RECONCILIATION, FORGIVENESS AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

BIBLICAL, PASTORAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITORS

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BEYERS NAUDÉ CENTRE SERIES ON PUBLIC THEOLOGY

JESUS WITHIN THE GENRES OF THE HUMAN

Sylvia Wynter, African Philosophy, and Post-Colonial Conceptions of the
Not Nonviolent Resistance of Jesus

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INTRODUCTION

Peace—with God, within oneself, among groups of kin and kindred, with the earth and all of creation—is the habitat in which humanity was intended to flourish. The peace which humans are designed to inhabit, however, is regularly assaulted and destroyed. This is particularly so when peace is divorced from justice and love, and married instead to legal compliance. The law, so often the hand-maiden to class-ordered divisions of society, regularly has the effect of fermenting anti-peace conditions. The law as such, often results in environmental degradation, holocausts, and alienations of affection.

In modernity, these anti-peace legal conditions are very often inseverable from racialised constructions of the human. Anti-peace laws and politics became inscribed in human flesh, rather than merely inscribed on the page, and supplanted the Human Being with the Human Looking. One's skin, hair, features, and shape, which the law recognised as either White, Black, or some degree towards one or the other—in addition to distinctions based upon sex—became determinative of one's existential rightness or wrongness within the conceptualisation of the human. Laws and politics which privileged ways of Human Looking as legitimised humanity, constituted categorical effacement of the peace of human beings in relation to other human beings on a global scale. These laws and politics did violence.

Using a postcolonial hermeneutic, this chapter will endeavour to show the ways in which a re-conceptualisation of the human renders possible a theology that uncouples humanity from political subjectivity, and from the political anti-peaceableness of Man, which then allows for the possibility of aggressive acts in furtherance of human dignity and true peace.

Drawing from Sylvia Wynter's ontology of the human, which repudiates "Man as Human" constructions and instead recognises "genres of the human," the first part

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of the chapter will articulate Wynter's mapping of the construction of the "Man as Human" concept, followed by Wynter's reconceptualisation of the human as genred. The chapter will then substitute the conception of Jesus as "Man," for the conception of Jesus in his kenotic, Kyriotic, and mediating human genres. The second part of the chapter will sketch the incidence of violence in the life and teachings of Jesus, and argue that, contrary to the discourse of nonviolence, there is warrant for apprehending aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus as violent. Finally, this chapter suggests that Jesus' human genres may be understood as demonstrating a necessary engagement in violence by those who would be like Jesus, and who would pursue the flourishing of creation.

MAPPING THE EMERGENCE OF 'MAN'

In both *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (McKittrick, 2015) and 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument' (Wynter, 2003), philosopher and cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter explores the roots of Western and colonial knowledge systems and furthers her sustained project of "eroding the foundation of the Western imperial (racial and patriarchal) concept of Man/Human" (Mignolo, 2015:121). Wynter begins the task of decolonising the conception of the human by undertaking the mapping of the Western conceptualisation of "Man",² from the medieval to the modern.

In the medieval Western world, knowledge systems were constructed around God. The world was understood to have been created by an omnipotent God, for God's sake only, without consideration for humanity (Wynter, 2003:275). Further, humanity was deemed to be corrupt, with fallen flesh. "Sinful by nature" humanity, thus, was cognitively incapable of knowing reality. As a result, the spiritual enlightenment of the Church fixed its hegemony over all laity, including the state (2003:276).

Near the turn of the 15th century, Pico Della Mirandola ("Pico") published a treatise that provided an alternate narrative of humanity's condition. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1496) (Pico Della Mirandola, 1998), man's³ fallenness was not

2 Key to Wynter's conceptualisation is the notion of "Man" as distinct from "man" or from "human" generally. As will be discussed, supra, for Wynter, "Man" represents the radical shift in thinking about humanity that occurred in medieval Europe, from God-centered existence, to human- and State-centered existence. "Man" became a political subject endowed with rights. "Man" conceptualised as such entails a referent who is situated within Western European imperialist modernity; who is descended from Europeans, raced as White, and inherently endowed with a humanity that is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of differing humanities. "Man" who is at the pinnacle of humanity is also imagined as male. (Cf. Mignolo, for discussion of de Vinci's drawing of *Vitruvian Man*, which reflects a medieval heuristic correlating the colonisation of time and space with the geometric perfection of the male body (Mignolo, 2015:108–110)). Also, I would argue that, necessarily implied in the Wynterian concept of "Man," is the possession of, or the right to the possession of, property; modernity's *sine qua non* of realised freedom and citizenship. Capital "M" Man, will be used throughout this chapter, following Wynter's conceptualisation of the term.

3 It might be argued that Pico's re-narration intended to include women and men in his use of the term "man," since it appears that he intended to reference humans universally. However, to the

central to man's identity. Instead, man existed at the midpoint of a hierarchy in creation between beasts and the divine. Man was marked not by fallenness, but by the potential for self-actualisation. In Pico's cosmological scheme, God gave man a mandate to:

[be] the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine (1998:5).

This re-narration of man's essential human nature accomplished two things. It transformed God from uncaring and arbitrary, into "a Caring Father who had created the universe specifically for man's sake (*propter nos homines*, for our sake)" (Wynter, 2003:278) and, it unleashed Man from a fallen, cognitive incapacitation into the freedom to fully exercise human reason.

It was within this shifting space of knowledge that Copernicus offered his hypothesis⁴ of an earth in motion.⁵ Copernicus's theory of a moving earth made earth indistinguishable from other moving heavenly bodies.⁶ Earth, he posited, was not inferior to, but of equivalent substance to other heavenly bodies. Accordingly, earth was understood to move physically, and to have moved from being a "degraded place" to being, instead, an "exalted place" (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:14).

Copernicus consciously instigated an epistemological paradigm shift. If God created the universe for mankind's sake, it followed that the world was necessarily made "according to rational, nonarbitrary rules that could be knowable by the beings that He had made it for"⁷ (Wynter, 2003:278). Thus, not only had God created man with the ability to know man's world, *alá* Pico, but God had created a world that could be known by man.

The evolved conception of God (as caring), of humanity (as advancing), and of the world/cosmos (as knowable), ultimately resulted in a transformation of man's relationships within the social order. Man was no longer a creature subject to God,

extent that Pico is regarded as a natural magician of the time (see, Alcoff, *Feminist Epistemologies* (Alcoff & Potter, 2013: 175)), it is more likely that he adhered to the less liberated outlook of the time, whereby "magnus ... [practiced magic] inside a vigorously ordered creation in which the female and passive bodies are irredeemably the male's inferiors." (Kodera, 2010: 283–284) The section will, therefore, retain his use of the term "man."

- 4 Copernicus' theory entailed a radical break from the Ptolemaic scientific model, which asserted earth as the unmoving center of the cosmos. Copernicus described, instead, a heliocentric solar system, in which heavenly bodies, including the earth, rotated around the sun.
- 5 Here, Wynter relies on *From Genesis to Genocide* (Chorover, 1980) and *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Blumenberg, 1985).
- 6 Copernicus' idea displaced the former idea of the Scholastics that the Heavens were fundamentally divided from, and vastly greater than, the Earth; and that a static earth, fixed at the center of the universe (its dredges), was the proper abode of post-Adamic fallen man.
- 7 Wynter relies upon, for her citation by Copernicus, Hallyn, *The Poetic Structure of the World*, pp.53–57, as well as her own, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*," pp.251–286, and Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*.

along with other created and subject beings. The potential accompanying the ability to exhibit reason freed humanity from the principal obligation of securing redemption from “enslavement to Original Sin by primarily adhering to the prohibitions of the Church” (Wynter, 2003:277).

The potential unlocked by Man’s rational ability destabilised the hegemonic authority of the church. In place of spiritual leadership, came rational and political leadership. The chief aim of humanity was untethered from matters related to the Kingdom of God, and became instead occupied with constructing, and adhering to, laws governing the kingdom of Man (the natural world), and the kingdoms of Men, i.e. the State. To be human was to be one who participated in constructing and maintaining knowledge, the existence and expansion of the State, and the ownership and control of property within the State. “Man,” then, fashioned as “the rational political subject of the state” (Wynter, 2003:277) supplanted “Christian,” the fallen subject of the church, as the preeminent mark of being human.

Out of this “epochal rupture,” as Wynter describes it, came both the advent of missions of colonial conquest and the development of the physical sciences. With respect to missions of colonial conquest, Man’s⁸ possession of the particular properties of rational selfhood and political subjectivity to the State, had implications for newly emerging State contexts, wherein existed a stark separation between the ruling class of landowners and the labouring class. The ruling class was invested with political rights, while the labouring class was commonly exploited and either temporarily or permanently devoid of political subjectivity (Smedley, 2007:2–3).

Colonial leaders in the newly “discovered” Americas, were generally large property owners, and “consciously contrived a social control mechanism” (Smedley, 2007:6) to protect their economic interests by impeding the unification of the racially diverse poor labouring class. “Physical features became markers of racial (social) status, to ‘fix a perpetual Brand upon Free Negroes and Mulattos,’” in the words of Virginia governor William Gooch in the early 18th century (2007:6). The Brand would serve to differentiate and disunify the labouring class. Prior to the distinctions based on phenotype, none of the labouring class was included in the reigning conception of Man. Subsequently, those with European physical features were included within the concept of those who were Men, or who had the potential to become Men. Meanwhile, those with the physical features of the non-European African were explicitly excluded from the definition of Man. The African-featured were given the newly devised designation of permanently enslaved, and therefore permanent Not Man status, and ultimately ontologically categorised as not human. In this way the economic structuring of the colonial project of Western Man was responsible for the invention of racial identity (Smedley, 2007:6).

The conception of Man as rational political subject continued to adapt to the possibilities attendant to colonial expansion, possibilities that hinged upon the

8 Wynter distinguishes this particular construction of the human as Man and designates it “Man₁”. Man₁ is determined by rationality and political subjectivity, without reference to his biological characteristics.

subjugation of native peoples, and the labour of African peoples. Man's advances in the physical sciences, and the development of species classification⁹ during the early 18th century aided the scientific re-visioning of humanity. Man could now be known and understood according to definitive physiological characteristics.¹⁰ Humanness came to entail differentially categorising Africans and natives in "purely biologised terms ... the ostensible embodiment of the non-evolved backward Others ... and, as such, the negation of the generic "normal humanness," ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West"¹¹ (Wynter, 2003:266).

By linking the colonial project to the secularising ontological construction of Man, Wynter chronicles and disrupts the conception of "Man" and of "human" being one and the same, and elucidates how the overrepresentation of Man came to be understood in relation to race and racism. She problematises "the incorporation of all forms of human being into a single homogenised descriptive statement that is based on the figure of the West's liberal monohumnist Man"¹² (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:23).

9 See Gould, "The Geometer of Race," for discussion of how Linnaeus revolutionised taxonomy during this time. His *Imperium Naturae* established the three kingdoms of Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral which is still in use as part of modern vernacular. His method of binomial nomenclature standardised the manner in which organisms are scientifically identified, and provided for a ranked hierarchy of organisms within the system of categorisation that he invented that includes distinctions between class, order, genus, and species. It was Linnaeus who developed scientific racial groupings. In his *Systema Naturae* of 1758 he identified four groups, *Europeus* (albus), "white"; *Americanus* (rufescens), "red"; *Asiaticus* (fuscus), "dark"; and *Africanus*, (niger), "black" (Sauer, 2008:79). Linnaeus' "scientific" categorisations of humans was based upon the straightforward mapping of people "onto the four geographic regions of conventional cartography. Linnaeus then characterised each of these groups by noting color, humor, and posture, in that order" (Gould, 1994:3).

10 Wynter regards this re-conceptualised *biologised* rational political subject as "Man₂."

11 Gould discusses the origins of the normitised European body. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), German anatomist and naturalist, was the first to move "scientific" racial distinctions beyond customary geographic indicators, towards racial distinctions based upon hierarchical human order, in his *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa* (On the Natural Variety of Mankind). Blumenbach postulated that those geographically situated near the Caucasus mountain region must have been the first of humankind, and thus constituted the human ideal. He based this determination upon his judgment of the aesthetic beauty of the people of that region. From there Blumenbach devised a symmetrical ordering of all other groups "by relative degrees of departure from this archetypal standard" (Gould, 1994:6). For purposes of symmetry, Blumenbach added a fifth human subgroup, the Malay, to Linnaeus' four. He identified two lines of departure from the idealised Caucasian. With White humanity at the pinnacle, one line of departure deemed Asians to be the furthest removed from White, with American Indians holding the intermediate place between Whites and Asians. The other line of departure deemed Africans to be the furthest removed from Whites, with Malay people occupying the intermediary space between Whites and Africans. In this way, hierarchical racial ordering came into being.

12 Wynter's problematisation of this conception of man includes the objection to the conceptual emptying of previously understood constitutive elements of the human. "Mortal/immortal, natural/supernatural, human/the ancestors, the gods/God" distinctions, upon which "all human groups had millennially "grounded" their descriptive statement/prescriptive statements of what it is to be human" were eliminated in the human as Man formulation (Wynter, 2003:264).

Wyterian humanity

In place of this overrepresented figure of the Man, Wynter argues for the necessity of speaking of “genres” of being human. Our genre-specific *who* is determined, not by our being “primarily biologic subjects, born of the womb”, but rather by our being “both *initiated* and *reborn* as fictively instituted inter-altruistic kin-recognising members of each symbolically re-encoded genre-specific *referent-we*.” Which is to say, that our biologic life is heavily influenced, even dominated by, our storytelling and mythic life. “As such, kin-recognising member subjects...performatively enact themselves/ourselves as ‘good men and women’ of their kind according to a nongenetically determined, origin-mythically chartered symbolically encoded and semantically enacted set of symbolic life /death instructions. At the same time, at the level of bios/brain, the [origin-mythic symbols] are genetically (neurochemically) implemented” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:27). We become ourselves through symbolically encoded neurochemical transmission of our kin mythology. Our mythos becomes our bios. Or, to put it another way, our genre-specific logos, is made flesh.

Wynter posits that the genred human’s knowledge-making practices “elaborate the genre-specific (and/or culture-specific) orders of truth through which we know reality, from the perspective of the no-less-genre-specific *who* that we already are” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:31–32). In other words, human knowing is determined by the praxis of human being. As a result, elaboration of a universal human knowledge is futile. Instead, knowledges facilitate a specific genre/culture/grouping’s apprehension of reality from the perspective of that particular genre/culture/group.

African conceptions of the human

Wynter’s conceptualisation of genres of being diverges sharply from that of Western philosophy, with its central concern for the universal “I”. Her view, however, is highly compatible with an African metaphysics, which understands the human as communitarian and necessarily existent as an “I/we”.

Though Africans are not one but many peoples with a diversity of cultures, beliefs, and traditions (Okolo, 2005:248) it is not disputed that Black Africa “exhibits a certain cultural unity” (2005:248). This unity has been termed “‘Africanity’, which [Maquet] briefly defines as ‘the totality of cultural features common to the hundreds of the societies of Sub-Saharan Africa’” (Okolo, 2005:248, citing Maquet, 1972:54).

Within this Africanity, metaphysics of reality and of the self both exist. The African conception of reality may be understood as dualistic, representing forces in both seen and unseen realms. “In the invisible or immaterial universe, according to African ontology, dwell God, or the highest being; the ancestors, or souls of the heads of class and of the departed relatives; and nature gods, or spirits. The material realm, on the other hand, contains human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate beings” (Okolo, 2005:248). In this view of reality, all existence is interconnected.

“[N]o single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network” (Tempels, 1959:41, orig [29 digital]).

As a consequence of a view of reality that recognises a cosmic interconnectedness of beings, a defining characteristic of African culture is that of a communitarian social structure (Gyekye, 2005:349). This view of reality has implications for the view of the self. An African worldview of the person understands individuals as interconnected. There is no conceptualisation of an individuated self (Okolo, 2005:252). The individual is a self in intimate and personal relationship with other forces acting above and below the individual in the hierarchy of forces. “Every man, every individual forms a link in the chain of vital forces, a living link, active and passive, joined from above to the descending line of his ancestry and sustaining below him the line of his descendants” (Tempels, 1959:71, orig [51 digital]).

Gyekye qualifies this unrestricted communitarian conception of the human by clarifying that the communitarian self is not best understood as “a cramped or shackled self, acting robotically at the beck and call of the communal structure” (Gyekye, 2005:359). Rather, though the individual is fully embedded and implicated in communal life, the possibility is always present for a self to take a distanced view of communal values, to set different goals, and to participate in determining its own identity (2005:359). The self has the capacity for “self-assertion” or for self-willing, in other words. Further, apart from communal relations, the individual is understood as possessing “a divine spark,” and as having an intrinsic value that makes the individual worthy of dignity and respect (2005:360). Gyekye’s qualification results in a conception of the self that is dual-featured, contemplating the individual as one embedded in an interconnected and interdependent community, yet also possessing inherent value and self-assertiveness.

Ultimately, Gyekye’s dual-featured humanity allows individual human self-assertiveness to enable the development of a human communal culture (Gyekye, 2005:359), and for a communal culture of the human to shape and inform an individual human self-assertiveness. Gyekye’s humanity aligns with Wynter’s conception of personhood as entailing the biologic person/individual engaging in a performance that perpetuates the mythic/symbolic life of a genre/group, while at the same time being acted upon, and constituted of, the genetic and neurochemical encoding of the genre/group (Wynter, 2003).

Following Wyterian and African conceptualisations, then, the human, is not defined by being an individual with rationality, political subjectivity, and particular physical attributes. Rather, humanness is defined by an individual existing in relation to a group of other individuals; creating and being created by various *genres of the human*.

With this conception of genres of the human in mind, we turn now to consideration of the humanity of Christ.

BEHOLD THE HUMAN NOT THE "MAN"

In light of the foregoing, it is necessary to contest the overrepresentation of the incarnate Christ as an instantiation of colonial Man (and of colonial Man's self-identification as messiah).¹³ Examination of the social and political context in which he lived reveal Jesus to have been geographically Palestinian,¹⁴ religiously Jewish,¹⁵ economically disadvantaged,¹⁶ demographically rural,¹⁷ culturally deeply embedded in a sacred, not a secular, economy,¹⁸ and politically, a colonised subject.¹⁹ What is not in evidence in an examination of Jesus' identity and personhood, is a demonstrated privileging by Jesus of any kind of pre-modern scientific rationality, nor of Jesus' self-understanding being rooted in his subjectivity to state authority. On the contrary, Jesus existed on earth within a web of relationships that constituted Jewish community or a group of Jewish individuals. Wynter's conceptualisation of genres of the human aid the apprehension of Jesus, not as the image of universal Man, but rather as a human existing in different genres. The value of this conceptualisation is that it eliminates the "competition"²⁰ of Jesus idealisations, and it is reflective of the gospel witness of a multivalent God.

- 13 J. Kameron Carter's analysis of the connection between the theo-political project of the West and Christian religious anthropology is helpful. "The constitution of the White Masculine as imperial Man was tied to his assuming a messianic and mediatory role in the world, as he accumulated divinity for himself. As imperial Saviour, he functioned by "divine right" to establish a utopian kingdom—a kingdom of whiteness we might say—as the kingdom of God. Those who enter the kingdom can be saved. Yet to be saved is to be made "religious" in the proper way within a properly ordered secular space" (Carter, 2012:89).
- 14 Palestine being the modern geographic identifier of the region of Judea, the place in which the biblical record indicates Jesus was born and engaged in ministry.
- 15 Jesus's Jewish identity is clearly verified in biblical accounts. His Jewish ancestry is recorded in both the Matthean and Lucan gospels. His participation in Jewish ritual is noted from the time of his dedication as an infant to one of his final acts of observation of the Passover meal. Further, Jesus participated in Jewish customs, including attendance at synagogue, reading and studying Jewish law.
- 16 The biblical account of Jesus's parents' sacrifice of a pigeon upon the occasion of his dedication at the temple is indicative of the lack of means of his family; Jesus is also regarded as part of the peasant class of Judea/Galilee. (Horsley, 1993; Powell, 1998; Sanders, 1985).
- 17 See Morten Jensen (2012) for a description of the rural conditions of Galilee, the region where Nazareth was located.
- 18 See Boer, R., Abrams, M. and Nicholas, D. (2015). *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*. London: Westminster John Knox Press.
- 19 Jesus lived as a Jewish peasant in volatile and occupied Judea, within the Roman Empire. See R.A. Horsley. (1993). *Jesus and the spiral of violence : popular Jewish resistance in Roman Palestine*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, and R.A. Horsley. (2005). "By the Finger of God": Jesus and Imperial Violence,' in Matthews, S. and Gibson, E.L. (eds.) *Violence in the New Testament*. USA: T & T Clark International, 51–80.
- 20 By "competition" what is meant is the regular substitution of one heuristic principle for comprehending God over another, depending upon one's social/political/economic context. E.g. John H. Yoder might identify God as a God of pacifism and nonresistance. Gustavo Gutiérrez might deem God's ultimate mission to be related to uplifting the poor. John H. Cone might identify God as primarily concerned with freedom. Delores Williams might determine that God is principally a God concerned with the survival of oppressed women.

The second chapter of Philippians features what has come to be known as the Christ Hymn.²¹ In her commentary of Philippians, Lynn Cohick regards the Christ Hymn as a significant means of understanding the human. According to Cohick (2013:106), the Hymn describes “the person of Jesus Christ and in so doing, develops a vision for what it means to be fully human before God.” Referencing the text of the Christ Hymn, found in Philippians 2:6-10,²² allows us to view more clearly the ways in which Jesus’ humanity is dual-featured - influenced by, as well as influencing, the community in which he was embedded - or, *genred*. The nature of Jesus’ humanity is revealed in three significant genres: the kenotic, the kyriotic, and the mesolabóic. Jesus was revealed as a self-emptying I/We, as an I/We of self-imperium, and as a mediating I/We.

Jesus’ kenotic human genre

In the Christ Hymn Jesus is presented as one who had the “form of God” but who emptied himself of this form, who yielded his Godly prerogative, and who entered into the humble existence of the human. This “emptying of self” (*ekenōsen*), or kenosis, entails Christ having the authority of God, yet choosing to become subject to authority as human.²³ When the gospel narratives depict Jesus as being birthed,²⁴ as acceding to the wishes of a woman,²⁵ as kneeling and washing the feet of his

21 Exegesis of Philippians 2:5-11 exceeds the scope of this chapter. See Gregory P. Fewster (2015). “The Philippians ‘Christ Hymn’: Trends in Critical Scholarship” for an overview of the major trends in research concerning Philippians 2:5-11; the themes of authorship and origin of the passage, its hymnic structure and form, and its function and theology within the letter itself.

22 5 Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus,
6 who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

23 See Gorman (2009). Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology, for extensive treatment of Christ's kenotic emptying.

24 See, Matthew 1-2; Luke 1:26 – 2:7.

25 See, e.g. John 2:1-11; John 11:1-45; Mark 5:26-34.

disciples,²⁶ as allowing himself to be betrayed,²⁷ arrested,²⁸ and abused,²⁹ the gospels narrate for us Jesus' humbled existence; it discloses the human being as one who is for others.³⁰ We see Jesus influenced by his community of colonised, oppressed, and impoverished Jews, yet as influencing that community by living an alternative way of life. A way of service and submission to his peers, and fearlessness to his overlords, arising from his knowledge of his own power.

Where there has been a preoccupation with the human as Man, the "self-emptying" genre of humanity has been often overlooked as characteristic of the human. However, as Jesus' self-emptying exemplifies, humans who live within genres of powerfulness, have the capacity to choose to live for others and to embrace vulnerability. It is the human creature alone³¹ that is able to choose to empty itself of power and to serve and submit to those with less or no power.

Jesus' existence within the kenotic genre of the human is rife with meaning for those who might claim for themselves the form of a god, in their exercise of and access to power.³² Jesus' example is one of yielding the prerogative of power, and of entering into the human genre of the vulnerable. Remaining vulnerably placed despite the cost to oneself.

Jesus' kyriotic genre

Later in the same passage of Philippians (2:11), another of Jesus' human genres is disclosed. In addition to the presentation of Jesus as embracing the surrender of his almighty prerogative while embodied, we are presented with Jesus who is the Christ and who is Lord (*Kyrios Iesous Christos*). This statement is not simply an ontological account of Jesus' divinity and absolute sovereignty, though it is both these things.³³ The assertion that Jesus is Lord constitutes an acknowledgement of the exaltation of lowly humanity. "Jesus is Lord" bespeaks the revelation that one who had the form

26 See, John 13:4-9.

27 See, e.g. Mark 14:18; John 13:21.

28 See, Matthew 26:46-56; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:47-54; John 18:21.

29 See, e.g. Mark 14:65; 15:5, 19.

30 This coheres with the saying of Jesus, "but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:26-28). See also, Mark 10:43-45.

31 It is interesting that even the angelic host, who are identified as ministering spirits, are not revealed in scripture as beings who are able to enter into a genre of being that is inferior to the genre to which they originally belong.

32 For Karl Barth godlikeness was a feature of Western Man's conception of himself. "We are not concerned with God but with our own requirements, to which God must adjust Himself ... And, so when we set God upon the throne of the world, we mean by God ourselves. In 'believing' on Him we justify, enjoy, and adore ourselves ... God Himself is not acknowledged as 'God' and what is called God is in fact Man (Barth, 1933:44).

33 "When kyrios is used in this sense, it conveys the idea of "one who is absolutely sovereign." It is a majestic title, conveying God's sovereignty and divine power, and it is a remarkable proof of Jesus' divinity when it is applied to Him in this manner" ("Ligonier Ministries", 2017).

of a slave is he who possesses ultimate value, dignity, and power. Jesus' lordship did not arise following, or because of his death on the cross.³⁴ He was simply revealed at that time to the world to be that which he truly was, that which the world had not apprehended.³⁵

The kyriotic genre of humanity entails the revelation to onlookers of the authority, agency, and exaltation of the humble, while the humble remains shrouded in vulnerability. Thus, following the Annunciation, unmarried and pregnant Mary could be revealed as the prophet who sang a Song of Praise acknowledging that God had already brought down the powerful and exalted the lowly.³⁶ During the baptism of Jesus, an anonymous carpenter from Nazareth, a hovering dove and divine pronouncement could identify him as the beloved Son in whom God was well pleased.³⁷ Jesus could enter a synagogue and teach with an authority that learned scribes did not possess.³⁸ Upon ascending a mountain with his disciples, Jesus could be seen as inhabiting a body transfigured into magnificence.³⁹

Where there has been a preoccupation with Man, there has been a tendency to overlook the kyriotic genre of humanity. Certainly Man has embraced the notion of the *imago Dei*, that he alone in creation has been graced with the image, and special favour, of God, which is the basis of his exalted position in the earth. This is not, however, kyriotic. The significance of kyrios embodied in Jesus' humanity, is that

34 We often view Christ's humiliation as the basis of his subsequent exaltation; his having been humbled so that he could be exalted. (See, e.g. 2 Cor 13: 3-4, Heb 2:9, 14-18). Yet Christ's humiliation might be viewed another way, namely at a means of displaying an exalted way of being human. Cohick articulates the reminder of redeemed humanity's participation in Christ. Accordingly, Christ's humility in the Hymn is a demonstration of "the posture of service that characterises the child of God" (Cohick, 2013:131). See also, Barth's Philippians, wherein he posits that God found glory in, "prepar[ing] his kingdom in incomprehensible condescension. And that is the right and the glory that now count also for those who are his...the right and the glory of tapeinophrosynē (humility)" (Barth, 2002:68).

35 The notion of a concealed or misperceived identity correlates with another principle emphasised by Wynter in her conceptualisation of humanity, a concept previously gestured toward by Frantz Fanon as sociogeny ("besides phylogeny and ontogeny there stands sociogeny") (Fanon, 2008:11). The same concept was articulated earlier by W.E.B. Dubois (1868-1963) as "double consciousness." Wynter's sociogenic principle identifies that phenomenon whereby racialisation results in the construction of the Black person as doubled. One experiences oneself as one is, while at the same time experiencing oneself through the lens of the subjective circumscribed disabilities imposed by a referent-we populace. So that one is at the same time both the normal and abnormal/Othered/marginalised human. The Black person is both the normative "we" and the lesser-than "they" (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:54-56); (Wynter, 2001). "The concept of sociogenesis underlines that: I am who I am in relation to the other who sees me as such; and, in a society structured upon racial hierarchies, becoming black is bound up with being perceived as black by a white person...This process of being seen and seeing oneself is sociogenesis or DuBoisian double consciousness" (Mignolo, 2015:116). My suggestion is that Christ's kyriotic human genre is, effectively, the true self of Jesus overwhelming the imposed selfness of Jesus.

36 See, Luke 1:46-55.

37 See, Matthew 3: 13-17, Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32-34.

38 See, Matthew 7:27-29, 13:54; Mark 1:22; 6:2; Luke 4:32.

39 See, Matthew 17:1-3; Mark 9:2-4; Luke 9:28-30.

the acclaim of Kyrios is attached to Jesus, the lowly, and not to Caesar, the mighty. A kyriotic human genre acknowledges in the humiliated human the impartation of agency, glory, and the special attentiveness of the Divine. "Jesus is Lord, and always has been, even if no one recognises it," his Kyriotic genre asserts. "The lowly have power, authority, and the agency to exercise both," the kyriotic asserts, "even if no one recognises it."⁴⁰ This power, authority, and agency, revealed in the kyriotic genre, does not require permission to be or to do, but is proactive and self-directing in accordance with its self-knowledge.

Jesus' mesolabóic human genre

The final human genre that might be contemplated via the passage in Philippians 2 is that of the mesolabóic, Jesus' mediating selfhood. Mediation is conveyed in the acknowledgement that "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess" Jesus' Lordship. By this statement, Jesus' life is placed in connection to all other beings in creation. The human, incarnate Jesus, thus, has a mediating function not merely between the Creator and humanity, but between the Creator and all of existence. Jesus, stands between the natural and the divine, as well as between the various objects of creation within the natural created world.⁴¹

The mesolabóic genre of humanity entails the human standing as mediator, following the example of Jesus standing as mediator. Jesus mediated between God and humanity, in his incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection. He mediated between God and non-human life, such as in his expressed concern for lilies and sparrows.⁴² He also demonstrated a mediating humanity in relation to animals. He acknowledged that human help should be immediately given when an animal falls

40 Stovell helpfully problematises the classic understanding of kenosis as the complete emptying of the divine attributes of God:

The classical kenoticists, led by Gottfried Thomasius, stretched the concept of kenosis so that it meant "emptied himself of the divine attributes not compatible with human nature." This created for them a novel way to resolve the incarnational paradox: instead of attenuating either Christ's humanity or his unity of person...they would preserve both by attenuating his divinity. But this is...a slip back from Chalcedon's hypostatic union to a natural union. It allows only God's character to be compatible with creaturely existence, and not his power. By insisting on a metaphysic that opposes divine and creaturely, heavenly and earthly, antithetically against one another, such "kenotic Christology" ultimately denies the possibility that the heavenly order can be fully realised in the created world... See various relevant essays in Evans, ed. *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Stovell, 2014).

41 Gregersen's account of "deep incarnation" conceptualises the creation's comprehensive connectivity through Jesus's humanity, thus:

God's own Logos (Wisdom and Word) was made flesh in Jesus the Christ in such a comprehensive manner that God, by assuming the particular life-story of Jesus the Jew from Nazareth, also conjoined the material conditions of creaturely existence ("all flesh"), shared and ennobled the fate of all biological life-forms ('grass' and 'lilies'), and experienced the pains of sensitive creatures ('sparrows' and 'foxes'). Deep incarnation thus presupposes a radical embodiment which reaches into the roots (radices) of material and biological existence... (Gregersen, 2013:253).

42 See, Luke 12:6, 24.

into a ditch,⁴³ and that pathos is evoked by a herd of shepherdless sheep or the concern for a lost sheep.⁴⁴ Jesus also mediated between humans, as seen during his interventions between those with power and those who were powerless, such as the woman caught in the act of adultery,⁴⁵ and the man who was born blind,⁴⁶ or those whom he healed of various conditions.⁴⁷ Jesus also intervened between those with authority and those with greater authority, such as when he offered a determination on paying taxes to the emperor⁴⁸. Finally, Jesus might even be understood as one who mediated between humans and the inanimate created world, through his speaking to winds and water,⁴⁹ and his assertion that rocks might somehow cry out in worship.⁵⁰

Where there has been a preoccupation with the human as Man, the genre of humanity as mediating being has been obliterated. Humanity, instead, fetishises the human. Jesus' incarnate identity demonstrates that one who is human, formed and influenced by one's particular community, can influence that community by serving as a mediating force between the seen and unseen, between humans, between the human and the nonhuman, and between the elements of earth and the rest of creation.

Ultimately, in Jesus' incarnation, three genres of the human are disclosed. The kenotic genre reveals that humanity is ordered in a way that affords the emptying of one's self, and one's power. The kyriotic genre of the human, on the other hand, reveals humanity's latent power can be brought to the fore. Finally, the mesolabôic genre reveals humanity's privileged place of being as a mediating force within the cosmos.

EXEMPLAR OF NONVIOLENT "MAN"?

The movement we have seen has shifted away from Jesus as Man-as-Human, the rational political subject of the state. The way has been opened for apprehension of Jesus as habituated to different genres of the human, genres which do not necessitate conforming Jesus' actions to those that equate to good citizenship. Now begins the task of reckoning with the historical reality of the actions of Jesus which could

43 See, Matthew 12:11.

44 See, Matthew 9:36, 18:12.

45 See, 8:1-11.

46 See, John 9.

47 See, e.g. Matthew 4:23, 9:35; Luke 9:6, 11, 14:1-6, John 5:2-9. See also, Crossan generally for a discussion on a medical anthropological distinction between disease and illness; disease being the objective physical condition, and illness the social and communal meaning attributed to the condition. He makes a distinction between curing, which is physiological, and "healing," which encompasses community/relational aspects of making the sick well (Crossan, 2007).

48 See, Matthew 22:17-23; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:19-26.

49 See, Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25; Mark 4:35-41.

50 See, Luke 19:40.

not be regarded as good citizenship, which may, in fact, be deemed constitutive of violence.⁵¹

The limited notion of Jesus as an agent of a strictly non-violent strategy for change is discursive. As Jeremy Punt establishes, contrary to pervasive teaching of Christian nonviolence, the New Testament does not univocally espouse this teaching.

The position that the New Testament...unequivocally eschews violence and opts for peace...can only be maintained within what can be described as a prior conceived biblical-theological hermeneutical template...Such templates serve as filters, which too easily permit unqualified claims and disallow complexities such as the ambiguity of a verse like Romans 16:20 ("The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet")... " (Punt, 2012: 29, n.21).

Specifically, with respect to Jesus' life, the biblical text is replete with explicit depictions of Jesus engaging in what may be understood as physical violence, verbal violence, and ideological/eschatological violence. In Matthew alone, Jesus is shown as engaging in violent rhetoric, making references to future temporal and eschatological violence, and engaging in physical acts of violence against the temple complex and against demons and Satan.

[Jesus'] claim in 10:34 not to bring peace but a sword is usually understood metaphorically...But as Davies and Allison observe, the sword is also associated with eschatological judgment (for example, Isa 66:16) [footnote omitted]. That judgment is under way in Jesus' ministry manifested in people's responses, and will

51 Though a comprehensive treatment goes beyond the scope of this chapter, a distinction is warranted between the argument that I am here advancing, and the arguments that are raised in Walter Wink's extensive body of work on domination and nonviolent resistance. (See, e.g. *Engaging the Powers* wherein many of Wink's arguments relating to domination and nonviolence are set forth (Wink, 1992). Wink and I both argue that Jesus advocated resistance to oppression and injustice. However, our positions otherwise differ in numerous ways. Three of which I will note here. First, we have differing views on the fundamental nature of power and domination as it relates to the Christian God and God's action in the world. Wink traces the "system of domination" and violence to ancient non-Judeo-Christian societies. He argues against all dominating violence. This seems to me to poorly account for the ways in which the Hebrew Bible characterises some acts of God's judgment. Second, Wink argues that a "third way" exists, as an alternative to either passive acceptance or violent reaction. He offers examples of resistance from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount of love-based and respectful resistance, including the example of turning the other cheek. The back-handed slap on the face was meant to humiliate, but by turning the other cheek, the victimised regained their dignity by determining their own response to being unjustly slapped. I think that Wink is naïve in his belief that turning the other cheek will effectively rob the oppressor of the will to oppress and result in transformation. An example from South Africa will suffice. Steve Biko's adhered to a non-cooperation policy when detained by state security forces. His creative resistance, and refusal to cooperate, was intended to either coerce the police to stop beating him, or force them escalate their abuse beyond what was intended or at all reasonable, thus again leading to an end to the abuse. His tactic was much the same as offering the other cheek to be slapped, in hope that it might end the humiliation or escalate it. Steve Biko was beaten to death while in the custody of state security forces. Finally, Wink proposes "nonviolent" militant resistance, yet fails to recognise the "violence" that is interpreted by the state through the mere assembly of Black bodies. When "standing your ground" while Black is sufficiently threatening to result in state-sanctioned murder of those standing, notions of what constitutes nonviolence must be re-examined.

be completed at Jesus' return. Jesus' physically violent disruption of the temple in 21:12-17 foreshadows the destruction and punishment of the elite's center of power (Jerusalem and the temple) at Rome's hands in 70 CE (22:7), and anticipates the final violent judgment effected in the cosmic war that marks Jesus' return (24:27-31) [footnote omitted]. So too do his rhetorically violent assertion that the Jerusalem elite have no place in God's purposes (15:13), his description of them as "evil" like Satan (cf. 12:34; 16:1-4 and 6:13; also tempters in 16:1 and 4:1-3), and his scathing series of condemnatory woes against them (chapter 23). His exorcisms, his "throwing out" of demons (8:16; 9:33, 38 and more) and of the temple officials (21:12), evidence the struggle with Satan and victory of God's empire (12:24-28) (Carter, 2005:99).

Many of the passages described by Carter in the above quote have parallels in the other gospels, or can be supplemented by incidents of a violent character in other gospels that are not accounted for in Matthew's gospel. When the anachronistic divisions between political, religious, relational, physical, and ideological violence that are often imposed on the biblical text are removed, there can be no question that Jesus did engage in conduct that worked damage towards family structures, religious authority, and political institutions; conduct that is constitutive of violence.

Resistance to the notion of Jesus' engagement with violence within his social/political context is often present in direct correlation to the acceptance of the conceptualisation of Jesus as Man. When Jesus is conceived as Man, the possibility of Jesus acting against the (imperial) power of the State and her agents is foreclosed, since Man, the ideal, exists by and through his being a rational political subject of the State. New Testament Scholar Richard Horsley's analysis is precisely to the point in making the connection between constructions of Jesus as nonviolent Man and constructions of Jesus as Man citizen-subject of the imperial state. Thus, I quote him at length:

The vehemence with which leading scholars insisted that Jesus was a teacher of nonviolence and even apolitical nonresistance, however, cannot be explained simply as the response to a few maverick interpreters of Jesus as politically engaged, perhaps even a sympathiser with "the Zealots" [footnote omitted]. The 1960s and 1970s, of course, were times of national liberation movements against European and American imperial rule in the "third world," and of widespread protests against the U.S. war in Vietnam and other counterinsurgency wars. Again in retrospect, it seems like no mere coincidence that European scholars constructed an elaborate synthetic picture of "the Zealots" as a longstanding and widespread movement of violent revolt against Roman rule, as a kind of ancient Jewish "National Liberation Front" [footnote omitted]. As practitioners of anti-imperial violence, "the Zealots" provided a useful foil over against which Jesus could be portrayed as a sober teacher of pacifist nonresistance. It seems no mere coincidence, moreover, that New Testament scholars thus focused the issue of violence on resistance to foreign imperial rule rather than on imperial rule itself. Like many other academic fields, New Testament studies originated in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany and England during the heyday of imperialism. That Western nations were ruling and exploiting subject peoples was simply assumed as the standard order of things [footnote omitted]. It was also assumed that the Gospels belonged to European Christians, whose responsibility it was to take them as authoritative

Scriptures to those subject peoples. The portrayal of Jesus as a sober advocate of nonresistance in opposition to the revolutionary violence of "the Zealots" thus perpetuated the Western Christian appeal to Jesus' teaching of "love your enemy" as a device to suppress resistance to Western domination, including repressive imperial violence (Horsley, 2005:52).

Just as conceptions of Man arise concurrently with a Western imperialist agenda, according to Horsley, it appears that the Western scholarly project of constructing a nonviolent Jesus, is likewise directly related to the project of Western imperialism.

Instead of reckoning with Jesus as he is presented in the pages of scripture, Western man adapted Jesus to suit his drive to conquer and to amass power and wealth. For the imperial subject, Jesus is Man. He represents Man's power to rise in stature to become like God. Jesus is the exemplar of Man's authority and imparts Man with the destiny of exploring, discovering, plundering, subduing, and exerting dominion by physical, psychological, and technological force, if necessary, in order that the world might be sculpted into the shape that Man deems best, *alá Pico*. For those who are objects of the imperialist agenda, however, Jesus must not be recognised as Man, with limitless agency and power. The attributes of self-actualisation, so prized by Western Man, must be withheld from the colonised, lest the colonised exercise their agency to disallow their subjugation. The colonised must engage a Jesus who is the nonviolent Saviour from sin, and not the Jesus who is Man.

That there could be two Jesuses simultaneously legitimated in the mind of Western Man, affirms the concept of Jesus occupying more than one genre. This seeming consistency with genres of humanity is only partial, however. The Western construct of Jesus as Man and of Jesus as nonviolent Saviour both corrupt and invert the concept of the genred human, and of genred Jesus. Instead of either of Western Man's genres moving humanity toward peace, flourishing, and unity of life, both move, instead, toward injustice and dehumanisation, and an "I/we" that takes the creation being *prompter nos homines* ("for our own sake") to always further extremes. None of which, ultimately, is faithful to honour the person and work of Jesus.

The Christ Hymn, alternatively, provides guidance as to what genres might be more faithful reflections of who Jesus is. If Jesus is understood within the genre of the kenotic, we might, perhaps, regard him as exemplar of a humanity which properly enters into the social realm of the marginalised. Who engages in a violent ideological resistance that rejects existing hierarchies of power; or as a provocateur whose life could not be considered one that promoted "peace (law) and order".

In regions where there are staggering levels of inequality, such as South Africa,⁵² there are implications for a kenotic humanity. Such a humanity would task those

52 Twenty-eight years after the end of apartheid, the effects of apartheid continue. Separation largely remains. Over 7 million people, nearly all Black South Africans, live in informal dwellings, which consist, primarily, of shacks. (Statistics South Africa, 2016:59). Over 60% of the population do not have piped water inside their dwellings (2016:64) Economic disparities also endure. A study in 2013 revealed dire inequality, not merely in income, but of wealth. "[T]en percent of the population own more than 90 percent of all wealth while 80 percent have no wealth to speak of" (REDI & Orthofer, 2016:4).

with wealth to pursue transformation of the heart, so that meaning in life might be reimagined as tied to the work of justice for the violated, and to securing the basic needs of the poor. A kenotic culture might censure concern by the wealthy for increasing their wealth and possessions, and encourage instead the disregard of the wealthy's own loss of money, prestige, and security.

If Jesus is understood within the genre of the kyriotic, we might, perhaps, regard him as exemplar of a humanity that allows the spark of the Divine to blaze into a renunciation of the imposed identity of colonised-subjugated Lesser-Being. A renunciation that does not eschew the performance of acts of verbal and/or physical violence. Renunciation that might encompass, like Jesus, vociferous public condemnation of those wielding oppressive authority, and the disruption of the operation of oppressive, exploitative, or destructive institutions, without regard for harm to property.

If Jesus is understood within the genre of the mesolabóic, we might, perhaps, regard Jesus as exemplar of a humanity whose interest lies in fostering a harmonious creation, inclusive of the earth, animals, and humanity, and whose life and actions reflect a radical concern for the flourishing of all, as opposed to a preoccupation with the mere absence of physical violence between humans. This might involve restructuring communities to honour communal, multi-family, living. It might involve providing radical care for and treatment for victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence. It might involve the stringent imposition of consequences on unethical poachers, and affirmative steps to restore balance to the habitat of the poached. It might involve rigorous reform to humanity's relationship with water.

Reimagining the human in accordance with different genres is a seed that bears much fruit in its application to our lives.

CONCLUSION

Wynter has mapped the development of the ideology of "Man" in place of human. She then offered a corrective by conceptualising genres of the human. Examples of Jesus' incarnate identity within different human genres was shown as a counter-production to the image of Jesus as Man. Finally, the notion of Jesus as nonviolent Saviour was deconstructed, and a suggestion for the possibility of alternative views of Jesus' humanity within the kenotic, kyriotic, and mesolabóic genres of the human suggested.

The "we" who have been culturally molded in the image of Jesus as Man face an urgent 21st century task of reimagining Jesus' humanity. "[We] have to replace

Educational disparities reflect similar inequalities. A 2007 study showed 41% of rural Grade 6 children, largely Black South Africans, were functionally illiterate; a 2011 study showed that 50% of children whose home language is not English or Afrikaans, could not read by Grade 4; other data shows that only 44% of Black and Coloured youth graduated high school, while 88% of Whites graduated. (See, Spaul (2014), "Education in SA – Still separate and unequal". Added to these are the staggering instances of gun violence, as well as gender based violence, including rape.

the ends of the referent-we of liberal monohumanist Man with the ecumenically human ends of the *referent-we on the horizon of humanity*. We have no choice” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015:24).

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