

Imagining an Ethics of Political Participation for Women in Sub-Saharan Africa

A Sophialogical Hermeneutic

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IMAGINING AN ETHICS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A SOPHIOLOGICAL HERMENEUTIC

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation draws upon African and Christian ethics as well as on African women's experiences of resistance to violations of their human dignity and womanhood. It takes a theological approach drawing on resources including African women's theology, Jon Sobrino, Emmanuel Katongole, and Catholic social teaching. An important lens for diagnosing the problems faced by women in Sub-Saharan Africa is Engelbert Mveng's concept of "anthropological poverty." This concept refers to the multiple aspects of the loss of dignity resulting from slavery and colonialism; a basic argument of this dissertation is that anthropological poverty affects women in unique ways, that are exacerbated by religious and cultural histories of oppression of women. To address this situation, I will advocate for an interplay between the sacredness of life of every individual that is a salient principle of Christian ethics and the collective consciousness of solidarity that is distinctive of African cultures.

The dissertation uses the narratives of abuse of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo that mirror those of Sub-Saharan African women more generally. It argues that these abuses impoverish women not only economically but also and especially anthropologically. While anthropological poverty is rooted in the history of slavery and colonization of African nations, it continues to be worsened by an intermingling of androcentric Christian views with the cultural patriarchal gender biases which significantly

shape women's identity and women's roles in society. Another factor that worsens women's anthropological poverty is sexual violence, especially rape used as a weapon of war. The dissertation argues that the Catholic social teaching's discourse of the preferential option for the poor overlooks the ways these factors doubly impoverish women and obstruct their political participation in society. The Church's teaching tends to focus on economic over anthropological poverty.

The dissertation undertakes the task of moral imagination using narrative criticism as a method of biblical exegesis. It assesses the foundations of the political participation of women in African traditions and Scriptures, using the feminist biblical lens of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "discipleship of equals." Through a "sophiological" hermeneutic, the dissertation identifies the epistemology that arises from women's resistance to anthropological poverty. From the perspectives of Latin American liberation theology and a political theology of hope for Africa, it theorizes that the passion of anger offers a particular epistemology of liberation, and can become a praiseworthy and effective means of women's social participation when it is solidaristic and resistant.

The dissertation concludes by assessing the extent to which Catholic social teaching on the preferential option for the poor lacks an adequate analysis of women's specific poverty. The option for the poor needs to regard women's suffering and responses to suffering as *loci theologici*. This option needs to consider the "conative interruption" dimension of anger that women's narratives disclose as a sign of the times. The dissertation resolves that the Christian virtues of fortitude and prudence need to be rearticulated in the contexts of grave abuses of womanhood, connecting them to solidaristic and resistant anger through which women's sacredness of life can be significantly ennobled.

*And if anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom Sophia's] labors are virtues;
for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in
life is more profitable for mortals than these.*

Wisdom 8: 7.

DEDICATION

For my mother, Véronique Naweza N'talega

Thank you from the bottom of my heart,
we will remain together now and for the eternal life.

For all the silenced women of Africa and the world,
that they may find a voice through this work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	: Anno Domini
AFEM/SK	: Association of Media Women of South Kivu
APADEIM	: Asociación Para el Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer (Association for Women Integral Development)
ATR	: African Traditional Religion
BCE	: Before Christian Era
CDF	: Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith
CORDAID	: Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid
DR Congo	: Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC	: Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
FDLR	: Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
OCHA	: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
HIPC	: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HRW	: Human Rights Watch
HIV	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICC	: International Criminal Court
REV	: Rape with Extreme Violence
RTNC	: Radio Television National/Congo
SFVVS	: Women's Synergy against Sexual Violence
SGI	: Sokka Gakkai International
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Program
US	: United States

Introduction

1. Why I Care About a Theology that can Lift Up the Impoverished Women

I begin by sharing a childhood memory that has been with me in all the work that I have done accompanying women. We are eleven brothers and sisters in my family. My father Philippe worked at the National Bank, one of the few public institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) that provides a dignified salary and health care for the employees and their families. My mother, Veronica, enjoyed her role as a housewife, which included making trips to the market to buy food for the family. She would buy either an entire goat or a whole cow's leg to feed the eleven of us, our cousins, friends, and neighbors. There was always food for everyone. My mother had to buy 110 pounds of beans and 110 pounds of rice every month—or twice a month, depending on our visitors. The practice of sharing food was a way of strengthening kinship with neighbors and extended family, a very dear virtue to communal and harmonious communities in the DR Congo.

The image that never left my mind is this: my mother used women called *porteuses* or *portefaix* (carriers) whose job was to carry weights for whoever needed it. These carriers used to bring home our sacs of beans and rice. Since my father had a car, it might seem that my mother did not need the women to carry the goods. However, our car was never available to be used as a means to transport the market goods, and no one thought there was a need for the vehicle for this service. Transporting market goods was the job of the impoverished women carriers. Seeing these women carrying so much weight on their backs used to break my heart, even when I was still in primary school. Two women would come over to my family's house

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carrying 110 pounds each. I can always remember the feeling of anger that this image evoked in me. I could feel the weight myself seeing the women so bent over by the weight they carried.

I directed my anger to my mother, asking her why she was using the women to carry so much weight instead of men, who, as I was taught, were physically stronger than women. My mother used to reply simply by saying this was the reality of these women, that they had to do this job to feed their children. She recognized that from the carrier's perspective, carrying rice would provide money to take home and feed her family. There were very few male carriers, and my mother preferred using female carriers out of solidarity with the other women. Yet, I could not and still cannot bear to see them so bent over and exhausted. It was appalling and shocking to me; something was evidently amiss. What if it were my mother? It is this imagery, among other things, that pushes me to coin the term “cheap death” regarding the young women who passed away for lack of the social recognition necessary to guarantee the primary conditions of a dignified life.

I call “cheap death,” those deaths which could be avoided in a more just political system, one more responsive to human dignity. My use of the concept “cheap death” draws upon the discourse of Dr. Denis Mukwege, a Nobel Prize-winning surgeon who repairs the effects of rape. He uses this concept in speaking of “rape” against women in the DR Congo. Mukwege argues that “it is a cheap, effective way to destabilize entire communities.”¹ Therefore, by “Cheap death,” I include any death that is anticipated, violent, and quick. “Cheap death” results from institutional violence to which people are subjected, including the consequences of the traditional gender biases and the rape that Mukwege has termed as “Rape with extreme

¹ Dr. Denis Mukwege, “Speech Accepting the 2015 Champion of Peace Award,” November 2015, <https://www.womenforwomen.org/blog/read-dr-denis-mukweges-speech-accepting-2015-champion-peace-award>.

violence,”² (REV) that are killing millions of women in war zones of the Eastern DR Congo. I consider this “cheap death” as it occurs from the REV as well as from bearing heavy load as a factor that has not-quite-yet been defined among the many unjust structures that put women in dehumanizing conditions which in turn raise their mortality rate. The factors concluding in the “cheap death” of women in the DR Congo are overwhelming.

While she spent time cooking for many other people and us, my mother Veronica would insist that we dedicate our time to reading and studying more than in household chores. She used to say that it was our duty to do so. I developed a reading habit thanks to my mother, who, besides dedicating so much time in cooking, did not stop going after us to get our homework done and not to miss Sunday Mass.

I consecrated my life to a Christian life-commitment, in celibacy and total dedication to working for more humane conditions for women in Sub-Saharan Africa, through the Teresian Institutes³ and, later, with several national and international non-governmental organizations advocating for women's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa. Addressing the cheap death and the anthropological poverty of women of Sub-Saharan Africa from a theological perspective is the task to which this dissertation turns. It is for suffering women that I undertake this theological reflection, wherever they may be.

² Denis Mukengere Mukwege and Cathy Nangini, “Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,” *PLoS Medicine* 6, no. 12 (December 2009): e1000204, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000204>.

³The Teresian Institute or Association (TA) is a Catholic Church group, founded by Saint Pedro Poveda in 1911, in Covadonga, Asturias (Spain). The members are men and women committed to evangelization, human advancement, and social transformation through education and culture, in various associations and movements. They live in the world, without the habit of distinguishing them from the community, but with a unique way of integrating life and faith. It is composed of the primary association and co-operating associations. The former is composed of the consecrated individuals who commit to living a life that involves celibacy, obedience, and sharing of the goods—a life in community and fraternity. The latter includes men and women who are willing to commit to sharing in the mission of the TA. It is to the former that I have consecrated my life. To read more, see <https://www.teresian-association.org/en/>.

In addition to theological ethics, I have degrees in economics and development studies, and I have professional experience in conducting and evaluating programs for the inclusion of the socially disadvantaged, especially women. I spent a decade working with Teresian communities for the most underprivileged people of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and the DR Congo, carrying on socio-educative projects that target the improvement of conditions of life for women and other marginalized groups, such as street children. Additionally, I conducted training in Lima, Peru, in collaboration with international non-governmental organizations, including the Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (CORDAID).⁴

1. Main Theological Points and Thesis

This dissertation assumes the task of moral imagination in suggesting the ways theological ethics can help address women's anthropological poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. I suggest an interplay between the dignity of the individual woman with the collective consciousness of solidarity of African ethics for the good of the community. Striving to make communal values outweigh personal dignity, especially when it comes to the dignity of women, can be problematic and become unethical as it entertains or oversees the factors abusing the individual woman's sacredness of life. This dissertation focuses on a few concepts that display the elements of the impoverishment of women. It aims at reimagining Christian ethics from both African and Christian theological perspectives to dismantle the anthropological poverty of women.

⁴ See CORDAID's website: <https://www.cordaid.org/en/>

The concept of “anthropological poverty” is to be understood from the perspective of postcolonial theory. For Mveng, anthropological poverty was rooted in historical events such as slavery and Western Christianity in collusion with colonial powers. This collusion constitutes the main factors of the anthropological poverty of black Africa to date. Anthropological poverty is “indigence of being, the legacy of centuries of slavery and colonization,”⁵ which originates from the annihilation enslaved people went through. It “consists in despoiling human beings not only of what they have but of everything that constitutes their being and essence—their identity, history, ethnic roots, language, culture, faith, creativity... their right to speak.”⁶ Slavery and Western Christianity, in collusion with colonial powers, worked to annihilate the people by denying them humanity, identity, and culture. Their poverty goes beyond simple material poverty and its “chains [grow] heavier by the day.”⁷ Indeed, the factors of slavery and colonization and their practices continue to date, especially regarding women.

I draw on Engelbert Mveng’s⁸ concept of “anthropological poverty” or “anthropological pauperization,” qualifying the idea of this poverty in terms of the particular factors affecting women in Sub-Saharan Africa. I build upon Emmanuel Katongole’s argument that the DR

⁵ Engelbert Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 156–57.

⁶ Engelbert Mveng, “Third World Theology— — What Theology? What Third World?: Evaluation by an African Delegate,” in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17–29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 217–21.

⁷ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 156–57.

⁸ “Engelbert Mveng was born in 1930 near Yaoundé, Cameroon, to Presbyterian parents. He eventually became a Jesuit priest, as well as a historian, poet, artist, philosopher, and theologian [...] As a historian and theologian he made a great contribution to the study of African culture and history, especially in the realms of cultural and religious anthropology and iconology.” See “Engelbert Mveng: A Theology of Life Expressed in Art,” *Indigenous Jesus*, May 2012. Accessed November 2015, <http://indigenesus.blogspot.com/2012/05/engelbert-mveng-theology-of-life.html>.

Congo mirrors the African continent and all that goes wrong in it, especially when it comes to illegal management of mineral resources and violence.⁹ To wit, the DR Congo mirrors the world by displaying the worst of the poverty that women face. The DR Congo is the *locus theologicus* [place of theology]. The world of the poor constitutes a setting from which the traditional sources of theology can be and should be reinvigorated.

The DR Congo is counted among the worst places in the world to be a woman.¹⁰ It also mirrors violence in postcolonial Africa¹¹ in the sense that it is located at the heart of the great-lakes region [Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, DR Congo] torn up by the political and economic conflicts. These conflicts extended to the DR Congo with the last two decades following the Rwandan genocide, only exacerbating the situation. It is right to affirm that the DR Congo is “a paradigm of all that was wrong with post-colonial Africa”¹² in many ways. Therefore, although this dissertation focuses on the DR Congo, its scope expands to postcolonial Sub-Saharan Africa. It brings in the voices of women of the Congo and scholars who address how theology can speak to the postcolonial economic and political conflicts of Sub-Saharan Africa and the ways these conflicts impoverish the peoples.

I expand Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty to address the impoverishment of women in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. I consider two additional factors to the historical ones, including the traditional gender biases, which are accentuated by what I term “biblical illiteracy” and the phenomenon of rape, which is commonly used as a weapon of war in the

⁹ Emmanuel Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 7–11, 250.

¹⁰ “The World’s Worst Places to Be a Woman,” *Amnesty International*, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/the-worlds-worst-places-to-be-a-woman/>.

¹¹ Katongole, *Born From Lament*, 4.

¹² Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 10.

DR Congo. I argue that these two additional factors contribute to what I term “cheap death” of women.

I consider “biblical illiteracy” to be one of the main impoverishing factors, for both men and women. By “biblical illiteracy,” I mean a patriarchal reading and naive interpretation of biblical texts, which becomes harmful to women in the DR Congo. My use of “biblical illiteracy” builds upon the work of José Ngalula, a Congolese religious woman and professor of theology in the DR Congo. Ngalula considers the fact that men and women in the DR Congo project “cultural biases into biblical and magisterial texts”¹³ as a form of cultural poverty. For Ngalula, this projection is harmful to women. I argue that this illiteracy is one of the main factors exacerbating gender biases, which, in turn, worsen women's poverty. However, “biblical illiteracy” is overlooked by Catholic social teaching, especially in its approach to the preferential option for the poor, which “demands that all Christians, the rich and the poor alike, share and live out in action the divine priority for alleviating the suffering of the poor.”¹⁴ The effect of the “biblical illiteracy” in impoverishing women must be considered in Catholic social teaching.

This dissertation claims that all the above factors form a set of unjust structures which work to create “crucified women.” This concept is borrowed from the liberationist theologian, Ignacio Ellacuría, who first termed the concept of “crucified people,”¹⁵ referring to the vast

¹³ Josée Ngalula, “Milestones in Achieving a More Incisive Feminine Presence in the Church of Pope Francis,” in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 31.

¹⁴ Christine E. Gudorf, “Commentary on Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, OFM et al., Second edition (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 334.

¹⁵ Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Crucified People,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 278; Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Crucified People,” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings*

majority of the sufferers of history as the victims of the structures of injustice and sin of the world but also the bearers of the salvation of the world carried on by Jesus. For Ellacuría, the crucified people constitute the “sign of the times,” that the Church has to scrutinize and interpret in light of the Gospel.¹⁶ These signs are “authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings”¹⁷ within the reality of the poor.

Drawing on Jon Sobrino, I claim the need for “crucified women” to live as “resurrected beings.”¹⁸ The latter concept endorses the idea that Jesus' resurrection offers hope, especially for victims. Jesus's resurrection should be experienced in the present; it is a gift granted by God, leading to a life of faith and hope that is actualized in the present but is eschatological. It is this hope, then, that is lifted in the present work. Such hope drives victims and those in solidarity with them, participating in addressing the sin that crucifies the poor.¹⁹

Anthropological poverty and unjust structures obstruct the political participation of Sub-Saharan African women, understood in the context of this dissertation as an “activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making.”²⁰ Political participation highlights the importance of enhancing the agency of the participants. I consider that it is not only a tool allowing citizens to influence government in determining the outcomes necessary

from Mysterium Liberationis, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); Jon Sobrino, *Terremoto, Terrorismo, Barbarie y Utopía: El Salvador, Nueva York, Afganistán*, 1. ed, Colección Teología Latinoamericana, v. 29 (San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 2003), 95–101. The concept of “the crucified people” originally appeared in an article by Ignacio Ellacuría “Discernir el ‘signo’ de los tiempos,” *Diakónia* 17 (1981), p. 58 that Sobrino quotes in the Book *Terremoto, terrorismo, barbarie y utopía*.

¹⁶ Paul VI, “*Gaudium et Spes*,” Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, December 7, 1965, para. 4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 11.

¹⁸ Jon Sobrino, *Christ The Liberator: A View From The Victims* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 12–14, 74–78.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12, 44.

²⁰ Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), 4.

for the well-being of all²¹ but also reflects the participants' right to collaborate "with God in making a better world, more just, and [a] more peaceful place."²² In this sense, political participation enhances the life of "resurrected beings."

Thus, I argue that the political marginalization of women in Sub-Saharan Africa can be alleviated by Christian and African theological ethics of women's dignity. This ethics needs to affirm an interplay between the sacredness of the individual woman's life and the "collective consciousness"²³ of solidarity suggested in African philosophical ethics. This interplay suggests a theopolitics that requires an orthopraxis centered in solidarity with each oppressed woman. This solidarity calls upon the passion of anger—a solidaristic and resistant anger in which women's existence can be significantly ennobled. This African and Christian theological ethic will be constructed from postcolonial feminist theology, especially from the sophiological hermeneutics of liberation.

The theopolitics of female participation will be related to the experiences of women in the mining areas of the DR Congo. It will add what Michael Jaycox calls "cognitive interruption," an intelligible perception that evokes the "social anger" needed to resist and respond to structural injustice politically.²⁴ I argue that since women who suffer from trauma can lose their cognitive ability, the focus of anger in these contexts needs to move from a cognitive dimension to a conative one. In the metaphor of Aquinas, anger involves "kindling of the blood

²¹ Otto Saki, "Linking Political Participation, Democracy, and Human Rights," in *Political Participation in Zimbabwe*, ed. David Kaulemu and African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings (Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe: African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching, 2010), 6.

²² David Kaulemu and African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings, eds., *Political Participation in Zimbabwe* (Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe: African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching, 2010), vii, 5.

²³ Dona Marimba Richards, *Yurugu: An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, Washington, DC: Nkonimfo Publications (Washington, DC: Nkonimfo Publications, 2007), 5.

²⁴ Michael P. Jaycox, "The Civic Virtues of Social Anger: A Critically Reconstructed Normative Ethic for Public Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36, no. 1 (2016): 127, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2016.0008>.

about the heart,”²⁵ a phrase that resonates with my heartbroken reaction to the injustice undergone by women carriers when I was young. This anger is solidaristic and resistant even in the face of death, as will be shown from the example of Sub-Saharan African women.

African male theologians, in general, do not address women's political participation. Female theologians tend to focus more on the related issue of women in the family or the clan. Neither male nor female African theologians, therefore, address the anthropological poverty of women as it is associated with the mining and oil exploitations of the war-zones of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nor do they successfully balance the dignity of the individual with the communal worldview of the African philosophical ethics.

Official Catholic social teachings indeed bring the essential concepts of the dignity, participation of all towards the common good, and solidarity, especially with those who are most vulnerable. However, it does not adequately address women's political participation. Usually, it fails to apply either a “gender lens” (or, a cross-cultural lens that includes Africa) when it speaks of human dignity, authentic humanism, the common good, participation, mutual rights and duties, importance of the family and marriage, etc.

Postcolonial theorists provide an overview of African women's burden in society. Still, they do not adequately address the potential of faith traditions, whether Christian or not, to empower women as agents of their transformation, especially transformation related to anthropological poverty and political participation. The ethic of political participation in this dissertation will, therefore, be constructed from the theological tools drawn from the

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Complete English Edition in Five Volumes (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1920), ST, Ia-IIae, q.22, a.2, ad 3.

perspective of postcolonial theological ethics, liberation theology, feminist theology, African traditional religion, and Catholic social teaching.

2. Overview of Chapters

Chapter One draws on Engelberg Mveng's work to extensively explain the scope of the anthropological poverty of African peoples, which is rooted in slavery and colonization and which continues to expand in the postcolonial period. This chapter claims that Mveng's anthropological poverty, however, is too generalized. It needs to be gendered because women and men have been differently anthropologically impoverished by slavery and colonial practices. This chapter, therefore, discusses how women were doubly impoverished through these historical events, including through the collusion of colonial power and Western Christianity.

Chapter Two explores male African theologians' insights on African traditional religion. Then, it draws on the African proverbs to demonstrate how many African theologians overlook the impoverishment of women, which is accentuated more acutely not only under slavery and colonization but in African traditional and contemporary postcolonial societies. These societies continue to support conventional androcentric gender norms that convey an idea of women's personhood as subordinate or inferior to men.

Chapter Two also builds upon the African philosopher Thaddeus Metz's representation of a communal and harmonious relationship between people in African ethics to suggest a vision of communion centered on solidarity with the marginalized in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Chapter uses examples of contemporary forms of marginalization, including the rape of women in African contexts of conflicts and homosexuality. This chapter argues that this marginalization puts into question the communal-harmonious relationship view of African

ethics. However, Chapter Two also reinforces Metz's claim that when a way of life becomes abusive to any group, it ought to be changed for the sake of solidarity. Who we are and who we become must be shaped by solidarity in such a way that we can no longer accept any form of life that leaves space for marginalization or abuse? To this end, Chapter Two suggests a more horizontal vision of communal-harmonious relationship, as opposed to a vertical one which overlooks the excluded groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapters Three and Four discuss ways of addressing the intermingling of traditional cultural beliefs with Christian androcentric teachings. It also discusses the ways these two worldviews currently act to dampen women's political participation. Chapter Three then provides the first response, suggesting a reversal of a patriarchal reading of African traditions and cultures. This reversal uses a sophiological hermeneutic that discloses the grounds for political participation constituted by the agency of female African mythical and historical figures. I borrow the concept "sophiological" from Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. She states that a feminist sophiological hermeneutic is "one that understands itself as exploring and elaborating the words of Wisdom"²⁶ and "that is free of domination and does not exclude anyone."²⁷ My sophiological reading, therefore, aims at retrieving gender balance in referring to the concept of God as it overflows into the reflective African mythology and in the lives of African women who have been silenced and marginalized by patriarchal and hierarchic structures of domination.

This sophiological reading is coupled with the biblical reading method of narrative criticism, mainly that version suggested by the French, biblical exegete Daniel Marguerat and

²⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 180.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

Yvan Bourquin. Chapter Three explores how African myths and historical figures provide grounds for both individual dignity and collective consciousness, both of which are shattered by the factors entertaining the anthropological poverty of women in Sub-Saharan African contexts of wars and conflicts.

Chapter Four starts by reading Catholic social teaching through the lens of political participation. Although Catholic social teaching assumes equal dignity and equal rights to participate in society for both women and men in general, it includes androcentric claims, especially throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s encyclicals. Thus, they display a view that women are equal in dignity and deserve the same respect as human beings, but during these periods, Church teachings inclined to kyriarchal as well as a patriarchal statement regarding the role of women in society. “Kyriarchy” is a term coined by Schüssler Fiorenza suggesting “the rule of a master, lord, father of emperor”²⁸ and “patriarchy” suggests male domination of women in every sphere of life. Chapter Four maintains that both kyriarchy and patriarchy continue to dampen the political participation of Christian women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Section Two of Chapter Four suggests that the feminist scholars' accounts of the discipleship of equals constitute a second response by which to address the androcentric elements of Catholic social teaching about women's participation in society. The hermeneutics of the discipleship of equals is relevant in two main ways: First, it explores some biblical texts that hinder the equality of men and women, especially in Paul's letters. Beliefs in the inequality of men and women by women themselves are illustrated by a few narratives of educated women of the DR Congo provided in this section to serve as a *locus theologicus*. Secondly, it

²⁸ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 10th-anniversary ed (New York: Crossroad, 1994), xix.

extensively explores texts that affirm the equality of dignity and participation of men and women, grounded in their sacred identity of *Imago Dei* (image of God).

To the account of the discipleship of equals, Chapter Four also provides a narrative criticism of Tabitha (Acts 9:36–41) as an example of how a sophiological reading of women's agency in biblical texts can illuminate the women's political participation that is often obscured by the androcentric accounts taught to women.

Chapter Five, undertaking the same sophiological hermeneutics, builds upon the narratives of women resisting violence to suggest that the practical wisdom revealed therein affirms both the sacredness of the individual and the collective consciousness of solidarity. The chapter demonstrates the knowledge that the women's stories convey and how such knowledge informs the ethics of women's political participation in Sub-Saharan African, especially in the context of the abuse of women's bodies, womanhood, and dignity.

These narratives are used intermittently in two complementary theological frameworks. First, in the frame of the “crucified people” who *se encarga de su realidad*, meaning who being honest with reality and are agents of change. This framework illuminates a grassroots approach to theology and suggests how these women's realities can be understood as a “sign of the times.” Second, the stories are assessed from Emmanuel Katongole's political theology for Africa's perspective, highlighting how women's stories provide “resources and skills to engage... politics from a more determinative account of reality.”²⁹ This account will demonstrate the ways women themselves are a *locus theologicus*.

²⁹ Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa*, The Eerdmans Ekklesia Series (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2011), 4.

Introduction

By engaging with these stories, Chapter Five provides epistemological grounds for a reimagined ethic of political participation by women in contexts of grave abuses of women's rights, war, and a lack of the rule of law. These grounds help address the question: What would a Catholic social ethic of political participation look like if it seriously took the anthropological impoverishment of women of Africa as a dialogue partner?

CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

This chapter builds upon Engelbert Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty and draws from male African theologians' approach to poverty in Africa. It affirms that African women, particularly women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), are anthropologically more impoverished than men. The first section uses postcolonial theories to show how the anthropological poverty of African peoples is deeply rooted in systems of slavery, Western Christianity, and colonial powers. The second section returns how these systems doubly impoverish women. The third section returns to the ethical systems of African traditional religion(s) (ATR), mainly through proverbs, to show how women are also anthropologically impoverished by the African traditions themselves. This chapter concludes by assessing Laurenti Magesa's and John Mbiti's tendency to idealize the African religion(s).

SECTION ONE: COLONIAL POWER AND WESTERN CHRISTIANITY AS THE ROOT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY

Introduction

This section explores how the church absorbed and benefited from the colonial power in many ways that formed the foundation for the anthropological poverty of colonized people. The form of Western Christianity brought to colonized people was limited to "pastoral" and "spiritual" work, without challenging the alienation of the people from their local cultures by the

colonizers.¹ Both Western Christianity and colonial power greatly contributed to containing the African people in a state of total dependence.² Following Mveng, Jean Marc Ela described the collusion between the Church and the colonial states in French colonies³ and how the Gospel was used to justify the oppressive colonial power.⁴ Similarly, Katongole portrays the reinforcement of anthropological poverty in the Congo by missionaries.⁵ Both Ela and Katongole demonstrate the role played by the missionaries' educational system in teaching the story of Africa as a 'dark continent,' one without history, with pagan traditions and social structures.

1.1.1. The Scope of Mveng's Anthropological Pauperization as Rooted in the Slave Trade

Engelberg Mveng proceeds from the history of slavery, colonization, and postcolonial domination of African peoples. Pointing to the anthropological "annihilation"⁶ caused by this history, he advocates for the rehabilitation of the humanity of African people. Mveng's thoughts on anthropological poverty are situated within the framework of the theology of liberation in black Africa. Aligning with black African theology, his intention is to retrieve the dignity and the cultural identity of the black person.⁷

Mveng defines anthropological poverty as the dehumanization of the person—one is deprived not only of what one has or of what one is doing but also of what one is.

¹ Engelbert Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985).

² Ibid., 207.

³ Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 20.

⁴ Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African* (Maryknoll, N.Y. : Orbis Books, 1988), 111–12.

⁵ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 70.

⁶ Hermann-Habib Kibangou, *La vision mvengienne de la paupérisation anthropologique: une piste de réflexion philosophique sur le ntù* (Saint-Denis: Éditions Edilivre AParis, 2011), 60.

⁷ Leonardo Boff, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and James Aitken Gardiner, eds., *Theologies of the Third World: Convergences and Differences*, Concilium 199 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 24.

Anthropological poverty is also “what happens when a people are forced to live (survive) within a culture based on a world view which is oppressive to their ethos.”⁸ They are put in a dehumanizing circumstance like that of bringing African peoples as slaves “in chains, like a horse, a cow or a chicken.”⁹ Anthropologist Dona Richards, also named Marimba Ani, understands “ethos” as a unique spirit or spiritual being that results from a shared cultural history.¹⁰ Anthropological poverty therefore implies that material, sociological, cultural, and religious or spiritual poverty intermingle.

Material poverty implies a deprivation of the means of subsistence, which includes economic poverty. Sociological poverty, by contrast, suggests that one loses the social milieu that constitutes a source of human equilibrium. One suffers the loss of those human ties that help one stand straight in struggles.¹¹ For Mveng, those resources and competencies which were provided by the traditional milieu were lost by the treatment of slavery and colonization, which led Africans to what he calls a *déséquilibre nerveux* (a nervous imbalance or some kind of mental illness).¹² Affective poverty can push people to offer themselves to exploitation, prostitution, and trade of their personhood.¹³ Cultural poverty occurs when one comes to ignore one’s proper traditional heritage, creating a sense of emptiness that leads to the search for value from outside one’s moral spheres.¹⁴ It refers to an impoverishment of values and becomes the denial of oneself as one imitates their new model for a valuable life. Such imitation brings with

⁸ Dona Richards, “Let The Circle Be Unbroken : The Implications of African-American Spirituality,” in *1st Pre-Colloquium of the 3rd World Festival of Negro Arts : “The World Dimensions of the Community of Black Peoples,”* vol. 1st and 2nd Trimester (Présence Africaine Editions, 1981), 250, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24350836>.

⁹ Ibid., 257.

¹⁰ Ibid., 250.

¹¹ Mveng, *L’Afrique dans l’église: paroles d’un croyant*, 81.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

it desolation and misery because of the impossibility of appropriating the foreign values and the struggle to return to the traditional values. This accompanies a consciousness of one's difficulty in taking a position, which creates pessimism and infantilism, as often observed in people called "les évolués."¹⁵

Dona Richards argues that culture is potentially political; destroying one's cultural system equates to weakening one's political power because cultural identification is a basis for political consciousness.¹⁶ She uses the concept of "cultural violence," which occurs when Africans internalize the idea that they are destined or created to be controlled by Western countries—the ontological definition of Africans applied by Western ideology—to the effect of dampening their self-determination.¹⁷ Richards also refers to Franz Boas who argued that "cultural inferiority" which is "Eurocentrically defined" leads to "self-hatred and self-denial among the Africans."¹⁸ This cultural inferiority kills not merely the body but the soul and the will—it breaks down people's spiritual strength and enslaves them in their own home.¹⁹ Destruction of the ideological structures of Africans, therefore, was worse than the material destruction perpetrated under colonialism because it left the colonized without the foundations to form rational defenses.²⁰

Richards adds that slavery and colonialism set up mechanisms that prevent Africans from the realization of their collective consciousness will.²¹ Finally, religious poverty is the loss of the ancient religious systems and the ethics and worldview that sustained it. It is also a loss of

¹⁵ Ibid., 82 [Emphasis mine]:Les évolués literally means "the advanced" referring to people who live according to the European Standard and culture while living in Congo.

¹⁶ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 6.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 408.

¹⁹ Ibid., 429.

²⁰ Ibid., 427.

²¹ Ibid., 24.

rituals with their aesthetic, affective, socially and metaphysically enriching values.²² By the metaphysical values of the rituals, Mveng refers to the search for the “last ends,” the meaning and causes of the rituals that transcend the material world and life.

Consequently, anthropological poverty implies a situation in which

persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions... they sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or interior goods or possessions but strikes at the very being, essence, and dignity of the human person.²³

Anthropological poverty is, therefore, a political problem that intermingles with forms of spiritual and moral poverty that are as devastating as the material.²⁴ It deprives people from believing in their capacity as human beings to do well and build a better life.

Habib Kibangou's thoughts on Mveng's vision of pauperization stress the larger institutional and international factors in anthropological poverty, which are helpful to understand the scope of this concept. For Kibangou, Mveng's concept of anthropological pauperization takes place on five levels:

The first one is structural impoverishment. It is rooted in the historical circumstances of colonization and political independence. It alienates the essence of state structures in such a way that they continue to reflect the machinery of colonization in a postcolonial era. Pre-colonial African empires, kingdoms, or dynasties are erased and replaced by European states' organizational structures.²⁵ The second form of pauperization is pseudo-philanthropic impoverishment, implemented by a set of mechanisms that maintain colonized people in a state

²² Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 81.

²³ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 1994, 157.

²⁴ Ibid., 155–56.

²⁵ Kibangou, *La vision mvengienne de la paupérisation anthropologique*, 61–64.

of dependence. In the name of philanthropy, Africans are kept prisoners of subsidies and other forms of assistance.²⁶ The third kind is the corruptive pauperization characterized by the politics of greed and plundering of resources not only by colonizers, but by the African leaders themselves. The fourth form is that of national debt of various African countries to Western countries or the European Monetary Fund that maintains Africans in a kind of economic slavery. Mveng sees this fourth category as overwhelming, shattering, and oppressive. The fifth and last category is that of cultural pauperization, which hinges on Africans ignoring their history and culture. Two examples illustrate this. First, almost all state Constitutions in Africa are written in European languages inherited from former colonizers which are not understood by the majority in several countries. Second, virtually all school manuals come from Western countries. This implies a loss of essential cultural and spiritual values.²⁷

All of the layers of pauperization put colonized people at the margins. They create, for the Africans, an existence void of genuine humanity. Consequently, for Mveng, black Africans live existentially alienated from themselves and relate to others from within this diminished existence.²⁸

The slave trade began the process of anthropological poverty that Mveng calls “anthropological annihilation,”²⁹ a process that gradually enforced the belief that the Africans were lesser beings.³⁰ Richards reinforces this point in saying:

The trade in African lives and the enslavement of African beings by Europeans constituted the most thoroughly destructive act ever to be perpetrated by one group of people upon another. That is so because of a combination of factors which created a unique historical circumstance. To begin with, within the setting of our

²⁶ Ibid., 65.

²⁷ Ibid., 67–71.

²⁸ Ibid., 71–72.

²⁹ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 85–87.

³⁰ Kibangou, *La vision mvengienne de la paupérisation anthropologique*, 55.

enslavement, the ideology of white supremacy was systematically reinforced by a set of interlocking mechanisms and patterns which functioned to deny the validity of an African humanity.³¹

Richards also adds that, “the system and circumstance of slavery in New Europe sought to destroy African value, African self-image and self-concept. The African universe was disrupted. It became dysfunctional as the sense of order that it offered, dissolved.”³²

In the African slave trade, millions of people were sold and sent to America. They were likened to beasts and exploited over three centuries in plantations of the so-called new world. The African slave trade varied over time and included the slavery that was practiced among Africans themselves in complicity with the Europeans slave traders.³³ To illustrate, slavery in the Kingdom of Kongo³⁴ included the slavery performed by the European and Arab slave traders who captured hundreds of thousands of slaves (men and women) from the kingdom of Kongo alone. By the 1530s, thousands of slaves were shipped as merchandise from the Congo River overseas. In the 1600s, fifteen thousand slaves were shipped every year from the

³¹ Richards, “Let The Circle Be Unbroken : The Implications of African-American Spirituality,” 257.

³² Ibid., 258.

³³ Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 1st ed (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 215.

³⁴The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Kongo: Historical Kingdom, Africa,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, January 15, 2018), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kongo-historical-kingdom-Africa>. [emphasize that]: “Kongo, former kingdom in west-central Africa, located south of the Congo River (present-day Angola and Democratic Republic of the Congo). According to traditional accounts, the kingdom was founded by Lukeni lua Nimi about 1390. Originally, it was probably a loose federation of small polities, but, as the kingdom expanded, conquered territories were integrated as a royal patrimony. Soyo and Mbata were the two most powerful provinces of the original federation; other provinces included Nsundi, Mpangu, Mbamba, and Mpemba. The capital of the kingdom was Mbanza Kongo. The capital and its surrounding area were densely settled—more so than other towns in and near the kingdom. This allowed the manikongo (king of Kongo) to keep close at hand the manpower and supplies necessary to wield impressive power and centralize the state.” See also: Magloirer Mpembi Nkosi, *Kimpa Vita: la fille de Ne Kongo* (Paris: Anibwé, 2012), 277. [Mpembi Nkosi traces the origine of the Kingdom of Kongo from the people named Kongo who originally came from the dispersion of black people from the Nile Valley of Egypt into Africa. Such a dispersion occurs when the XXVIIth Persian dynasty was installed in Egypt in 525. The Kingdom of Kongo was shared as a piece of cake among France, Belgium, and Portugal in 1885 by the Berlin Conference].

kingdom. Many of those who were exported to the Americas came from the Kongo.³⁵ There are archival records and archeological evidence tracing the presence of earliest slaves from Kongo in the United States back to the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The three regions of the United States which are known to have received a significant number of Kongo peoples are “the Georgia and South Carolina Low country, Louisiana, and the Chesapeake Bay region.”³⁶

Slave hunting was performed by Arab and European slave-traders in complicity with local chiefs. Twenty-five francs per person was the usual price of a slave around the years 1897–1900. All men and women of Kongo witnessed slave traders’ atrocities. Sick persons were thrown alive into rivers.³⁷ Babies were abandoned in the roads and forests to die or to be eaten by animals just because they prevented enslaved mothers from being able to carry foodstuffs, which included smoked human flesh and cooking pots for the slave-traders. Men and women were tied up—six, eight, or ten in number—with cords. They knew that the life of a goat was more valued than theirs and that they were to be killed if they were not strong enough to carry a goat for the slave masters.³⁸ Women or men were taken by canoe across rivers to white men’s towns to be sold and given religious instructions.

³⁵ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, 1st Mariner Books ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 9–11.

³⁶ Susan Cooksey, Robin Poynor, and Hein Vanhee, “Kongo Across the Waters. Exhibition Preview,” *African Arts* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 79.

³⁷ Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 128–31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

Mveng underlines the fact that the slave trade was massively the doing of Christian Europe, looking for gold for the benefit of the Christian kings.³⁹ King Afonso I's⁴⁰ letter to the king of Portugal João III in 1526 is illustrative:

Each day the traders are kidnapping our people—children of this country, sons of our nobles and vassals, even people of our own family... This corruption and depravity are so widespread that our land is entirely depopulated... We need in this kingdom only priests and schoolteachers, and no merchandise, unless it is wine and flour for Mass... It is our wish that this kingdom not be a place for the trade or transport of slaves.⁴¹

King Afonso's statement shows how slavery worked side by side with Western Christianity to which King Afonso was obviously converted. The leaders worked side by side with slave traders and Western Christianity is another factor of the anthropological pauperization of African peoples. For Mveng, even if the slave trade happened in the past, it is still happening in many ways and threatening contemporary African society more than material poverty.⁴² As the political scientist William Faulkner put it, "the past is never dead, it is not even past."⁴³ Indeed, this dissertation will show the ways many abused of women in contemporary war-zones in Sub-Saharan Africa are similar to those of those of women over slavery and colonial period.

The second historical event that founded the anthropological poverty of African people is colonization. For Mveng, it is in the collusion between colonial powers and Western Christianity that the anthropological poverty of colonized people came to be reinforced. On the one hand, he posits that African people were held in total dependence and "annihilated" by

³⁹ Ibid, 204.

⁴⁰ Affonso Ist. was the king of the Kingdom of Kongo who gained the throne since 1506 for nearly 40 years.

⁴¹ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 133.

⁴² Engelbert Mveng and B. L. Lipawing, *Théologie, libération et cultures africaines: dialogue sur l'anthropologie négro-africaine*, Essai (Yaoundé [Cameroun], : Paris: C.L.E. ; Présence africaine, 1996), 65.

⁴³ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 135.

both the colonial power and church. Colonization denied Africans not only what is today called human rights but also their humanity. The marks of such a denial last even in the postcolonial period.⁴⁴ For Katongole, the future of Christianity in Africa will depend on its ability to provide Christianity with the resources to face this social history.⁴⁵ Therefore, the proposal of an ethics of political participation is to be inscribed within the quest for such resources.

Katongole recalls that King Leopold's reign in the Congo in the late nineteenth century did coincide with the work and spread of Christianity within the region. Despite the valuable work of building churches and schools of missionaries, "Christianity by and large remained in the background of King Leopold's civilization mission."⁴⁶ The missionaries accepted a Western view of Christianity as a religion whose proper area of competency was "pastoral" and "spiritual." Missionaries could receive the dying children and people in their hospitals and schools following the abuses of the King, and yet continue to pray for the great King Leopold II. Katongole considers that "the root of the problem [which explains the challenges faced by Africa, including poverty] is that Christianity in Africa has failed to become a way of life, but has remained a spiritual affair."⁴⁷

According to the American author, journalist, and lecturer Adam Hochschild, missionaries acted as observers on the battlefield.⁴⁸ He illustrates this using the words of a nun in 1892–1893, describing how only 62 of 108 schoolgirls survived a forced march to the state colony in Boma (western DR Congo). The mother superior who was supposed to receive and attend to the girls wrote to the colonial state official that "Several of the little girls were so sickly on

⁴⁴ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 203.

⁴⁵ Cited by Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *What They Didn't Say: A Book of Misquotations* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 86.

⁴⁶ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 203.

⁴⁷ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

their arrival that... our good sisters couldn't save them, but all had the happiness of receiving Holy Baptism; they are now little angels praying for our great king.”⁴⁹ This statement suggests that pastoral and religious works had to be done even if such works endorsed the dehumanization of the native people.

In fact, in general, the Christian church did not condemn slavery as such; it only condemned the export of slaves to powers or places that were in hands of “heretics.”⁵⁰ To illustrate, Thornton mentions that in July 7th of 1708, a Capuchin⁵¹ priest named Lorenzo stood before a multitude of Africans to be sent into slavery to Brazil, and “he prayed for good luck on the voyage.”⁵² As long as they were not sent to heretic islands, it was alright. He even considered that the inhuman conditions under which the slaves were shipped were a means for them “to extirpate their sins and acquire great merits for their soul.”⁵³ Thus, missionaries embraced a Christianity that sought to alleviate actual suffering without questioning the ways such suffering came to be.

Ela confirms the view of a Christian mission oriented toward pastoral works without challenging the ways native people were dehumanized. Missionaries played a great role in building churches and schools with colonial government's funds and raised from them other funds for evangelization. The idea that native people knew nothing and had to be almost

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁰ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 172.

⁵¹ The order of Capuchin is a 16th century reform of the Franciscan Order, recognized by the Church as a legitimate branch of the Order of Friars Minor founded by Saint Francis of Assisi. The Capuchins are known to have been one of the leaders of the counter Reformation and for taking the Gospel the end of the earth.

⁵² Ibid., 135.

⁵³ John Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684 - 1706* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 102.

recreated as human beings gave credibility to the myth of the inferiority and dependence of black African people.⁵⁴ As Richards explains:

[It is a European] ideology dictated that they create “inferior objects” in order for their self-concepts to function “positively” within the context of their value-system. “Functioning positively” meant relating as “superiors” to “inferior” beings. If they could not make themselves feel superior, they were nothing: they were defeated in terms of their own ethos and world-view in which pleasure was derived only from power and control. Europeans created an inhuman circumstance in which to enslave African humanity.⁵⁵

While Ela recognizes that missionaries did contribute to educating African leaders so that they could resist colonial abuses, he also argues that the nineteenth century Europeans continued to believe they were to remake the inferior black race in their white image, which they believed was a “perfect specimen of humanity.”⁵⁶ They thought of themselves as the “guides and tutors of the inferior races.”⁵⁷ Richards reinforces this point, saying that Europeans compelled Africans to admit an inferior rank and to consider that they were fairly outcast.⁵⁸ They did all this through pastoral and spiritual works. Meanwhile, their missions in French colonies enjoyed the protection and prerogatives of colonial civil authorities and acquired vast domains for their works as we can still see today. Ela illustrates this with the example of Archbishop Prosper Augouard (1852–1911), who “was decorated not only as a mission founder, but also as a servant of the French presence in the middle Congo.”⁵⁹ Thus, for many years, Christianity was a religion of the West that propagated a manner of being Christian that denied the integration of local cultures and failed to challenge the very root and continued mechanisms of

⁵⁴ Thornton, *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony*, 204.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 206.

⁵⁶ Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 17–19.

⁵⁷ Richards, “Let The Circle Be Unbroken : The Implications of African-American Spirituality,” 257.

⁵⁸ Ela, *African Cry*, 21.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

anthropological poverty. Thus, Ela argues, “Africans must be given the opportunity to speak their faith with the words of their languages and the signs of their cultures.”⁶⁰

I.1.2. Anthropological Poverty and the Collusion of Western Christianity-Colonial Power.

The allotment of the continent by the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) also strengthened the dependence and the view of African people as inferior beings. It constituted one of the many ways through which the anthropological poverty of the African continent was reinforced. For example, “following negotiations among European powers in the 1880s, the Kongo region was divided among three colonizing states—Belgium, Portugal, and France—which further monopolized the economic and political development of the region.” Thus, this allotment separated the people according to colonizers as slavery did,⁶¹ reinforcing their impoverishment.

The modern DR Congo is itself an invention of the West dating back to the Berlin Conference. As a result, most of the people who make up the modern DR Congo have ancestors in neighboring countries. This is the case for the Bakongo community, including Beatrice Kimpa Vita,⁶² who was born in Angola, but whose familial legacy is legitimately claimed by Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, the DR Congo, and Angola, each of which has a piece of the old kingdom. This is one of the reasons why my postcolonial theology, even though it tries to focus on the Congo, must go beyond the current geographical borders of the Congo. It would be anachronistic to use the current Congolese borders to define an era prior to these borders. For the same reason, my audience too is broader than the DR Congo.

⁶⁰ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 429.

⁶¹ Ela, *African Cry*, 22.

⁶² [Emphasis mine]: One of the women’s leaders whose agency and spirituality will be explored in the third chapter.

The impoverishment of African colonized people was also reinforced by the story of colonization that depicted Europeans as having good will and Africans, on the other hand, as unfit for liberation. This is seen in the proclamation of colonizers like Jules Ferry, a spokesperson of Left Republicanism in France, that Africans are childlike and inferior.⁶³ Ferry argues that

Il faut dire ouvertement que les races supérieures ont un droit vis-à-vis des races inférieures. Je répète qu'il y a pour les races supérieures un droit, parce qu'il y a un devoir pour elles. Elles ont le devoir de civiliser les races inférieures (28 juillet 1885).⁶⁴

Missionaries themselves were caught in this belief of superiority of the white race, as they interpreted what happened in Berlin as good for the native people of Africa, a philanthropic campaign and moral duty of a “more human” race over the “less human” one of the dark worlds. Missionaries accompanied French and Belgian flags to the borders of Congo. It is true that missionaries gave to Africa a horrifying image of itself.⁶⁵

Without directly speaking to the concept of anthropological poverty, both Ela and Katongole implicitly reinforce Mveng's insights by showing the role played by the missionaries' educational system in teaching the story of Africa as a 'dark continent,' considering its traditions and social structures as pagan. For Katongole, missionaries and colonial masters were like birds of the same plumage, supporting each other's work, and not easily distinguishable.⁶⁶ The ontological and infrastructural frameworks they constructed in

⁶³ Ibid., 119.

⁶⁴ Cooksey, Poynor, and Vanhee, “Kongo Across the Waters. Exhibition Preview,” 82. Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 204. Translated as: “It must be said openly that the superior races have a right vis-à-vis the inferior races. I repeat that there is a right for the superior races, because there is a duty for them. They have a duty to civilize the inferior races (July 28, 1885).”

⁶⁵ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 207.

⁶⁶ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 129.

colonial Africa continues to characterize the politics and economy of post-colonial African nation-states.

For Mveng, missionaries intended to be charitable in works regarding schools, catechesis, hospitals, leprosy colonies, etc. However, they did not challenge the perversion of the colonial systems nor did they understand that the colonization system was a work of anthropological pauperization and enforced servitude. He cites bishops, such as Carret in Cameroon, who did not hesitate to enroll as propagandists of the colonial system. He also refers to the bishop Augouard in the Congo who praised the colonial systems without discretion and to Cardinal Lavigerie who discretely negotiated the occupation of Africa by the colonial power in the name of civilization.⁶⁷

Thus, the alienation of African cultures developed in many ways under the collusion of the colonial power and the church. The first way is through what Mveng calls the politics of *table rase* (or, the throwing into flames of the treasures of traditional African art after many local practices including religious ceremonies, traditional medicine, and artisanal techniques were coded as evil or *diableries*).⁶⁸ Mveng reflects on the obstinacy of missionaries in considering every African practice as pagan and calls such obstinacy a direct aggression against traditional culture. He concludes that the *table rase* practice led to the crisis of African identity or crisis of depersonalization.⁶⁹ This *table rase* is also pointed out by Musa Dube when she references *The Matabele Mission*, edited by J.P. Wallis, saying that “the habits and modes of thinking have been broken up,” to prepare for the seed of the Christian God.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 207.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁰ Musa W. Dube Shomanah, ed., *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 2 (Atlanta, GA : Geneva: Society of Biblical Literature ; WCC Publications, 2001), 64.

The second way through which alienation occurs is through schools and catechesis. To illustrate, missionaries who landed in Congo dedicated time to study African languages and traditions in order to transmit the Christian message in schools and catechesis. Such a transmission totally ignored the traditional cultural patrimony of Africa. Missionaries who worked in Cameroon, Gabon, Togo, Dahomey, Cabinda, Uganda, Tanganyika, and elsewhere followed the same scheme and edited books on grammar, dictionaries, school manuals, and journals along with the sacred texts. They also edited books of prayers and catechesis that they used in schools built by colonial powers.⁷¹ The same documents that were used to teach European children were transposed inorganically onto African peoples without considering the context within which they were supposed to be received. These methods of tutelage did not consider the local cultures that could help form African Christians. Rather, they destroyed them. For example, the main task of missionaries in Benin, Congo, and Sierra-Leone since the sixteenth century was to go after the so called “fetishes”⁷² and make people get rid of them.⁷³

For Richards, “cultural violence” was the work of the collusion of colonial power and Christianity. Christianity focused on salvation of the individual in contrast to the communalistic African worldview. Children, in entering schools, cut ties with their traditions and rites of initiation that were considered backward, heathen, and devilish. They cut ties with all institutions that gave them a sense of safety and identity. They were forced to change their names and to be docile, humble, and obedient to their colonial masters. They were pressed to

⁷¹ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 73.

⁷² See Vincent MULAGO GWA CIKALA M., *La religion traditionnelle des bantu et leur vision du monde*, p. 13 : “African religion has been designated by the term fetishism. Vincent Mulago, a Congolese theologian (Kinshasa), in his book *La religion traditionnelle des Bantu et leur vision du monde*, Mulago means by Fetishism “all non-Christian worship; it would be according to Lalande, “the use and worship of fetishes, that is to say, small material objects considered as the incarnation or at least as the correspondence of a spirit and consequently as possessing a magical power.”

⁷³ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 74.

depreciate African languages, speak European ones, and imitate and value European behavior and cultures more than their own.⁷⁴ Concerning the alienation of local cultures, Katongole argues that “all local history was devalued as “folklore,” “animism,” “paganism,” “barbarism,” and a host of other “isms.” They were considered “retrogressive tribalism” and it was taken for granted that the project of colonization would bring about “civilization.”⁷⁵ Hochschild reinforces Mveng’s view of colonial schools as vehicles of cultural annihilation. He explains that in Leopold’s Congo, “state colonies were the only state-funded schools for Africans”⁷⁶ and technical schools of Catholic missionaries were used to train personnel for colonial industrial companies. Missionaries had to prepare native people that the colonial powers needed.⁷⁷ Thus, missionaries and the colonial schools opened up a future crisis of identity from which the African continent is still suffering until today.⁷⁸

In my view, colonial schools in collusion with missionaries’ education opened up what Mveng calls pseudo-philanthropic pauperization and economic slavery. They built a cultural scheme of education that created domination and dependence that continues today. The concept of *Extraverti* is a French word. It means something turned outward. It includes the politics of “table rase,” indicating that cultures are turned toward sources that are external to their inheritance. Schools provided an education that deported the colonized outside of themselves. Despite the high number of students who graduate every year in different educational programs, the DR Congo still depends on European funds to improve people’s

⁷⁴ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 428.

⁷⁵ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 67.

⁷⁶ Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 135.

⁷⁷ Mveng, *L’Afrique dans l’église: paroles d’un croyant*, 76.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

living conditions. Besides, the politics of *table rase*, schools, and catechesis were not the sole tools through which collusion between the colonial state and church came about.

The third way through which alienation took place was employment into colonial factories of some natives already educated by missionaries. In the mid-nineteenth century, colonial governments took interest in missionary schools and associated them into their works of colonization. In the case of the Congo, Leopold, king of Belgium, sumptuously subsidized the Catholic schools and “sometimes used [his] financial power to deploy priests, almost as if they were soldiers, to areas where he wanted to strengthen his influence.”⁷⁹ Some bishops’ correspondence illustrates this, praising the work of missionaries in teaching the native people to read and write, and to work in colonial factories.⁸⁰ This third way displays the ways the corruptive dimension of pauperization of Africans came to be reinforced in post-colonial era. Such a pauperization is well described by Katongole, Jason K. Stearns, and Hochschild.

Katongole argues that parts of Africa continue to function under the scheme of colonial practices of alienation and under the “same law of plunder and greed.” The actors have changed, but the characters remain unchanged.⁸¹ As Thomas Sankara⁸² adds, “In essence, colonial society and neocolonial society differed not at all. The colonial administration was replaced by a neocolonial administration identical to it in every respect...”⁸³ Regarding the

⁷⁹ Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 134.

⁸⁰ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 1994, 154.

⁸¹ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 15.

⁸² Carina Ray, “Thomas Sankara President of Burkina Faso,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed February 15, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Sankara> “Thomas Sankara, (born December 21, 1949, Yako, Upper Volta [now Burkina Faso]—died October 15, 1987, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso), military officer and proponent of Pan-Africanism who was installed as president of Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso) in 1983 after a military coup. He held that position until 1987, when he was killed during another coup.”

⁸³ Thomas Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-1987*, 2nd ed (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2007), 35.

killing and plundering, a good illustration of Sankara's statement is the Congo's most recent decimation of over five to eight million people since the Rwandan genocide. For Katongole, "the entire project of the civilization of the Congo was tied up with the rubber economy."⁸⁴

Scenes of scrambling and killing in the Congo were described by Stearns who stated that,

In 1885, during the scramble to divide Africa among colonial powers, King Leopold II of Belgium claimed the country as his personal fiefdom. He set up the Congo Free State, a private enterprise, and during the rubber boom of the 1890s the country became a key source of latex for car and bicycle tires. Colonial officers created a draconian system of forced labor during which they killed or mutilated hundreds of thousands and pushed millions of others to starvation or death from disease.⁸⁵

They are also described through some songs of laments recorded by a Swedish missionary:

We are tired of living under this tyranny
We cannot endure that our women and children are taken away
And dealt with by the white savages
We shall make war...
We know we shall die, but we want to die
We want to die.⁸⁶

Katongole concludes that the famous dictator-killers of some African modern states display the colonial plundering and killing mindset. To understand the current political actors, one needs to locate them in the social history of colonialism.⁸⁷ The Congo is like a ghost, for it "continues to hold Africa in its enchanted grip—a grip made more horrific and inescapable by its invisibility."⁸⁸ Such understanding of the history of colonialism calls upon that of anthropological poverty as developed by Mveng, and explains how the postcolonial stories of

⁸⁴ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 12.

⁸⁵ Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, 6–7.

⁸⁶ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 172–73.

⁸⁷ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 12.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

Congo and of many other African countries remain the same, those of a “‘magnificent African cake,’ a feast to be consumed.”⁸⁹

The fourth type of alienation occurred through the participation of both Catholics and Protestant missionaries in the Commission for the Protection of the Natives established by King Leopold. This commission did not have the freedom, consciousness, or the means to report abuses of native people. The only task it was able to perform was merely to inform the state authorities in European cities about the abuses in the colonies.⁹⁰

The fifth form of alienation arose through missionary work with the chiefs and political leaders at very local levels as well as more broadly. Some of the chiefs, once baptized, made Christianity the religion of entire countries. In the Congo, local leaders who became pastors became themselves partisans of a total rupture with local practices. They preached a Christianity that culminated with Westernization, with the result that new Christians were obliged to take on European behaviors, speak English or French, go to European schools, dress as white people, and practice European medicine and hygiene.⁹¹

Sixth, the colluding missionary-colonial state is also displayed in the so-called texts of *le regime dit d'indigénat* in French colonies until the conference of Brazzaville in 1944. Such a regime is a perfect example of the ways the colonial system struck at the very being, essence, and human dignity of the colonized. The *indigénat* translates to the “Native Code.”⁹² This code of law was applied to colonial subjects and lasted nearly sixty years before being abolished in

⁸⁹ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 169.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 174.

⁹¹ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 76–77.

⁹² Gregory Mann, “What Was the Indigénat? The ‘Empire of Law’ in French West Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 03 (November 2009): 335, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853709990090>.

1947.⁹³ It was colonialism's most important, severe punishment toolkit and provided legal justification of the punishments. It included many dehumanizing punishments such as: (1) Making men and women spend days and nights in rivers and lakes until they drown. (2) Stuffing several recalcitrant taxpayers into small dwellings in which they would die, suffocating. (3) Imprisoning and killing men and women who were accused of a bad attitude when it came to paying taxes. Some were jailed in conditions that led them to die of cerebral hemorrhage. The *indigénat* was not only a set of sanctions, but also the colonial power's state of being in French colonial regimes.⁹⁴ Missionaries, in general, did not stand against such a regime. On the contrary they were ready to baptize those who were dying when it was time.

In Leopold's rubber system, the king's soldiers' commander performed unimaginable atrocities the extent to which the identity and life of the colonized were reduced to nothing. They cut off hundreds and thousands of hands of native people—men, women, and children—to prove how many were killed⁹⁵ and to prove that cartridges had not been wasted.⁹⁶ They wrapped people alive in a net attached to a stone and threw them into the river.⁹⁷ Any human being, man and woman, who is exposed to such dehumanizing treatment can truly be destroyed.

The *indigénat* regime created an overwhelming state of anthropological impoverishment for those under it, and for future generations who heard about it. The fitting concept to describe what can happen after experiencing such atrocity is that of erasing one's existence. It is an

⁹³ Ibid., 333.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 336.

⁹⁵ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 165.

⁹⁶ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 57.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Richards, *Yurugu: An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 413.

anthropological destruction. For Mveng, inhumane treatment by the colonizers destroyed the Africans' traditional security system. It created a double complex, dependence and insecurity, which in turn led to poverty and denouement.⁹⁸ Several resistances to such dehumanizing treatment were counted in the Congo. They include Simon Kimbangu's foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth before he was jailed and killed in prison, and the revolt of the Batetela people.⁹⁹

Before concluding this section, it is important to acknowledge that the relationship between missionaries and colonial states was not always one of collusion.¹⁰⁰ In some colonies, missionaries diverged from the colonial power. Hochschild refers to a Swedish Baptist missionary, E.V. Sjöblom, who continually and forcefully criticized King Leopold in the late 1890s and published details on the plundering of the Congo's rubber. He delivered speeches denouncing the terrors around Congo's rubber, some of which were published in the Swedish press in 1896.¹⁰¹ A second example is that of the Congolese youth, converted to Christianity, Isidore Bakanja. He was killed in 1909 by his white colonial master for praying the rosary. Bakanja's master did not want to hear about the Christian faith and wanted to stop him practicing the Christian religion.¹⁰²

Even though the collusion of missionary-colonial power was a general trend, it should not be generalized to all and every single missionary. For years, some missionaries were helpless witnesses, but at some points they did denounce the atrocities of the Belgian Congo, providing

⁹⁸ Mveng, *L'Afrique dans l'église: paroles d'un croyant*, 81.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁰⁰ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 129.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰² Jean Olwen Maynard and Catholic Truth Society (Great Britain), *Isidore Bakanja: Young Martyr of the Congo* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2001).

pictures of devastated villages, severed hands, and children with missing hands and feet.¹⁰³ Many were among those who led what Stearns calls “the first international human rights campaign,” to stop the brutality of colonial officers who killed hundreds of thousands of people in the Congo in the 1890s.¹⁰⁴

Anthropological poverty and alienation from African cultures continued in the postcolonial period in many ways. Mveng argues that the state of dependence and the view of Africans as inferior beings were maintained through neocolonial mechanisms like the concept of development and underdevelopment and the structural monetary debt. He acknowledges that in many African countries, material poverty removes humane conditions and dignity and reduces people to the condition of animals. Most importantly, such poverty has been accepted by Africans themselves. As he puts it,

In accepting the notion of underdevelopment, we condemn ourselves to a state of inferiority, which serves to justify the activity of those who enslave and dominate us... [and want us to believe] we are inferior beings. We hold a position beneath their level of development, below the normal condition of human beings living in dignity. At any rate, this is the worldview of our oppressors.¹⁰⁵

Kibangou supports Mveng, explaining that, in neocolonialism, anthropological poverty is linked to financial debt¹⁰⁶ as manifested through structural adjustment and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries’ (HIPC’s) initiatives.¹⁰⁷ In addition to structural poverty, African

¹⁰³ Wyatt MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 191.

¹⁰⁴ Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 1994, 154.

¹⁰⁶ Herman-Habib Kibangou, “La pauperisation anthropologique : variations conceptuelles dans les publications de Mveng,” in *Engelbert Mveng: chantre de la libération du Muntu. Relecture plurielle de son œuvre*, ed. François-Xavier Akono (Yaoundé, Cameroun: Pucac, 2014), 56, 58.

¹⁰⁷ The HIPC is “an international debt relief mechanism that provides special assistance to the world’s poorest countries. It was launched at the G7 summit in Lyon, France in 1996 following a proposal from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), December 14, 2005,” see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:r12402>.

societies are subjected to “annihilation” and subjugation by being deprived of both political and economic sovereignty, impoverished, and reduced to a state of indebtedness, begging, and possessing neither means nor powers.¹⁰⁸ They are obliged to prostrate themselves to industrialized countries and the International Monetary Fund. Overwhelmed by debt, they agree to comply with conditions that render them poorer.

Other structures of dependence include the power industry and its factories, which need the raw material—the third world’s gold, uranium, oil, and coltan, which produce political poverty and misery. They make the native peoples feel like strangers in their own land. They dispose of the resources belonging to the native peoples, as if they belong to the rest of the world and not to themselves. For Mveng, “nothing escapes this systematic, universal commandeering of resources, neither our states nor our human communities or, least at all, individuals.”¹⁰⁹ Its “domination deforms not only politics but also language-logos itself—and those who utter it.”¹¹⁰ Colonial powers affect not only the external limits of the globe, but also the scope of subjectivity,¹¹¹ nailing one into a kind of poverty that affects one’s very being.

I.1.3. On the Critiques of Mveng’s Anthropological Poverty

The anthropologist Alexander Bazié (1997) criticized Mveng’s use of anthropological poverty for its focus on the annihilation of the very being of Africans. He argues that there is a problem with the concept itself. Bazié considers that even if we grant that such a poverty deeply touches the very being of Africans, it cannot be said that it irremediably corrupts their essence in such

¹⁰⁸ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 1994, 157–58.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁰ Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2004), 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 161.

a way that makes the colonized African a different species (Bazié 1997, 102 n. 342). According to Bazié, if dignity is truly lost, then the individual is no longer a human. For him, inner worth may be denied to the person, but he/she will still have it.¹¹²

René Heyer,¹¹³ in turn, adds that Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty is contextualized. Heyer distinguishes anthropological pauperization from human poverty, as the latter was used in 1994 and in 2010 by the United Nations as part of a multidimensional poverty index. He questions why Mveng did not focus on human poverty instead, which refers to the lack and deprivations that qualitatively obstruct human capacities.¹¹⁴ However, Heyer considered Mveng's concepts of "annihilation" or "pauperization" justified by the very fact that the 28 million Africans were displaced by the slave ships, millions more died by the ravages caused by the European pandemics, including 2 million deaths in South Saharan Africa from Spanish flu alone. These deaths reduced the Sub Saharan African population from 17% of the total world population to 7%.¹¹⁵ He also argues that Mveng's anthropological poverty goes beyond the two levels of dignity distinguished by Emmanuel Kant. In Kant's conception of dignity, on the one hand, there is dignity in the acquisition of whatever has a price, but this dignity can be lost. On the other hand, there is the inalterable dignity of all rational beings, including criminals,¹¹⁶ grounded in autonomy and above any price, which can never be lost.¹¹⁷ For Kant, a person,

¹¹² Quoted by René Heyer, "Annihilation anthropologique et anthropologie de la vie: Une discussion critique des thèses du P. Mveng," *Théologiques* 19, no. 1 (2011): 134, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1014184ar>.

¹¹³ René Heyer is a professor of moral theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the Strasbourg University whose research focuses on the political ethics, the question of genders, and on the relationships between human science and theology.

¹¹⁴ Heyer, "Annihilation anthropologique et anthropologie de la vie," 134.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals ; with, On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3rd ed (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1993), 41.

is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in himself, that is, he possesses a dignity (an absolute inner worth) by which he exacts respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world. He can measure himself with every other being of this kind and value himself on a footing of equality with them. Humanity in his person is the object of the respect which he can demand from every other man, but which he must also not forfeit.¹¹⁸

This understanding of the person goes beyond the comprehension of human being as endowed with reason, autonomy, and capabilities.¹¹⁹ It is rooted in the inner worth of the person. Heyer, however, raises the question of whether the deprivations of humans of their cultures, languages, stories, realities, and spaces would make these persons less human, depriving them from this inalterable dignity. He would agree with Mveng that it is not only the philosophical or ethnological that is the matter here, but rather the ontological. Beyond annihilating the cultures and traditions, the being of the people enslaved and colonized has been annihilated as well. Thus, for Heyer, we should not be shocked by the idea that a human can be made non-human; rather we should be scandalized by the colonizers structures that have been able to destroy African civilizations and the anthropological value of the African person.¹²⁰

All the above facts justify Mveng's claim that the denial of the personhood of the enslaved and the colonized Africans did root their anthropological poverty. I argue that anthropological poverty did and is still corrupting African people's *sense* of their inner worth, turning the humanity of Africans into weakness and propagating the idea that "to be European was to have value; to be African [is] to be without personal worth."¹²¹ Anthropological poverty continues to shape the mentality of people of the DR Congo, even in the postcolonial period. It is

¹¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Texts in German Philosophy (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 230.

¹¹⁹ Heyer, "Annihilation anthropologique et anthropologie de la vie," 136.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 137.

¹²¹ Richards, "Let The Circle Be Unbroken: The Implications of African-American Spirituality," 258.

displayed through expressions such as “*muzungu ni muzungu*” (Swahili) or “*Mundele azali kaka mundele*” (Lingala),¹²² meaning that a white man is cleverer than a black man. Mveng’s endeavor was to lead Africans to question mechanisms that make the DR Congo’s people believe that “*muzungu ni muzungu*” as well as their roots in colonialism.

While agreeing with Heyer that anthropological poverty is devastating and should not be overlooked, I believe that Bazié is right. A person’s dignity is God-given. No matter how anthropologically impoverished a person may be, their dignity may be denied by those external to them, refused, unrecognized, but it can never be taken away. It may be treated as if it were annihilated, but it still exists. The research in this dissertation is concerned with the affirmation of such dignity, the sacredness of life, and the inner worth of each individual Congolese and African person. It is to reaffirm such inner worth that Mveng resorts to addressing anthropological poverty. These theological themes constitute the calls from God-self to his people to stand against the powers that crippled and bent them over, especially women. Therefore, endowed with the power of being resurrected by God, women must be agents to transform the forms of poverty that strike them and their society.

Mveng does provide some compensatory means, mostly in relation to the participation of the people and church in society. He calls on the Church to break its collusions with the past that magnifies the African people’s anthropological poverty and to mobilize Christians to do so as well.¹²³ However, neither Mveng nor Ela or Katongole address the anthropological poverty of women specifically. It is to this endeavor that I will turn in the following section, mainly relying on the work of postcolonial theorist Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch.

¹²² Swahili and Lingala are both two of the four national languages of the DRC.

¹²³ Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 1994, 165.

SECTION TWO: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND WOMEN'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY

Introduction

This section affirms that the structures, politics, and practices of slavery, colonial states, and Western Christianity have generated the anthropological poverty of colonized women in a very particular and even more cruel way than the anthropological poverty of men. It develops the scope of Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty to account for the ways it plays out for women. It builds on Mveng's, Katongole's, and Ela's insights, drawing on the postcolonial theorist Coquery-Vidrovitch to show how slavery, colonial powers, politics, and praxis have made women both economically and anthropologically poorer than men. According to Coquery-Vidrovitch, modern African women's subjugation is not only a result of an indigenous past. Rather, it is deeply rooted in trading women as slaves, and in the collusion between patriarchal Western Christianity and colonial power.

This section displays how the powers of patriarchy, colonial oppression and exploitation kept and are still keeping women in situations of marginalization. It unmask the roots that make colonized African women doubly anthropologically poor, particularly Congolese women. It argues that colonized Congolese women have been crippled, rendered incapable of standing up straight, just like the woman that Jesus cured on the Sabbath (Luke 13: 11), for almost two centuries of slavery, colonization, and post-colonization. It considers the two dimensions of postcolonial theory: the temporal (chronological) and the critical.

The temporal includes three main periods. The first one covers the end of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, as marked by the slave trade from Africa to the Atlantic. The second one draws upon the twentieth century, as marked by colonialism in Africa and the period following the Second World War. The third period considers the decolonization process and the period following independence.¹²⁴ The critical dimension describes the atrocities of slavery and colonization on women. It assesses how both slavery and colonization shaped the “over determination of women from without”¹²⁵ denying them “any attribute of humanity.”¹²⁶ It includes the effects of the collusion of the colonial states and the missionaries on enslaved and colonized women, particularly the Congolese.

Slave trade, colonial agendas, and collusion with Western Christianity shaped the histories and collective memories of colonized Congolese women. Decolonization did not alleviate the dehumanization of women, however,¹²⁷ necessitating a “liberative remembering”¹²⁸ to promote political participation of Congolese women in the postcolonial era. While this section relies on postcolonial theory to undertake such remembering, it also considers the ways through which slavery and colonization separate women from their identity, freedom, history, and language. It also shows the ways their values, cultural mores, and ancient systems of beliefs came to be subjugated in a cruel manner.¹²⁹ Such subjugation represents a multidimensional impoverishment, as developed in the previous section.

¹²⁴ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies*, 7–8.

¹²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 182.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, Social Change in Global Perspective (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997), 5.

¹²⁸ Melinda A. McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 62.

¹²⁹ Eric Clark Jawanza, “The Dead Are Not Dead: A Constructive, African-Centered Theological Anthropology” (Dissertation, MI, Emory University, 2008), 174, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.bc.edu/docview/304370634?accountid=9673>.

This section shows how the different dimensions of poverty intermingle and produce an existential denial of African colonized women, particularly Congolese women. It will conclude by affirming that the multidimensional impoverishment of women forms the foundation of their exclusion from political power in the present time. In comparison to men's slavery and colonization, which were considered a deprivation of freedom, separating them from their ancestors, wives, children, and forcing them to perform "female's" tasks;¹³⁰ slavery and colonization have tremendously shaped African women's identity and negatively influenced their participation in society in many different ways.

1.2.1. Women's Anthropological Poverty and the Slave Trade

Women, as well as men, experienced what it meant to be hunted, captured, and sold like an animal to colonial white conquerors. Between 1897 and 1903, women were the most hired-out and enslaved.¹³¹ They were the most affected by the two forms of slavery that existed: domestic captivity and the international slave trade that involved both local African chiefs and colonial white traders.¹³² Moreover, they were impoverished in more violent ways than men, used for their productive and reproductive capacities to increase colonial economic power.

This reproductive exploitation of women was the most gender specific type of abuse, making them the most valuable merchandise¹³³ to Europeans as well as local traders. As Coquery-Vidrovitch puts it, "women were traded at least as often as cows, ivory, and guns, they had value, and very few were willing to let them escape."¹³⁴ In the nineteenth century, enslaved women were the only ones who had the obligation to work the land and so they were

¹³⁰ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 27.

¹³¹ Ibid., 74.

¹³² Ibid., 27.

¹³³ Ibid., 21–22.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 25.

the ones furnishing the city with crops, water, and wood for fire.¹³⁵ They were the most enslaved for the purpose of increasing the workforce of the slave population. They constituted the main workforce to cultivate foodstuffs¹³⁶ and were used as workers in domestic and agricultural lots. Women had to spend extra hours in cooking and other domestic tasks like caring for children. Their reproductive and productive capacity provided additional gains to slavery's economic system. Owning a female slave granted a master the right to own the children that might be born from her.

A trader could pay four hundred thousand cowries¹³⁷ for a woman, four hundred thousand for each of her children, and four hundred thousand for a child still in her womb.¹³⁸ Once the children were of age to work their master's field with their mother, they represented added value. A master could also give his slave as concubine to another master or to a guest in order to use the children conceived.¹³⁹ Women could be sold from master to master or local chief, leaving behind their children. Women's slavery included also domestic slavery, which included the sale of widows to their diseased husbands' relatives to fulfill customary laws in traditional culture and to ensure a future workforce by continuing to bear children.

Thus, enslaving women meant preserving the outcome of production not only from their own works but their descendants as well, despite the fact that female slaves bore fewer children than free women because of the burden of their work.¹⁴⁰ According to Roman law, introduced

¹³⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 117.

¹³⁷ "Cowrie Shell," Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia, accessed February 16, 2020, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/cowrie-shell>. "With the advent of the slave trade to the New World, cowries were among the items that Europeans exchanged with coastal West African groups for slaves."

¹³⁸ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 23.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 21–22.

to colonies by the Dutch, children inherited their mothers' servile status.¹⁴¹ Masters also capitalized on the traditions of matrilineal societies to reinforce the inheritance of servile status from the mother, even though the masters themselves came from patrilineal societies such as Britain.¹⁴² In effect, the more children a slave woman had, the more labor was provided.

Finally, women were used as sexual slaves. Whether women were daughters of local chiefs or born from ordinary families, they could be sold to slave traders, colonial masters, and husbands.¹⁴³ In addition, colonial masters could sexually abuse their male slave's dependent's wives whenever it pleased them. Women were frequently taken as hostages and enchained, naked, in order to force their husbands to go into the rainforest to gather wild rubber for the colonial masters. A slave woman could be given like an object to a slave man through or without marriage. To illustrate, a woman named Bwanika from Central Africa, known for her beauty, intelligence, and energy, was sold ten times between 1886 and 1891. First, she was sold as sexual slave to masters, then from husband to husband.¹⁴⁴ Thus, enslaved African women became more impoverished compared to men because "slaves or not, they always belonged to someone—their lineage, their husband, or their master."¹⁴⁵ They belonged to several masters who sexually abused them while men could only be sold to belong to and be used by their masters. They were not systematically sexually used as women were.

The above traits of the enslavement of women illustrate what Franz Fanon called a frenzied determination to deny one "any attribute of humanity."¹⁴⁶ It also illustrates what Mveng called

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴² Ibid., 238 See note 17.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 23–24.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* /, 182.

a strike at the very being, essence, and dignity of a person. Throughout European colonialism on the African continent, women were impoverished in an unspeakable way.

I.2.2. Women's Anthropological Poverty and Colonial-Western Christianity

The material, sociological, affective, cultural, and religious poverty of women developed in many ways through the collusion of colonial power and Western Christianity.¹⁴⁷ Christianization rebuffed local spiritual values and practices of the native people throughout the continent, some of which granted political and economic power to women in pre-colonial Africa. The devaluation of African peoples' faith, hope, ambition, and dignity was, therefore, most more pronounced for women, especially those of the Congo.¹⁴⁸

Congolese women's impoverishment through their deprivation of economic power pushed them to prostitution around mining. In 1885, during the scramble to divide Africa, King Leopold II proclaimed Congo as his personal fiefdom, proclaiming it to be the "Congo Free State," a key site for resource exploitation,¹⁴⁹ according to historian Michael Crowder.¹⁵⁰ From 1920 to 1925, a law granting the assimilation of unmarried women (or, "Independent Women" and "Free men" and "free women"), was passed to keep men in the mining workforce. Such assimilation put prostitutes and unmarried women in the same category. The latter became numerous because the bride-price was high—corresponding to ten month's income for a man working at the *Union Minière*, the mining company of Elisabethville (southern Congo). It was

¹⁴⁷ Ali A. MAZRUI, "Seek Ye First the Political Kingdom," in *Africa since 1935*, ed. Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, Christophe Wondji, and Unesco, Unabridged pbk. ed, General History of Africa 8 (Oxford : Berkeley : Paris: James Currey ; University of California Press ; UNESCO, 1999), 116.

¹⁴⁸ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 403.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Crowder, "Africa under British and Belgian Domination, 1935-45," in *Africa since 1935*, ed. Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, Christophe Wondji, and Unesco, Unabridged pbk. ed, General History of Africa 8 (Oxford : Berkeley : Paris: James Currey ; University of California Press ; UNESCO, 1999), 76.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Crowder (June 9, 1934–August 14, 1988) was a British historian and author notable for his books on the history of Africa and particularly on the history of West Africa.

cheaper for miners to use free women than to marry one.¹⁵¹ As Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler explain, mines in the colonies were “sites of unfettered economic and sexual opportunity where masculine self-indulgence could be given free vent...”¹⁵² They also add that being labelled an independent or free woman suggested that a woman could be raped without legal consequence.¹⁵³ This is still the case in the contemporary DR Congo, as the narratives shared in Chapter Five will show.

Markets and factories increased along with women’s prostitution around the mining. Women began doing some work around mining while being used sexually.¹⁵⁴ In addition, widows, single mothers, and orphaned girls were excluded from any regular work,¹⁵⁵ leaving them no choice than that of prostituting themselves. While used by the miners, women continued to sell their agricultural products. However, they had to pay a double-town tax in several towns of the Congo. Congolese women often worked in jobs that left them in an extreme state of material poverty. Many repeatedly lived with men outside marriage. Others were widows, divorced, or simply abandoned and responsible for young children.¹⁵⁶

Women’s impoverishment was further exacerbated through the brutal and dehumanizing practices of the colonial officers, which were “too vile to be spoken of.”¹⁵⁷ Even young girls

¹⁵¹ Leopold Mottoulle, *Politique sociale de l'Union minière du Haut-Katanga pour sa main-d'oeuvre indigène et ses résultats au cours de vingt années d'application*, Mémoires. — Collection in-8°, vol. Tome XIV. — Fasc. 3. (Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1946), 20, file:///C:/Users/Leocadie/Downloads/Hum.Sc.(IRCB)_T.XIV,3_MOTTOULLE%20L._Politique%20sociale%20d%20l'union%20minière%20du%20Haut-Katanga%20pour%20sa%20main-d'oeuvre%20indigène_1946.pdf. Ibid.

¹⁵² Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁴ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 28.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 136–37.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 91–92.

¹⁵⁷ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 26–27.

were beaten and thrown into the water.¹⁵⁸ Colonizers made young men rape their mothers and sisters.¹⁵⁹ This is still also the case in the context of warfare in contemporary DR Congo's as the narratives will show in Chapter Five. Young men prostituted their female relatives in order to meet colonial states' demands. They pushed men to leave their families and homes to carry sixty-five-pound loads for weeks or months for the rubber market.¹⁶⁰

Congolese women performed physical labor for the white colonizers who used even little girls without social protection, limit to work hours, or compensation, all while keeping them illiterate. Colonizers even shifted from using women as salaried workers to trafficking them. Some husbands did the same to fulfill colonial economic strain. In addition, colonial law worsened the situation of women by reinforcing marital authority—recognizing a man as the family head with the right to manage all goods created by women. Also, men benefited from the first technical innovations for facilitating mining tasks, from which women were excluded.¹⁶¹

Women also became poorer as a result of the shift of agricultural production to the international market. Economic power changes in the agricultural industry also helped increase gender biases in the sense that, while women were expanding production of cassava, yam, and maize, “production, processing, pricing and export functions in cash crops [were] basically... taken over by men.”¹⁶² The latter expanded products oriented towards exportation such as cotton, while women continued to do all the jobs of food production to sustain the alimentation of the family. Women could still be helping the men in the work of producing cotton, but the

¹⁵⁸ Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 279.

¹⁶¹ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 59–60.

¹⁶² Ibid., 319.

matters of exportation, which implied decision-making roles, were taken care of by the men alone. This too is still the case in contemporary DR Congo, as the report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) will show in Chapter Two.

Women's poverty was also reinforced by their exclusion from land ownership and property rights. In the so-called Napoleonic code,¹⁶³ through which all property belonged to the husband as the head of the family, colonial officers limited access to private property exclusively to men. The code provided men with more control over the land, but increased the workloads of wives while depriving women of men's help in men's own agricultural lots.¹⁶⁴ While matrilineal traditions granted women the right to lands in some traditional societies, these rights were simply denied under colonial rule, which, shaped by the Christian penchant for male supremacy, granted more control of land to men, leaving women with the work-land responsibility only.¹⁶⁵

Missionaries followed the steps of colonial officials in excluding women from accessing land property. They hired men to farm corn and trained them to use "harnessed animals," leaving an educational gap between men and leaving women in the agricultural field without professional training. Women even performed manual labor on these lands to help their mothers-in-law as a bride-price. They worked on cotton fields on lands whose products were reserved only for men.¹⁶⁶ Their presence was forbidden in the men's debating courtyard. Around the year 1927, despite the rainy season, they worked longer hours than men, eight months a year. Thus, women lacked the capital and agricultural techniques. This kept them out

¹⁶³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 60.

of markets, making them the poorest group by the end of World War II. Their non-access to capital and to land property not only increased women's material poverty, but also increased male supremacy, later reinforced by governments after independence.¹⁶⁷

Some missionaries' letters explain that many women lost husbands and children and continued to work either as house or sexual workers. They went through unspeakable hardships related to rubber traffic, in response to which missionary questioned a soldier: "have you neither mothers nor sisters that you can treat women in this brutal way?"¹⁶⁸ More evidence of the atrocities of the rubber traffic was provided by missionaries who recognized that rubber collection was a form of slavery of the worst possible kind—one that affected women in special ways.¹⁶⁹ As one witness explains,

I have known women to be taken (as hostages) without any regard to their condition, during pregnancy or period of lactation. They were made to work in the sun at grass work or weeding; some were confined in the common prison or hostage house without any privacy, and obliged to be at work again in a few days with their babies at their back.¹⁷⁰

Women were also subjected to atrocities in order to push men to fulfill the food supply required by the colonial officers.¹⁷¹ When administrative requirements were not fulfilled by men, the latter could hide in fear of reprisals. In finding villages deserted, soldiers could capture women, tie them up along with children to compel the men to come out.¹⁷² They could "rape the women, clear the villages of livestock, and generally behave in the most oppressive manner."¹⁷³ This

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 62.

¹⁶⁸ Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, 60.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 68.

¹⁷² Ibid., 62.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 70.

is still happening in the mining zones that fuel wars in the DRC to date. Chapter Five will illustrate the use of rape as a weapon of war in the contemporary DR Congo.

Women were also impoverished by keeping them illiterate and providing them with minimal educational training. Yet, the British colonizers did provide some education to women because of the influence of the Protestant Reformation that favored individuals' advancement. The French colonizers did the same because of the principles of equality that emerged from the French Revolution. In general, however, in African colonies (especially Belgian colonies such as the Congo), women were left “‘indoors’ to the domestic domain.”¹⁷⁴ It is important to note that, since the consideration of women as less valuable than men was also rooted in Western Christianity, it applied not only to African girls, but also to white daughters of colonizers.¹⁷⁵

In addition, women's annihilation involved uprooting their parental ties and taking away their children. Children whose fathers were killed by the colonial public forces were removed and looked after by both missionaries and colonial masters. Yet, they were themselves ruled by the *chicotte* and chain and were usually schooled for the purpose of making future soldiers of them. As King Leopold wrote in April 1890:

I believe we must set up three children's colonies, One in the Upper Congo near the equator, specifically military, with clergy for religious instruction and for vocational education. One at Leopoldville under clergy with a soldier for military training. One at Boma [West part of the DR Congo] like that at Leopoldville [Kinshasa, the ...The aim of these colonies is above all to furnish us with soldiers.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ John L. Comaroff, “Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience. Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 182.

¹⁷⁵ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 148.

¹⁷⁶ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 133.

These children were said to be orphans. However, many had a mother. Belgian Catholics were considered loyal to the King and his regime. Missions received subsidies from King Leopold and cooperated in separating children from their mothers or their extended families in order to fulfill the King's plan to provide his Congo colony with future soldiers.¹⁷⁷ Mothers suffered the most from these separations since the fathers were either dead or working in mining. While little boys were educated to read and write, learning geography, and becoming religious officials' assistants, little girls who could not yet work in the fields were used in their masters' houses for domestic tasks. Girls were considered auto-sufficient by age of ten or twelve.¹⁷⁸

Moreover, Catholic missionaries in the Belgian colonies were conservative, hardly interested in the education of the girls or their emancipation.¹⁷⁹ Thus, girls suffered from a double discrimination: from the traditional local cultures and from Western culture through the collusion of missionaries and colonial masters.¹⁸⁰ Consequently, "in 1906, girls made up only 15 percent of 48,000 schoolchildren."¹⁸¹ Only boys were allowed to study French and were more likely to become teachers, craftsmen, agents, animal farmers, or to learn to do any other work. Girls were trained to handle the responsibilities of wives and mothers. Girls were allowed to choose between being housekeepers, primary school teachers, or to be trained in social centers to help European families. Shortly before World War II, hundreds of thousands of boys had already received some basic schooling. For example, in 1958, primary schools counted 1.5 million children, among which only twenty thousand were girls.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 134–35.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 14–15.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 143–44.

¹⁸⁰ Patrick Boyle M., "School Wars: Church, State, and the Death of the Congo," in *European Decolonization*, ed. Martin Thomas, The International Library of Essays on Political History (Aldershot, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 382.

¹⁸¹ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 145.

¹⁸² Ibid.

In sum, schools were predominantly white, run by white missionaries and funded by colonizers. School “was the most important instrument of Christian missionary work in Africa.”¹⁸³ Entering school meant cutting ties with all that gave one a sense of security and identity from African perspectives. Africans had to imitate Europe and speak European languages. Education was about controlling people’s thinking, compelling them to accept that to be truly human, they had to live up to the standard of the white colonizer. However, decolonization did not remove the mechanisms of the impoverishment of women that colonialism established.

1.2.3. Women’s Anthropological Poverty in the Postcolonial Period.

The continuity of anthropological poverty of Congolese women in the post-colonial era is seen in the way women continued to be pictured in colonial representations. Feminist political theorist Uma Narayan defines a colonialist representation as “one that replicates problematic aspects of Western representations of Third-World nations and communities, aspects that have their roots in the history of colonization.”¹⁸⁴ In this section, I look at two instances: (1) The continuation of an *extraverti*¹⁸⁵ continued educational system. (2) The perception of black African women as inferior Others.

a. The Continued *Extraverti* Educational System.

Patriarchal religious education continued to impoverish Congolese women even after the country’s independence. At the time of independence, there was only one female high school graduate: the, daughter of the mayor of Leopoldville, the capital of the Congo, who graduated

¹⁸³ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 428.

¹⁸⁴ Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1997), 45.

¹⁸⁵The turning outward of cultures.

from Sacred Heart High School in June 1961. In the eastern DR Congo, my own primary and secondary school, one of the biggest schools for girls in the DR Congo, led by the Missionaries of the Holy Family of Helmet, accepted the first black girl only in 1956, twenty years after its creation. Even when the school introduced material such as History, Geography, Mathematics, French, Dutch, Religion, Sciences, Drawing, Technology, Sewing, Physical Education, and Music, it was still the formation of the future mother which considered to be at stake in educating women. Again, this low representation of girls in school was a common thing in African colonies in general. As Coquery-Vidrovitch puts it,

In 1970, with about equal opportunity, there was only one girl for every two boys who received her B.A., one out of five who got her Master, and only one in ten who reached the PhD. Girls' inferiority was only the exaggeration of what was common in the West; that same year, girls made up only 30 percent of British undergraduates and 16 percent of graduate students, and women were only 9 percent of teaching personnel.¹⁸⁶

Thus, almost three-fourths of women could not read in 1980 (except in Lesotho). 70% of girls failed the junior certificate compared to 42% of boys. Girls enrolled in university four times less than boys, and 23% of women in the cities and 60% of female peasants had not yet gone to school in 1970.¹⁸⁷

In the Congo, as a consequence of an education favoring boys, there were only 20% of girls in primary school and 4% in secondary school.¹⁸⁸ In cities, women could barely speak French, several thousands of them worked in missions, yet there were 745 nuns and only 5 nurses and 485 midwives. Ten years after independence, less than 100 women were employed as nurses and teachers. In Elisabethville (southeastern DR Congo), 6,600 women were working for pay. There were no female doctors in the town despite Elisabethville having 300 doctors

¹⁸⁶ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 148–49.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

in total. Girls who escaped expectations of submissiveness found themselves outside social norms and mores. They were identified as “being free” or considered as easy women.¹⁸⁹

In the Congo, education also continued to be oriented towards Western cultures, from the library, to the musical evenings, the cine-forum sessions, the plays, the excursions, and the sports (swimming, basketball, volleyball, and tennis). Nothing on African cultures and traditional African religion was taught. Family Education upheld the Christian patriarchal tradition. The schools funded by Belgian colonizers were meant to educate Congolese girls as Belgians, turning them into Belgian Congolese girls or the so-called *évoluées* (the “advanced” or “elevated”).

Such an education displays well Mveng’s anthropological pauperization in the sense that schools deprived Congolese people of what they really were. Considering that “the attack was cultural, aimed at the spirit and self-esteem of the African,”¹⁹⁰ one needed to deny one’s Africanism to be *évoluée*/elevated to a superior rank, as if being educated as an African was contradictory. To be *évoluée* meant to live according to the Belgian standard. It also implied a denial of African identity.

One may also consider the fact that the school I attended did not provide an extensive course on the Swahili language, as spoken in southern Kivu/southeastern DR Congo. French was the only language admitted in schools. As a result, I was not able to have a deep conversation with my own grandmother, who could not speak nor understand a word of French. Nevertheless, I used to enjoy spending time with her. However, there is nothing I could learn from her. We were living in two different disconnected worlds while living in the same material

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 147.

¹⁹⁰ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 428.

world. Instead, I grew up reading books that were disconnected from the context in which I was growing up. No one can deny that if women's education in the Congo could include the reading of the stories of the Queens of Africa, they would have strengthened their belief in the fact that their inner worth does not depend on being a mother or a married woman. They would also have increased awareness of how a few women participated in political decision-making processes throughout the history of Congo.

Within this discussion, it is important to recognize that the collusion of missionaries and colonial rule marginalized women in some areas, but reinforced their academic capacity in other areas. One may rightly argue in favor of the many positive tools, mostly academic [reading and writing], gained from Western education. Yet, one can increase their academic knowledge and still remain anthropologically impoverished, as Mveng would suggest. Learning foreign cultures and languages does not necessarily help improve one's self-esteem. And this is probably the case for many African elites who are not able to develop their countries despite the fact that they are academically highly capable. Instead, they buy houses and open bank accounts in Europe to ensure their security and that of their own children.

The post-colonial era's systems continued, bereft of African cultures and languages as well. Another cautionary example showing how anthropological poverty survived the colonization era is the fact that the Congolese Constitution was written in French and derived from Belgium. This excludes the majority of peasant women from understanding their own country's Constitution, that which grants them the right to politically participate and to stand up to claim their dignity. Such marginalization of language impedes not only real communication among women themselves, but also their participation in society, limiting their creativity.

The use of a Western language that the majority of the people cannot even understand is also a cautionary example of what Mveng calls sociological poverty, which alienates people from the social structures that provide social security and render possible and effective any human creativity. The use of language that is itself culturally *extraverti* deepens the loss of ties not only between different generations but also between public authorities and family systems. Such Western cultural languages, embodied within postcolonial systems, continue to despoil the educated and uneducated of their identity, especially women, who constitute the majority of the uneducated. For this reason, I agree with Kwok Pui-lan when she states:

A postcolonial political theology needs to pay attention to new forms of politics that are evolving and bear witness to people's unceasing quest for freedom and dignity... [P]olitical theologians must decolonize our minds and disengage ourselves from Eurocentrism and the colonial syndrome. A necessary first step is to rethink about the history, scope, legacy, and concerns of doing political theology.¹⁹¹

I will undertake the above task. In the chapters to follow, I will rely on the fundamental equality between men and women promoted not only in the Scriptures and Catholic social teaching but also in African traditional religion (ATR) itself, while assessing ATR's disempowering components in regard to women.

b. The Perception of Black African Women as Inferior.

As discussed, the view of women as inferior to men is deeply rooted in slavery and colonization. Both events trained society to view women as unequal to men. As Coquery-Vidrovitch argues, "What is less well-known is the impact this kind of training may have had on the minds of young Zairean [Congolese] women..."¹⁹² Let me describe, then, using my own

¹⁹¹ Kwok Pui-lan, "Postcolonial Intervention in Political Theology," *Political Theology* 17, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2016.1186443>. Ibid.

¹⁹² Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 147.

example and those of women I know and share thoughts with, how the preconceptions of the colonized mind are still doing violence to women, who perceive themselves as unequal to men.

Indeed, colonial agendas have shaped histories and collective memories of women in a way that dampens their agency in the present time. It strikes the very being and dignity of the young generations of the DR Congo when they come to internalize the “destructive rhetoric [that] persists across cultures in [private as well as public] discourses that “produce” so-called inferior others, connecting histories of violence to our present-day postcolonial contexts.”¹⁹³

Another rhetoric internalized by the DR Congo’s women is that the man is the family’s head. This teaching results from the collusion of colonial power and patriarchal Western Christianity, as well as from African traditions themselves. This patriarchal structure continues to asphyxiate women’s creativity. The teaching of women’s submissiveness and the authority of men in the family did not stop with decolonization but rather continues to be taught not only by churches but by the government. Mobutu, the president of the Congo (then Zaire) who took power five years after the Congo’s independence and ruled for more than thirty years, declared that “there will always be a boss in every household. And until proof to the contrary, the boss in our land is the one who wears the pants.”¹⁹⁴ He asked women to accept this male authority with a smile.

The patriarchal rhetoric of male authority continues to shape Congolese women in the post-colonial era, including the most educated. Below and in the following sections, I will present case studies from people I spoke and worked with in the course of my research, including some

¹⁹³ Melinda A. McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 75.

¹⁹⁴ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, 185–86.

family members and friends. I use pseudonyms to protect their identities, but the words are their own.

Case One: Mama B. MUKAMBI. These are Lingala words. They literally mean “woman pastor or minister.” She is forty-eight, married, and well-educated with a master’s degree. She is the mother of four children and leader in her church. Ordained, she often preaches in local churches. In addition, she is a leader in a prestigious international non-governmental institution working to promote human rights in the DR Congo.

My question to B. Mukambi was framed as follows:

Some argue that Jesus was a male and that, consciously or subconsciously, Jesus’s maleness is understood as granting some prerogatives to men alone to be ordained priests. What does the fact that Jesus was a male say to you? How does the maleness of Jesus affect your faith and ministry?

She answered in this way:

It is truly difficult to me to picture God, but using my little intelligence, I can say that I recognize God as my Creator and the Creator of the Universe. Presenting God as a male makes me think of the authority that God gives to a man. In the Garden of Eden, He said to the woman: “I will intensify your toil in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3, 16). Then in Ephesians 5: 22–24 He says, “Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.” Jesus was dead for the church and a man, in principle, should accept to die for his wife. I would say that the responsibility of a man lies in the fact that God gives him a certain authority. But, man did not responsibly assume his role, for this reason, he needs a helper, a woman. I am not taking an approach of comparing myself to a man, but I argue that a man needs a woman in every sphere, including the preaching of the Word of God.

Despite Mukambi’s significant participation in church and society, she believes that one of the tasks that a woman has is to be an “aid” to men. At the end of the day, it is the Word of God, which she understands literally, that is being applied throughout her ministry. She believes that

even her participation in society is made possible thanks to her husband's authority and permission.

If a woman who is highly educated, who is a pastor, and who assumes positions of leadership in society interprets the Bible this way, how will it be for women who are not educated? Considering the fact that this woman is literate and leads both men and women in her church and her profession, her responses speak volumes. It is also clear that her responses are coherent with the teaching of missionaries during colonization, who reinforced the oppressive gendered patterns and structural legacies of colonialism¹⁹⁵ within their Christian message. Decolonization, clearly, did not change the latter teaching in the DR Congo.

However, it is important to recognize that it is difficult to determine whether the responses in this case are more influenced by patriarchal cultures of the local traditions of the DR Congo or by her Christian, patriarchal education. Given the fact that our leader in this case inherits the worldview of local traditions, I argue that patriarchal cultures of the African religions as well as those of Western Christianity may intermingle to produce the patterns of thinking behind her points here.

The following chapter will explore the ethical analysis of African traditional religion by African theologians and philosophers, especially regarding the place of women in its communitarian vision. It will assess the extent to which traditional gendered patterns reinforce women's anthropological poverty in African Traditional Religion. The next chapter will also provide three additional cases that display how men and women internalize androcentric

¹⁹⁵ McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories*, 152.

Chapter One: Understanding the Scope of Anthropological Poverty

gender norms and how these norms can ontologically shape them and epistemologically guide their behaviors and actions.

CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGES TO AFRICAN RELIGION AND AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

SECTION ONE: AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND WOMEN'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY

Introduction

This section argues that, in addition to the slave trade and the collusion of Western Christianity and colonial power, the anthropological poverty of women is also reinforced by African Traditional Religions (ATR) themselves. It discusses John Mbiti's and Laurenti Magesa's tendency to "idealize" African religion(s). These scholars overlook the anthropological poverty of women within the ATR. To show this, I examine African proverbs, particularly those from the DR Congo, that speak to the participation and public role of women in society.

Andrea Musolff (a psycholinguist), Fiona MacArthur (an independent researcher in the study of Metaphors), and Giulio Pagani (a lecturer on Discourse and European Politics in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies) define a proverb as "a complete sentence that is often metaphorical and used to convey some wisdom or accepted truth."¹ Proverbs are a valuable resource and "have long been used in anthropological literature

¹ Andreas Musolff, Fiona Macarthur, and Giulio Pagani, eds., *Metaphor and Intercultural Communication* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 133.

to illustrate or stress a feature of belief or behavior.”² As the anthropologist James Boyd Christensen explains, using the example of West African proverbs,

West African proverbs, like those from elsewhere, may be grouped in two categories: the truism or ‘proverbial apothegm’, which has limited application because of its literal or definite assertion; and the ‘metaphorical proverb’, which because of the metaphorical use of a simple event or statement has wide applicability. While truisms may lack the imagery or artistry of the metaphorical variety, they play the same role, and any differentiation is made on the basis of form rather than function... It is perhaps needless to indicate that proverbs reflect the ideal or norm of behaviour rather than the actual. Moreover, the technique of presentation utilized does not imply that a given proverb is limited in its use to the area of experience under which it is listed. As elsewhere, some proverbs have wide applicability, and could be quoted with equal validity in reference to the beliefs and behaviour patterns of the Fante [one of the ethnically groups in the central coastal part of Ghana] in several aspects of culture.³

Following Christensen, I argue that the DR Congo’s proverbs not only function to reflect “the ideal or norm of behaviour” but also have wide applicability. For Abbé Kagaragu Ntabaza, proverbs constitute a cultural patrimony in the DR Congo. Many of them propose obsolete ideas that negate the progress of the people.⁴ They display the denial of women’s humanity in a way that suggests a reinforcement of their anthropological poverty. This challenges the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which affirms the humanity and preservation of life of everyone within the community. Considering the actual situation of oppression of women, one can safely say the virtues regarding the preservation of life as affirmed in *Ubuntu* philosophy or ATR are more idealized than practiced.

² James Boyd Christensen, “The Role of Proverbs in Fante Culture,” *Cambridge University Press on Behalf of the International African Institute* 28, no. 3 (July 1958): 232.

³ Ibid., 233.

⁴ Kagaragu Ntabaza, Abbe, *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes Des Bashi*, 3eme Edition (Bukavu/Republique du Zaire: Libreza, 1976), VI.

II.1.1. The Idealization of African Religion Furthers the Subjugation of African Women.

As Richards puts it, “in African society, religion is the thread which links the various aspects of culture.”⁵ There are similarities and differences among the views of African theologians, anthropologists, and sociologists on African religion as there are between Africans’ views and those of Western people. In order to situate the place of women in ATR, therefore, I will begin by exploring the singularity and plurality of African religion. I will then explore the proverbs as a component of the ethical system of ATR.

In a study written in 1933 but published only in 1990, Isaac Osabutey-Aguedze, a Ghanaian anthropologist, emphasized the unity of African culture and spoke of African religion.⁶ Similarly, Marcus James, an Anglican priest from Jamaica, also spoke of “African religion” in a study published in 1959 in the journal *Présence Africaine*. The main reason why James used the singular form is that he believed at the time that, despite the diversity of culture and geography, there was evidence and research supporting a uniformity in the essence of African religion.⁷ In the past half century, views on African cultures have grown more complex and nuanced.

John Mbiti, an ordained Anglican priest and philosopher from Kenya who provided a systematic study of the ways of thinking and believing that developed in many societies of Africa, preferred the plural form. He spoke of *African religions and philosophy*.⁸ Mbiti studied religions of more than one hundred African cultures throughout Africa. In contrast to James,

⁵ Richards, “Let The Circle Be Unbroken : The Implications of African-American Spirituality,” 261.

⁶ Isaac D Osabutey-Aguedze, *The Principles Underlying the African Religion and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Maillu Pub. House, 1990), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/27906369.html>.

⁷ Marcus James, “Religion En Afrique. Deuxième Congrès Des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs,” *Rome: Présence Africaine*, 1959, 185 [Text translated by myself].

⁸ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed (Oxford; Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann, 1990).

Mbiti explained that African religions must be spoken of in the plural because there are thousands of religious systems, beliefs, practices, cultures, languages—as there are African peoples or tribes.⁹ However, Mbiti also believed that the ways African peoples believe in God displays a potential unity among African religions. A number of beliefs relative to African religions can be found in any African society. African religions inhabit the entire person and her/his whole life. However, they are not “formulated into a systematic set of dogmas which a person is expected to accept.”¹⁰ Rather, the creeds of African religions are written in the heart of the individuals and communities. Religion is in the Africans’ whole system of being.¹¹

Even though Vincent Mulago founded a center named *Centre des religions africaines* in 1967, he chose the singular form, “traditional religion,” in his work. He believed that “the unity of civilization and culture does not stop at the so-called Bantu groups; It extends to all of Africa.”¹² For his part, Mveng, the Cameroonian theologian, in “*Le vêtement liturgique africain*,” used both the plural and the singular forms: “traditional African religions” and “traditional religion.”¹³ In the same way, he spoke of both “the Egyptian religion” and “the religions of pharaonic Egypt.”¹⁴ So for Mveng, the plural or singular form made no difference to the theological points he needed to advance. My use of African religion(s) endorses Mveng’s perspective, which distinguished two sources of African religion. The first, written sources, consists essentially of ancient Egyptian texts. The second, largely oral, consists of the post-pharaonic texts of traditional, modern, and even contemporary Africa.¹⁵ He mentions the myths

⁹ Ibid., 29–47.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mulago gwa Cikala, *La Religion Traditionnelle Des Bantu et Leur Vision Du Monde* (Kinshasa: Presses universitaires du Zaïre, 1973), 9.

¹³ Engelbert Mveng, “Le Vêtement Liturgique Africain,” *Cahier Des Religions Africaines*, 1987, 462.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Mveng, *L’Afrique dans l’église: paroles d’un croyant*, 7.

and legends to which we must certainly associate the proverbs, whose role is to introduce wisdom and which I argue shape the DR Congo's people at both individual and social levels.

The question of plurality and singularity of ATR also has been raised by a few Western anthropologists and sociologists. Newell Booth, for example, endorses both the singularity and plurality of African religions. He explains the plurality in the diversity of attributes, labelled as "supreme gods, nature spirits, ancestor rituals, initiation practices, divine kings, secret societies, sorcerers, and demons."¹⁶ Since the latter attributes are diversified according to social locations across Africa, for Booth, it makes more sense to speak of African religions.¹⁷ At the same time, Booth grants some kind of unity in the philosophy shared by diverse African religions.

MacGaffey reinforces Booth's point, arguing that ATR may be more different from each other than they are from the religions of other continents.¹⁸ Cultural diversities of the African historical context do challenge the views that make too-generalized claims about ATR as if they were only one unified religion.¹⁹ However, MacGaffey agrees that African religion can be spoken of as one when referring to the Bantu countries in Africa, where the structures of the native religions are similar (as is the case of the DR Congo and its neighboring countries). However, one cannot say that there is only one African religion, considering the Nilotic geographic areas. The religious structures of the Nilotic are different from those of the Bantu peoples.²⁰

¹⁶ Newell S. Booth, "Tradition and Community in African Religion," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 9, no. 2 (1978): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1581390>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Wyatt MacGaffey, "African Ideology and Beilef: A Survey," *African Studies Review* 24, no. 2/3 (1981): 263.

¹⁹ Ibid., 252.

²⁰ Ibid., 259. Bantu are often referred to as the speakers of the Bantu languages, which groups together about four hundred and fifty languages on the African continent. This concept also simply means "human" or "every human being in most of the Congolese languages." See K.E. Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français*,

Magesa opts to speak of “African Religion” in the singular because, for him, “Black Africa... intimately shares one ethos of culture, religion, and morality.”²¹ Despite the diversity of gods, rituals, spirits, and other forms related to transcendence, Magesa argues that they convey one basic belief and one basic worldview.²² He sees ATR as “a phenomenon with moral power that shapes and directs the lives of millions of people in their relationship with other human beings, the created order, and the Divine.”²³ By this, Magesa, like Mbiti, sees African religion as lying more upon a way of being than on dogmas.

For Magesa, African religion is “‘a way of life’ or life itself, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence.”²⁴ This language does suggest that there is no clear separation between the profane and the religious. Mbiti explains this even better:

Traditional religions penetrate all areas of life; there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual aspect and the material aspect of life. Where there is an African, there is his religion.²⁵

ATR, therefore, provides assurance that God’s presence and actions shape every single aspect of African people’s life. Magesa also grants that ATR is a religion that has been orally-based for many centuries before being codified in writing, just like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism.²⁶

avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite kikongo. A-L (Ridgewood, NJ: The Gregg Press Incorporated, 1964), 20.

²¹Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), x.

²² *Ibid.*, 16–17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 9.

²⁶ Magesa, *African Religion*, 22.

Booth adds that African religions share the same characteristics. First, they are considered as “a way of life.” Second, they are not to be located in the past but rather constitute a process that is transmitted and passed from generation to generation.²⁷ Anthropologist Michael F.C. Bourdillon reinforces this, explaining that, in African societies, religion is so much part of everyday life that its isolation as a distinct area of study should be questioned.²⁸ Younger generations can easily imitate the actions of the older ones without being taught what to do. Their lasting character bears a moral authority, a form of “traditioning.”²⁹ This traditioning form is shared by all the African religions and includes both oral communications and sacred texts.

Speaking of one single African religion suggests some shared attributes, rather than the diversity of religions found in traditional Africa. I will rely on these shared characteristics to argue that the champions of African religion, Mbiti and Magesa, seem to overlook the ways in which the ethical structures of ATR, as evident in common proverbs, deprive women of their dignity and render them more anthropologically poor when compared to men.

The proverbs are a cautionary example, explaining the ways the traditional ethical system of African religion(s) is still shaping peoples’ lives and determining the concept and meaning of womanhood. Before showing the oppressive force of the proverbs toward women, however, it is important to begin by recalling the moral/ethical system the proverbs entail and how they become morally binding, like the force of law, within ATR.

²⁷ Booth, “Tradition and Community in African Religion,” 6–7.

²⁸ M.F.C. Bourdillon, “Anthropological Approaches to the Study of African Religions,” *Brill* 40, no. 3 (September 1993): 218.

²⁹ Booth, “Tradition and Community in African Religion,” 83.

II.1.2. Proverbs Within the Moral/Ethical Systems of African Religion.

The DR Congo's proverbs work as covenants within African religion. They constitute the moral law, approved by the community, that governs behavior to ensure social harmony and, to some extent, preserve life. Magesa states that "for African religion, all principles of morality and ethics are to be sought within the context of preserving human life and its "power" or "force."³⁰ Proverbs are like wisdom books. However, they contain both maxims that promote such a preservation of human life and others which dampen it, especially when it comes to women's participation in society.

Mbiti states that the "proverbs are common words expressing religious ideas and feelings... [they are among the areas in which] one expects to find rich repositories of traditional beliefs, ideas, wisdom and feelings."³¹ For Magesa, therefore, African proverbs are part of the normative order that shapes life in black Africa. They express the conceptions of morality of ATR,³² including maxims, sentences, and dictums that have been orally transmitted since ancient times, from generation to generation.³³ They are an integral part of the "moral/ethical system" of the oral tradition.³⁴ They are a kind of law that is "tied to the realities of a cosmic and social order."³⁵

³⁰ Magesa, *African Religion*, 31–32.

³¹ Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 66.

³² Magesa, *African Religion*, 35.

³³ BioDun J. Ogundayo, "Folklore and Proverbs: 1400 to 1900: Africa," in *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, & Africa: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Andrea Stanton et al. (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 2 of 4, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218458.n281>.

³⁴ Scholars consider proverbs to be oral because of the orality of their origin. Yet, these sources were put in writing since the nineteenth century. See Rosetta Ross, E. and Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, eds., *Unraveling and Reweaving Sacred Canon in Africana Womanhood*, Feminist Studies and Sacred Texts (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 5–7.

³⁵ Solomon C. Madubuike, "Law, Traditional: 1400 to 1900: Africa," in *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, & Africa: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Andrea Stanton et al. (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 3 of 4, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218458.n294>.

Some traditional African religionists consider proverbs to be “mirrors of society.”³⁶ In contemporary Africa, they display the “traditioning” form of shaping ethical and moral behavior—that is, they express the knowledge accumulated throughout different generations. Booth adds that in order to understand African religions, one needs to do more than reading about it; a direct participation in such a way of life is crucial for a better understanding.³⁷ As he puts it, “Listening to the elders” is itself a participation in that which is central to the religion of the Baluba [Congo], and, I believe, of Africans generally.”³⁸ Similarly, Bourdillon affirms that familiarity with cultures in which a given religion is practiced is an advantage to study that religion.³⁹

Following Booth and Bourdillon, and based on my work as researcher in gender issues in African contexts, I affirm that proverbs do have moral authority in the DR Congo. Even though proverbs might not represent immutable truths, they are still part of the current language of the DR Congo in which ethical norms and beliefs subjugating women are grounded. Proverbs reveal the female traditional role and condition across cultures and provide valuable insights on the society’s ontological view of women.⁴⁰ Proverbs reinforce gender inequality in two ways. First, they display the nature, methods, and limits of what is known as “moral guiding conduct” in relation to women’s roles in society and in relation to men (the epistemological

³⁶ Fatimatu Sulemanu N-Eyare, *Those Who Entrusted Their Affairs to a Woman Will Not Prosper. Its Implication in the Ghanaian Muslim Community.*, ed. Rosetta Ross, E. and Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, *Feminist Studies and Sacred Texts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 8.

³⁷ Booth, “Tradition and Community in African Religion,” 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁹ Bourdillon, “Anthropological Approaches to the Study of African Religions,” 221.

⁴⁰ Mineke Schipper, “Introduction: Research in African Literatures,” *Indiana University Press* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 6. See also Schipper, “Beware of Women with Big Feet,” *The Times*, 2004, 4.

dimension). Second, they display a shared belief about the being of a woman or her “personhood”⁴¹ (the ontological dimension).

II.1.3. DR Congo’s Proverbs and Women’s Impoverishment

African proverbs that impoverish women speak volumes. In the DR Congo, these proverbs include those of several tribes and cultures found throughout the country, such as the Lega, Bushi, Kongo, Luba, Mongo, Wopo, and Bembe. I will focus my analysis on proverbs directly related to women’s public role in society but will mention a few proverbs in relation to family and marriage as well because they affect women’s public roles.

Let’s imagine half a dozen categories of proverbs. The first category groups those limiting the role of women to the domestic sphere and reproductive function. This first example echoes a Bushi proverb saying, *Omukazi arhaba embuga*.⁴² Or, *Omukazi ye murhima ali eka*.⁴³ These proverbs literally mean that a woman cannot be outside her home or that she is the heart that dwells at her home. They confine her in domestic roles, including taking care of husband and children while obstructing her belief in her ability and rights to participate in public roles or activities.

The second example is the Mongo’s proverb that says: “Women judge well in private matters, not in public.”⁴⁴ This obstructs her ability to bring anyone who wrongs her to court.⁴⁵ Ngandu-Myango Malasi, in interpreting the meaning of the Lega proverbs, reaffirms the same domestic role for women in the Lega tribe. He argues that the essential role of women is that

⁴¹ Ross, E. and Amenga-Etego, *Unraveling and Reweaving Sacred Canon in Africana Womanhood*, 8.

⁴² Kagaragu Ntabaza, Abbe, *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes Des Bashi*, 280.

⁴³ Ibid., 282.

⁴⁴ Mineke Schipper, *Source of All Evil: African Proverbs and Sayings on Women*, 1. publ (London: Allison & Busby, 1991), 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 45.

of mother. Girls are, therefore, trained to become mothers.⁴⁶ They might not be expected to take public responsibility, especially as leaders.

The above proverbs from the DR Congo echo several proverbs from different countries of Africa. An Igbo, Yoruba, and Igala proverb says that “A woman’s place is in the kitchen.”⁴⁷ Ngandu-Myango interprets this as an affirmation of the force of women in the family.⁴⁸ I argue that both men and women are needed in domestic roles for the good of the family. The stress put on women’s domestic roles, here, obstructs their creativity for taking public responsibilities in society.

The third example is that of a typical Woyo proverb that says “A girl is a peanut seed: she enlarges the clan” or the Kongo proverb “A clan with posterity cannot perish.”⁴⁹ The reproductive role of women is also portrayed in the proverbs of the Lugbara and Ganda of Uganda, which say that “the satiety of a pregnant woman is her offspring.”⁵⁰ It is also seen in the Tsonga-Shangaga of South Africa which says, “the woman who has children does not desert her home.”⁵¹ Thus, women are expected to take more the mothering roles than political ones. This message is strongly internalized by women themselves. Many of the DR Congo’s women lose their lives in risky pregnancies because they believe their dignity is not affirmed apart from being mothers.

⁴⁶ Ngandu-Myango Malasi, *Mutanga: la corde à proverbes des Lega du Kivu-Maniema (Congo)*, Recall literature series, nr. 15 (Gent, Belgium: RECALL, 2000), 52.

⁴⁷ Jeylan Hussein W., “The Social and Ethno-Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs,” *African Study Monographs* 26, no. 2 (August 2005): 86. See Also. Abbé Kagaragu Ntabaza, *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes Des Bashi*, 3eme Edition (Bukavu/Republique du Zaire: Libreza, 1976), 280.

⁴⁸ Ngandu-Myango Malasi, *Mutanga*, 54.

⁴⁹ Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 23.

⁵⁰ Hussein W., “The Social and Ethno-Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs,” 82.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

The second category groups the proverbs that limit women's roles in public spheres to being the helper of men, even in leadership roles.⁵² In public spheres, it is expected for women to perform tasks like being a secretary of a leader, etc. As the Lingala (DR Congo) proverb puts it, *Mwasi atongaka mboka te*, which literally translates to: "woman does not build a village." This proverb resonates with the Yoruba's (Nigeria) proverb which says, "The woman leader will never aspire to the king's throne."⁵³ It echoes the Akan (Ghana) proverb as well, saying, "Those who entrusted their affairs to a woman will not prosper."⁵⁴ And finally, the Kikuyu, Maasai, and Kamba of Kenya which say that "women, like the weather, are unpredictable"⁵⁵ and the proverb of the Oromo and Amhara of Ethiopia which says "It is a husband's job to take care of the household, not woman's."⁵⁶ While a household can mean family, it also represents a country where the expected leader is a man. These proverbs deny women's ability to contribute to political life.

Though the denial of women's capability is more pronounced in rural areas than in urban, the androcentric proverbs are still used in urban areas in the DR Congo to justify the lack of trust in the ability of women to take political roles. The above proverbs portray a shared perception of women and their place in society. This perspective is limited to viewing women as submissive to men in both public and private spheres, both in rural and in urban areas. *Mwasi atongaka mboka te* expresses the perception that women are naturally incapable of building, organizing and leading societies.

⁵² Ngandu-Myango Malasi, *Mutanga*, 55.

⁵³ Sulemanu N-Eyare, *Those Who Entrusted Their Affairs to a Woman Will Not Prosper. Its Implication in the Ghanaian Muslim Community.*, 28.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁵ Hussein W., "The Social and Ethno-Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs," 84.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 83.

The third category of proverbs denies women's ability to perform jobs that are culturally perceived as masculine. Ngandu argues that gendered roles like these are much more pronounced in rural African areas where women can go fishing, but only a certain kind of fishing is allowed to them while men can do all other public and economically productive forms of fishing as well as other works such as hunting and crafts including repairing fishing nets for women.⁵⁷ Ngandu's point can be illustrated by the story about a group of women (in a contemporary rural area in the Northeast province of the DR Congo) who started a fishing project to help each other financially.⁵⁸ This project created many problems since a group of men refused to work with fisher-women, considering fishing to be an unsuitable job for a woman. After several tries to convince them, the women started their own business as fisher-women; they succeeded and started hiring a good number of men. Today this fisher-women group owns a boat. Thus, the restrictive norms that exclude women from fully participating in the public sphere could create broader limitations on the range of opportunities available for the good of the community. This example shows that ethicists and theologians should not overlook the impact of traditional gender norms on the political participation of women in the contemporary DR Congo and Sub-Saharan African countries.

There is a saying in Lingala which identifies women who do "males' jobs" as *mwasi-mobali* or, "woman-men." This expression is often used to describe women who carry major responsibilities or who do things which are considered to be masculine tasks, such as building a house. This saying is also used for women who take the liberty to override their culture in acting in a way that is expected from men. Thus, identifying a woman as a woman-man only

⁵⁷ Ngandu-Myango Malasi, *Mutanga*, 58–59.

⁵⁸ I was told this story by a female member of the fisher-women group during a workshop I led on their behalf in the summer of 2017.

because she is able to play the same roles men play in a society suggests that the nature of a woman, endowed with capability, dignity, and creativity, is denied.

The fourth group of proverbs describe women as a source of evil—if not evil itself. This is the case of the Lingala saying: *Kolia na mwasi kolia na ndoki*—“To eat with a woman means to eat with a witch.”⁵⁹ It resonates with the Yoruba proverb that says “Don’t confide in a woman.”⁶⁰ Several other Lingala and Kikongo maxims and sayings have public approval and convey violence against women’s humanity.

The fifth category of proverbs denies women’s maturity, wisdom, and rights, insinuating that they are inferior to men, and considering women as the weaker sex. As the Lingala proverb says: *Mobali ata ko azali mwana moke, azali mokolo ya mwasi*. This proverb means “A man, even the youngest, is greater than a woman.” It affirms that, though a woman may be an adult or older, she will always need men’s help or guidance because “a woman has little brain.”⁶¹ In other words, even a young boy would be taken more seriously than an adult woman in many cases. As a consequence, as far as leadership positions and political participation are concerned, precedence will always be granted to males over females, regardless of their maturity or competence.

Related to this is the idea likening women to a dog to be trained by a man. This echoes another Bushi proverb that says, *Omunyere cibwâna: ocikomire ye naciheka*. It means that a girl is like a puppy that spontaneously follows the master who trains it. This proverb implies that women are not expected to take initiative; they need to be lined up (by men). This Bushi

⁵⁹ Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 84.

⁶⁰ Sulemanu N-Eyare, *Those Who Entrusted Their Affairs to a Woman Will Not Prosper. Its Implication in the Ghanaian Muslim Community.*, 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

proverb is corroborated by the Luba saying, “Woman is like the earth: even a fool sits down on her.”⁶² The expression “sitting down” expresses a negation of women’s own creativity, but also a denial of women’s identity and humanity. This is related to the idea that a woman’s main role is to bear children (for her husband). Women internalize this duty, even at risk of their own lives.

Several proverbs display the belief that women are a weaker sex, including the distinction: *Loboko ya mwasi, loboko ya mobali* (left hand, right hand). The left hand represents the female and the right one represents the male. Similarly, a brave act would be identified as being performed by the right hand while a failure would be performed by the left hand. This suggests also that “men are brave while women are not.”⁶³ The left hand is considered weaker than the right one.

The sixth group of proverbs grants women value only in relation to men’s value. As the Lingala saying puts it, *Mwasi ata aza na mbongo soki aza na mobali te ezali soucis ya mikolo na mikolo*. It means: “A woman, even if she has money, is not fulfilled without a male presence.” This proverb is continually repeated by the elderly, adult, young, and children in conversation and in songs. Its popularity displays the extent of internalization. It echoes another saying, *Mwasi aza kaka mwasi*. That is to say, “Woman is still obliged to rely on a man to resolve problems.” Or, as the Luba proverb says, “A woman without a man is a field without seed.”⁶⁴ The latter suggests that unmarried, particularly women, have no value, for women have value only when they can be identified through a male. Another Bushi proverb

⁶² Mineke Schipper, *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from around the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 375.

⁶³ Sulemanu N-Eyare, *Those Who Entrusted Their Affairs to a Woman Will Not Prosper. Its Implication in the Ghanaian Muslim Community.*, 10.

⁶⁴ Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 24.

states, *Omunyere orhajira muchinja wabo, yo ngoko ebikira emurhamba*: “A woman without brother is like a singing hen in a hen house.” These proverbs echo the Ghanaian that says, “like hens, women wait for cocks to crow,”⁶⁵ meaning that it is only when a man is nearby that a woman finds fulfilment. They are suggesting that women are unable to function by themselves. A military man with whom I spoke in 2012 in the eastern DR Congo expresses this viewpoint well:

Case Two: Baba P. KIJESHI. These are Swahili words. They literally mean “military man.” Kijeshi is fifty-six. He is a sergeant major in the regular national army and has a bachelor’s degree. He is a father of six children. I asked Baba Kijeshi what he thought about women’s leadership in the DR Congo. In response to this question he said,

There are things in which men are better than women like the army and the police. The areas reserved for women in the army are dressmaking or the administration. You will find more women in the army in these sectors. Women: if you want some sponsorship from men, seek it, it will be granted but do not ask for equality between us because we are not equal.

This statement echoes the culture behind the idea of political participation of women in society, especially when it comes to decision-making positions. Several other cases illustrate the ways DR Congo’s women themselves internalize the “peanut seed” proverb.

Case Three: Mama N. MAPASA. These are Lingala words. They literally mean “the mother of twins.” She is thirty, married, with a bachelor’s degree. Mother of four children, Mapasa is dedicated to domestic tasks while looking for jobs.

[Mapasa] believes four children are not enough to enlarge the clan. Despite advice to be more aware of the problems of having children that she and her husband cannot care for, she continued to want more children. Consequently, a fifth baby died before birth. She was narrowly saved herself from that delivery. Yet, despite such a risk of losing her own life, she became pregnant the sixth time with triplets.

⁶⁵ Hussein W., “The Social and Ethno-Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs,” 83.

Again, this was a risky pregnancy. One of the babies was lost early in the pregnancy. The other two were delivered at the seventh month of pregnancy. The premature babies delivered at a hospital that had only two incubators. The latter were in use when she delivered. A few hours after delivering, the twins and mother were transferred alive to a big hospital where they had available incubators. But the babies died one after another before they could be incubated. The mother herself was very weak and needed a lot of care in addition to the shock of losing her babies. Mapasa lost her triplets in 2017. Since then, I meet her every summer, she has not yet recovered. This loss has created an emptiness within her that God's grace alone would fill.

Indeed, the peanut seed proverb is powerful and still impoverishing women to the point of killing them. This woman is only one case among the many of the DR Congo.

Case Four: R. AKILI MINGI. These are Swahili words. They literally mean “very smart.” Akili Mingi is thirty-two. She was a woman, single, and assistant professor in a local university. She was also an activist advocating for gender equality in the DR Congo through an international NGO.

She worked hard for the change of the DR Congo's laws that protected men in case of domestic abuses against women. Yet, this woman too followed the cultural imperative to bear children, no matter the risk. Unable to bear children, she chose to have therapeutic surgery, knowing how risky it is to go through surgery in the DR Congo in order to get pregnant. Yet, she wanted to have a baby and chose to take the risk. She went to the hospital driving her own car, the surgery went wrong and she never came back. She was only 32 years old.

Anecdotes such as these are not limited to my personal experience, and are not rare in a context like that of the DR Congo. They display what Bourdillon sees widely in religious traditions:

Religious traditions usually focus on what is done and whom one associates with. Beliefs are usually a reflection on community gatherings and rituals, rather than the reason for them. If we are to present a true account of the society under study, we need to focus not only on what is said, but also on what we observe people doing. Further, we need to pay attention to sounds, smells, tastes, and other sensations. Religion is not simply a system of beliefs and formal rituals; [but] it comprises events which take place in real, bodily life.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Bourdillon, “Anthropological Approaches to the Study of African Religions,” 223.

These examples display how the ethical system underlying misogynistic proverbs shapes the anthropological poverty of millions of the DR Congo's women. Also, these examples echo Booth's insight that, more than a systematic reading, recounting experiences can explain much better how African religion becomes a way of life.

Going back to the twins' mother, I must add that she is not a submissive woman at all. She manages to look for jobs. She wants to work to provide for her children. However, she is so shaped by the reproductive value praised in the proverbs that she does not realize the negative impact of having so many babies on her quest for employment. Nor does she consider their limited resources to provide for them. Somehow for her, even though it is valuable to find a job, her dignity is so affirmed through her children, that she is willing to risk death to have more children. As the cases show, women internalize the proverbs' message that their inner worth is grounded in their motherhood rather than in their being beloved and created in the image of God.

Given the similarity of the proverbs throughout Africa, there is no need to enlarge the list of cases similar to those of the twins' mother and the woman who died. One can readily affirm that women are not only impoverished by slavery and collusion of colonial power and Western Christianity; they are also impoverished by the oppressive systems displayed in the proverbs. The denial of women's dignity through the proverbs deprives women of their dignity, freedom, and thought—from all their rights. The proverbs show how, even within the scheme of ATR, women “sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only the external or internal goods or possessions, but that attacks at their very ‘being, essence, and dignity of the human

person.”⁶⁷ For this reason, I take issue with Magesa’s and even Mbiti’s idealization of African religion.

II.1.4. Magesa’s and Mbiti’s Idealization of African Religion

Mbiti counts the proverbs among the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom.⁶⁸ However, he explains that we cannot use them to infer that women’s humanity is denied in African religions. He gives two reasons for this statement. On the one hand, the philosophical content of the proverbs is mainly situational.⁶⁹ On the other hand, women have a clear place in African religions anyway.⁷⁰ However, Mbiti did not explain what he meant by “situational” nor explain the clear place of women in African religion(s).

The situational character of the proverbs most likely means what Abbé Kagaragu Ntabaza refers to when he explains that proverbs are associated with a complex of ideas or a given cultural complex.⁷¹ It also means that they are not absolute truths; their meaning and relevance can vary from one cultural context to another.⁷² I grant that African religion contains immutable truths that affirms the sacredness of women, as I will show in the chapter to follow. However, the cultural complex of the proverbs, even situational, continues to shape morality and the ethical systems regarding women’s dignity and negatively impacts their political participation in society.

⁶⁷ Engelbert Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 156.

⁶⁸ Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 66–67.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., xiii.

⁷¹ Kagaragu Ntabaza, Abbe, *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes Des Bashu*, VI.

⁷² Elizabeth Amoah, “African Traditional Religion and the Concept of Poverty,” in *Religion and Poverty: Pan-African Perspectives*, ed. Peter J. Paris (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 112.

Magesa advocates for the idea that preserving life and respecting the sacredness of life are the main principles that define the ethical system in ATR. For him, the role of women in ATR was as a valued mediator within the family, a conciliator in the wider community, and that women were regarded with awe as the symbol of divine life itself.”⁷³ According to him, women were regarded as carriers of life and, on that ground, were given a central role in peacemaking and reconciliation.⁷⁴ Indeed, some proverbs affirm Magesa’s points. For example, a Bushi proverb says, *Omukazi mubidu milala*,⁷⁵ meaning “The woman is the one who unites families.” A Kongo proverb says, “Women are like earthenware plates: not to be thrown in the waste pit.”⁷⁶ The latter proverb suggests that women have to be respected and even to be regarded as precious. Thus, Magesa reinforces Mbiti’s statement that women did have a valued place in African religions. He argues that honoring a woman was equal to honoring the whole community and the land.⁷⁷ However, in contrast to Mbiti, Laurenti Magesa specifically does acknowledge that women were often marginalized and oppressed in family, society, and politics in ATR:

... it is true that the women in traditional society were regarded as having a place in the community which was not only different, but was also to some extent inferior. It is impossible to deny that women did, and still do, more than their fair share of the work in the fields and in the homes. By virtue of their sex they have suffered from inequalities which had nothing to do with their contribution to the family welfare. Although it is wrong to suggest that they have always been an oppressed group, it is true that within the traditional society ill treatment and enforced subservience could be their lot.⁷⁸

⁷³ Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred?: African Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 73.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁵ Kagaragu Ntabaza, Abbe, *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes Des Bashi*, 281.

⁷⁶ Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 26.

⁷⁷ Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred?*, 73–74.

⁷⁸ Laurenti Magesa, “Differences That Bind the Liberation of Women in Africa,” *AFER* 35, no. 1 (1993): 44.

For Magesa, therefore, any discourse about the liberation of African women needs to be contextualized, “otherwise nothing results in speaking out of this context but alienation of both the women themselves and African society in general.”⁷⁹ The fallacy to avoid is taking “gender roles as determined and sanctioned by culture, on the basis of what culture perceives as *natural*, to be necessarily right and just, and therefore ethical.”⁸⁰ He adds that,

Roles or division of labor in Africa was meant primarily to enable the survival and functioning of society. It was not intentionally meant for the subjugation or alienation of women. But this does not mean that it did not contain a skewed, oppressive view of them.⁸¹

I argue that, no matter how good an intention is, when it ends up subjugating people, whoever they are, and denying them fundamental dignity, such an intention needs to be questioned. Though an intention might be good, its consequences do matter.

Magesa’s points suggest that formally, with regard to the consequences of the traditions as displayed in the proverbs, and materially, with regard to the subjugation and oppression of women, what drove the traditions in regard to women was the regulation of society, its survival and good functioning. Regardless, this was a patriarchal regulation in function. For Magesa, the subjugation and oppression of women is an accident, which does not determine the goodness or badness of the traditions. Magesa’s thoughts recall the case in which an evil action may happen to be ordained to a good end.⁸² Aquinas states that,

in natural things, it is to be noted that the whole fullness of perfection due to a thing, is not from the mere substantial form...since a thing derives much from supervening accidents, as man does from shape, color, and the like; and if any one of these accidents be out of due proportion, evil is the result.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica.*, Ia-IIae, q.18, a. 4.

⁸³ Ibid. Ia-IIae, q.18, a. 3.

In contrast to Magesa, I argue that the subjugation of women as displayed by the proverbs—and in contemporary DR Congo life—is out of due proportion. For this reason, it is evil. The goodness of an action not only depends on the goodness or righteousness of its intention, but also on the circumstances which lead to the action. A good intention that ends up subjugating women for generations suggests that all the essential circumstances have not been considered or that the intention itself is not being applied in a right way and in respect to its inner goodness.

The narrative of a judge of the DR Congo's judiciary court that I came to know in my work is helpful to assess Magesa's statement on the non-intentionality of the subjugation of women. I presented to this judge some cases of women abused by their husbands who resisted complying with the husband's abusive requests. However, the judge believed it is wrong for a woman, abused or not, to refuse to comply with her husband's requests because "the husband is the authority" of the household. For him, refusing to comply is making things worse in the sense that it undermines the good functioning of the marriage. The judge's attitude here echoes the proverb that "It is a house where there is no male that the female speaks,"⁸⁴ suggesting that no matter the participation of women, the last decision in household's affairs belongs to men. The judge even referred to Pauline texts as reflected in the DR Congo's family legal code as a result of collusion Church, political, and colonial power. The judge's intention in endorsing male authority even in the cases of the abuse of women does not explicitly aim at subjugating women. Yet, his judgments are wrong and oppressive to women. They obviously support their subjugation. Therefore, those judgments cannot be morally acceptable on the basis of their good intention to ensure "good" functioning of the family.

⁸⁴ Christensen, "The Role of Proverbs in Fante Culture," 239.

In addition, Magesa argues that “African religious perspectives persist despite the odds against them, and they serve a positive purpose.”⁸⁵ Magesa explains that “for African Religion, all principles of morality and ethics are to be sought within the context of preserving life and its ‘power’ or ‘force.’”⁸⁶ Since African religion is life-centered, those in authority are charged to ensure the well-being of the community and each one of its members.⁸⁷ The oppressive proverbs toward women as well as the facts displaying the gender inequality in the DR Congo, however, show that the authority fails to ensure the well-being of women, therefore failing to enact the life-centered vision of the African religion in practice. The actual ethical system stifles women’s voices in society. It denies the fundamental principles of equal dignity between men and women. It also fails to affirm women’s sacredness and *Ubuntu* or humanness, which are the core of ATR itself.

The meaning of Ubuntu goes far beyond the community level, in fact, embracing an even more comprehensive prospect. The latter is contained in its first prefix *Ubu*. The second prefix *ntu* means “the process of life as the unfolding of the universe by concrete manifestations in different forms and modes of being.”⁸⁸ The ontological dimension in the concept of Ubuntu is also seen in the ways Ubuntu is etymologically defined. There are two concepts that form the word Ubuntu or *muntu*: *Bu-muntu* and *Ki-muntu*. Both refer to *the concept of “Being” or simple to “Be.”* *Bu-muntu* suggests humanity, bounty, benevolence, and justice⁸⁹ and *Ki-muntu* suggests compassion or mercy, a way of being that is more humanizing.⁹⁰ Phonological variants

⁸⁵ Magesa, *African Religion*, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

⁸⁸ Heinz Kimmerle, *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Glocal Management*, ed. Henk van den Heuvel, Mzamo Mangaliso, and Lisa van de Bunt, SAVUSA Series 2 (Amsterdam: Rozenberg; [etc.], 2006), 3, <http://rozenbergquarterly.com/ubuntu-and-communalism-in-african-philosophy-and-art/>.

⁸⁹ Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français, avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite kikongo. A-L*, 74.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 260.

of Ubuntu suggest that the philosophy of Ubuntu stands against oppression, affirms solidarity with the weak, and a model of power that emphasizes love, justice, self-giving, and service of and towards women as well as men. As Mogobe argues, Ubuntu reaffirms the indivisibility between the “one-ness and whole-ness.”⁹¹ In Ubuntu, we are truly human when we use our lives for the good of others to whom we are bound by our humanity.

There is a need for a solidarity that can help to correct any system that is abusive towards women or any other group within the African ethical system. The following section explores the extent to which the philosopher Thaddeus Metz responds to this challenge.

SECTION TWO: WOMEN WITHIN THE COMMUNAL VIEW OF AFRICAN ETHICS

Introduction

Philosopher Thaddeus Metz makes a philosophical claim that solidarity should change the African way of life when it becomes abusive to women or to any other group in society. This claim is relevant to address the subjugation of women displayed in the African proverbs described. It is also significant for the vision of brotherhood, sisterhood, and kinship that lies behind the philosophy of Ubuntu, which I would argue can only stand through solidarity. This section will use the phenomena of gender inequality and sexual violence, especially in the DR

⁹¹ Erasmus D. Prinsloo, “Ubuntu Culture And Participatory Management,” in *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 51.

Congo, to assess Metz's philosophical view of communion and harmonious relationships in African ethics.

II.2.1. Communal (Harmonious Relationship) View of the African Ethics

Metz suggests two ways for communion and harmonious relationships in African ethics. The first is sharing an identity. The other is living in solidarity with others. This solidarity seeks the common good, achieved through people in communion sympathizing and aiding each other.⁹² Since Afro-communal ethics is essentially relational, Metz explains that “all agents must treat others as having dignity in virtue of their capacity to enter in a communal life.”⁹³ Community, therefore, involves a combination of both identity and solidarity, as Metz's schematic representation of communion in African ethics shows (figure 1).

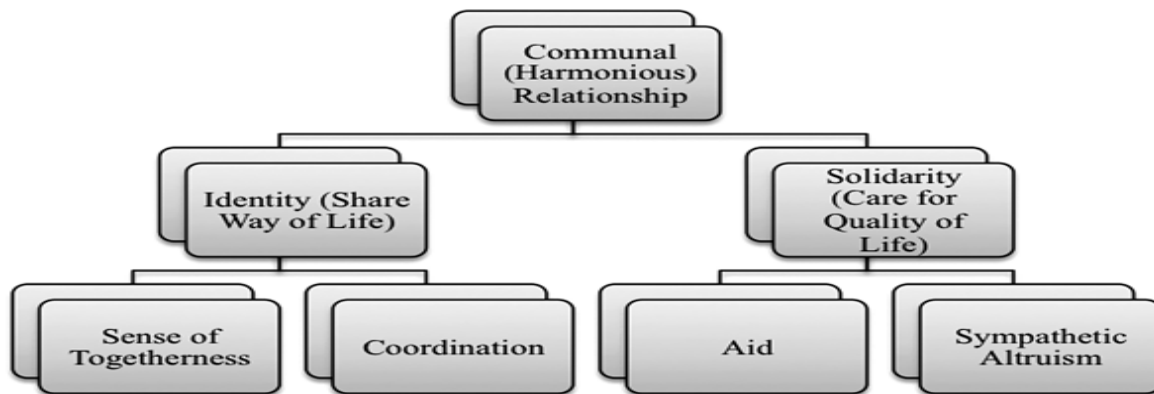


Figure 1: Metz's Schematic Representation of Communion⁹⁴

⁹² Thaddeus Metz, "The Western Ethic of Care or an Afro-Communitarian Ethic? Specifying the Right Relational Morality," *Journal of Global Ethics* 9, no. 1 (April 2013): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2012.756421>.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹⁴ Thaddeus Metz, "Replacing Development: An Afro-Communal Approach to Global Justice," *Philosophical Papers* 46, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 118, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2017.1295627>.

For Metz, “it is not a relationship exhibiting both identity and solidarity that confers a moral status but rather an individual’s natural capacity for it.”⁹⁵ This is in contrast to Kantianism and utilitarianism, wherein treating others rightly is the function of some good that is intrinsic to the individual (autonomy according to Kantianism, and pleasure according to utilitarianism). In African ethics, on the other hand, people have dignity in virtue of their capacity to relate to others rather than by their virtue of being part of an established group.⁹⁶ Thus, harmonious relationships and caring are key for identity, not merely belonging. This idea of harmony with neighbors existed in the ancient Egyptian nation, around 3,000 BC, even before the prophet Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed. Harmony with neighbors aimed to provide a flourishing life and it is sought out as a response to conflicts within family, community, and nation.⁹⁷

Metz contrasts the idea of harmony in community in African ethics with the individualistic views of Western thought. He adds that Western moral views “focus on an intrinsic property of individuals such as their pleasure, desire-satisfaction, self-ownership, integrity, desert, or autonomy,”⁹⁸ while African ethics focuses on “community [as] a characteristic feature of African or sub-Saharan worldviews and practices.”⁹⁹ This means that while we must grant that community is also valued in other parts of the world, it is “a value salient among the black cultures below the Sahara desert in a way that it tends not to be elsewhere.”¹⁰⁰ As Desmond

⁹⁵ Thaddeus Metz, “African Communitarianism and Difference,” in *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference*, ed. Elvis Imafidon (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 10, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04941-6_2-1.

⁹⁶ Thaddeus Metz, “Relational African Values between Nations: Bringing Communion to the Global Order,” in *Contemporary Africa and the Foreseeable World Order*, ed. Francis Onditi et al. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019), 135.

⁹⁷ Molefi Kete Asante, *Facing South to Africa: Toward an Afrocentric Critical Orientation*, Critical Africana Studies: African, African American, and Caribbean Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Studies (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 136.

⁹⁸ Metz, “The Western Ethic of Care or an Afro-Communitarian Ethic?” 78.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 80.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Tutu puts it, “the communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community” is the *summum bonum*, the “greatest good,”¹⁰¹ which is worthy to be pursued for its own sake.

Metz continues that, while Western Kantian-oriented morality focuses on autonomy or rationality as central to the dignity of the human person,¹⁰² African ethics is essentially “relational” and specifically “communal.” Desmond Tutu expresses this in even clearer terms, stating that

My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “a person is a person through other people.” It is not “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.” A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.¹⁰³

Tutu’s description of Ubuntu is relevant. It affirms that we are all called to be people of Ubuntu. It is towards this call to human solidarity that Thaddeus Metz’s view inclines.

Metz strongly disagrees with the many African philosophers and theologians who argue that African ethics promotes the interests of the community over those of individuals. He discredits the authors who emphasize the communal to the detriment of the individual, conveying the idea that, in African ethics, “community is ontologically and morally prior to the individual.”¹⁰⁴ For Metz, affirming that community is more important than the individual is a distortion of what African ethics involves and constitutes a source of tension between African values and individual differences. He stands against a kind of Ubuntu which he calls the

¹⁰¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Image Doubleday, 1999), 35.

¹⁰² Metz, “Relational African Values between Nations: Bringing Communion to the Global Order,” 134.

¹⁰³ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Metz, “African Communitarianism and Difference,” 5.

“Southern African catchword for morality,” whose proponents leave behind the importance of individuals realizing their aspirations or desires, including acquiring vocations or personal skills which embrace the communitarian way of life.¹⁰⁵ He cites Nkondo saying,

If you asked ubuntu advocates and philosophers: What principles inform and organize your life? What do you live for?... [T]he answers would express commitment to the good of the community in which their identities were formed, and a need to experience their lives as bound up in that of their community (Nkondo 2007, 91).¹⁰⁶

Metz maintains that community in African ethics is “sufficiently respectful of difference.”¹⁰⁷

He also stands against African theologians who argue that

social interests are invariably stronger than individual ones, that personhood is constituted by adherence to a given community’s standards, that unanimous agreement must be achieved at all costs or that overriding goods include upholding traditions and being deemed useful to society.¹⁰⁸

He argues that the idea that “personhood is acquired by conforming to social norms”¹⁰⁹ leads to oppressing homosexuals, lesbians, and women and is therefore a distortion of the vision of Ubuntu. This oppression elicits anger against a way of life that acts contrary to its harmonious ideals or that does not ensure the interplay between collective consciousness of the need to preserve community and the dignity of each individual. No community can stand where individuals’ rights or inner value are trampled on. Thus, Metz does not share the idea that Ubuntu as a way of life is communal at the cost of the individual.

Metz explains that, discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender is even censured by the law in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. As he puts it,

For example, even if homosexuality, for example, were not criminalized, the law might permit those who run universities and corporations not to admit those who

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 6–7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

are gay and to dismiss those who are discovered to be. Or the law might allow those in charge of allocating educational and work opportunities to do so on a gendered basis, so that, say, women are prevented from becoming firefighters and men from becoming nurses.¹¹⁰

For Metz, these practices of repressive communitarianism that leave no place for individual liberties easily obscure differences, not only based on sexual orientation, but also on gender. What Metz overlooks is that even when the law might not be discriminatory in itself, the patriarchal mindset of Church and society often takes the lead in discriminating on a gender basis. For example, a woman or a nun theologian would have more trouble being hired as a teacher in a seminary than a man or a priest would.

Thus, communitarian views opposing individual dignity do not necessarily define African ethics. Rather, they show that African communitarianism is not rightly understood and that it is made incompatible with true African ethics. From a philosophical standpoint, Metz affirms a communal framework that implies identity as a share in a way of life, caring for the quality of life for all members, and solidarity in sustaining a flourishing life for all. This solidarity suggests “promoting others’ well-being, being sympathetic, acting for the common good and showing concern for others,”¹¹¹ as well as partaking in their joy and suffering.

Thus, in virtue of the relational dimension of Christian ethics, in which people come together, participate cooperatively, and commit to serving the need of one another through mutual aid. The people’s coming together is altruistic, caring for the other’s sake. Metz’s vision of solidarity suggests a deep desire to take responsibility for alleviating the suffering of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 7–8.

¹¹¹ Metz, “The Western Ethic of Care or an Afro-Communitarian Ethic.” 81.

individual encountered in a relationship.¹¹² Afro-communal ethics is, then, not only compatible with the different, it is also inclusive of difference.¹¹³

Metz's description of communal African ethics is a philosophical ideal which is not meant to be descriptive of how communitarian and relational African societies actually function. Even if the values it highlights were not and are still not lived up to in African societies consistently, they are prescriptions that draw on values that are significant elements of these societies. These values provide a reconstruction of what is particularly attractive about some facets of African cultures, especially solidarity. I argue that this solidarity is not to be taken for granted, considering both the abusive proverbs as well as the evil of sexual violence against women in contexts of war and conflict as the section to follow illustrates.

The philosophical prescriptions of Metz, emphasizing the dignity of the individual, is challenged by the present reality of abuses against women. The recent statistics of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the poverty of women are illustrative of this point. To the UNDP data, I add research showing the anthropological poverty of women through rape, used as a weapon of war, and I argue that this data is overlooked by the UNDP. At the same time, I claim that women's anthropological poverty challenges Metz's representation of communion and harmonious relationships in African ethics.

II.2.2. Sub-Saharan African Women's Poverty—Challenges to the African Communal-Harmonious View

According to the 2018 UNDP estimates, the majority of the world population living below the income poverty line are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.¹¹⁴ The 2019 UNDP's report

¹¹² Ibid., 79.

¹¹³ Metz, "African Communitarianism and Difference," 12.

¹¹⁴ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "*The 2019 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)*," *Human Development Reports*, accessed January 2, 2020, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-MPI>.

attests that among 105 countries, 77% of population falls below the poverty line, the Sub-Saharan African region boast the highest number of impoverished people with 560 million of the world's poor followed by South Asia (540 million). Sub-Saharan Africa is also ranked with a high gender inequality index regarding maternal mortality in the birth process and the adolescent birth rate. It is also counted among regions where women hardly have access to high-level education, even in the 21st century.

However, women in Sub-Saharan Africa beat the record of the world's poor despite a higher labor force participation rate than most comparably ranked countries at 63.5% for women (age 15 and older) against 72.9% for men. It is followed by East Asia and the Pacific (59.7% against 77% for men), Latin America and the Caribbean (51.8% against 77.2% for men), Europe and Central Asia (45.2% against 70.1% for men), South Asia (25.9% against 78.8% for men), and finally the Arab States (20.4% against 73.8% for men). Yet despite this high rate of women in the labor force, Sub-Saharan African women share only 23.5% of parliament seats.¹¹⁵

Amnesty International counts the DR Congo among the worst places in the world to be a woman, along with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and India,¹¹⁶ as the fact of rape as a weapon of war illustrates. Besides, information about areas in which women's rights could be advances, the violence against women in war continues to go under-reported. Violence against women in wars, especially rape used as a weapon of war, is another factor increasing their anthropological poverty.

¹¹⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2019. Beyond Income, beyond Averages, beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century* (Lanham: Bernan Press, 2019), 149.

¹¹⁶ "The World's Worst Places to Be a Woman."

The DR Congo phenomenon of war-related rape is not unique, as Nontando M. Hadebe corroborates in her work on the abduction of schoolgirls by the Boko Haram in northern Nigeria in April 2014. She argues that this abduction of girls in wars represents violence that “characterizes the lives of many women and sexual minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa.”¹¹⁷ In the DR Congo, rape as a weapon of war is very tied to the mining economy.¹¹⁸ This tie suggests a continuity of the colonial and postcolonial politics of greed and plunder, by which the DR Congo operates, as suggested by Katongole. It also shows continuity from the abuses of women under colonial mining, as described by Coquery-Vidrovitch in Chapter One. Besides, the DR Congo case not only illuminates the reality of the African wars but of many of the worst war zones around the globe. It shows how “women are the face of poverty...[or how] poverty manifests in the lives of women in various forms.”¹¹⁹ As I will argue in Chapter Six, Congolese women’s poverty constitutes a “sign of the times,” relevant to inform the Church’s teaching on the preferential option for the poor.

II.2.3. Rape with Extreme Violence (REV) in the DR Congo—Challenges to the African Communal-Harmonious View

Rape has been used against women in conflict zones all over the world. The estimated scale of sexual violence during World War II and in several countries in conflicts indicates that rape has been and continues to be used as a prevalent weapon of war even in contemporary times. Up to 200,000 Bengali women were raped by members of the Pakistani army in their attempt

¹¹⁷ Nontando M. Hadebe, “‘Advocate For Life!’ A Kairos Moment for the Catholic Church in Africa to Be a Guardian, Sustainer, and Protector of Life,” in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 214.

¹¹⁸ United Nations, “Letter Dated 12 November 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1533 (2004) Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo...,” Security Council, November 15, 2012, 01/15/2013, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1533/egroup.shtml>.

¹¹⁹ A. E. Orobator, “Introduction: Reading the Times for Signs of the Future,” in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), xx.

to suppress the Independent Movement in Bangladesh in 1971. US troops used the same weapon in the Vietnam War against Vietnamese women as “standard operating procedure.”¹²⁰ Up to 20,000 - 50,000 cases were recorded in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1991-93.¹²¹ This weapon was used recently in the massacre of Muslim Bosnians in Srebrenica in 1995, in Syria, Iraq, Burma, Croatia, Colombia, Haiti, and Mexico. In Africa, the number of victims of sexual violence in war zones was accounted to 50,000-64,000 in Sierra Leone between 1991-2002, and 250,000-500,000 in the 100 days Rwandan genocide in 1994. This weapon is still used in war zones in Libya, Guinea, South Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda, and the DR Congo.¹²²

The use of rape as a weapon of war reflects “systematic or strategic and opportunistic forms of sexual violence that occur in the build-up to, active fighting in, and aftermath of armed conflict.”¹²³ It is “a deliberate strategy of one or more parties to the armed conflict.”¹²⁴ As Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen state,

War rape is perhaps the clearest example of an asymmetric strategy. In war rape, the enemy soldier attacks a civilian (not a combatant), a woman (not another male soldier), and only indirectly to hold or take territory. The prime aim of war rape is to inflict trauma and thus to destroy family ties and group solidarity within the enemy camp. Apart from the demoralization, war rape can also become an integral aspect of ethnic cleansing.¹²⁵

Rape as a weapon of war can also include mass rape and extensive forced prostitution.¹²⁶ Such a weapon is used because of the way it destroys the social structure of the community,

¹²⁰ Kerry F. Crawford, *Wartime Sexual Violence: From Silence to Condemnation of a Weapon of War* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 13.

¹²¹ Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, “Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War,” *Body & Society* 11, no. 1 (March 2005): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X05049853>.

¹²² Crawford, *Wartime Sexual Violence*, 58.

¹²³ Ibid., 14.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Diken and Laustsen, “Becoming Abject,” 111.

¹²⁶ Crawford, *Wartime Sexual Violence*, 14.

humiliating the adverse camp, and transforming women into “abjects.”¹²⁷ Diken and Laustsen used the word “abject” to mean that women are forced to feel as “‘dirty,’ morally inferior person[s].”¹²⁸ Rape enacts abjection by not only demonstrating the power of one camp over the other but also by denigrating the victim from without and spoiling her from within, making her feel ashamed.¹²⁹

Rape with extreme violence (REV) is a term coined by Dr. Denis Mukwege, who is a doctor, obstetrician, and gynecologist, and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. He is the director of Panzi Hospital in the eastern DR Congo, a pioneer in the treatment of female victims of rape. Dr. Denis Mukwege is known for “repairing” the physical pathologies created by REV. The concept of “repairing” women is used by Dr. Mukwege himself to show the extent to which REV destroys women’s bodies. It also suggests that REV is used with the intention to deny women their humanity.

Mukwege has identified three primary types of violent rape: gang rape, usually by three or more men, leading to a high risk of injury; genital mutilation; and the intentional transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and HIV.¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch reported that around five hundred thousand women were subjected to rape during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. It is estimated that up to five thousand children were born from pregnancies resulting from these rapes and who are now stigmatized as unwanted children. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Family in Rwanda, after 1994, 35% of the pregnant women referred to the hospital conceived during rape. This number could be even higher,

¹²⁷ Diken and Laustsen, “Becoming Abject,” 117–18.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 113.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹³⁰ Denis Mukengere Mukwege and Cathy Nangini, “Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,” *PLoS Medicine* 6, no. 12 (December 22, 2009): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000204>.

considering that some of the raped women choose to commit suicide when they find out that they are pregnant. As a Rwandan rape survivor asked, “how can you have a child of someone who killed your husband and children?”¹³¹ Many other women chose not to disclose they had been raped after finding themselves pregnant. Many kept the child but abandoned them later.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), in 2010, more than five thousand women were raped between January and August in the province of South Kivu alone,¹³² and “in 2011, a nationally representative household survey estimated that 1.69 to 1.80 million Congolese women had been raped in their lifetime.”¹³³ The actual magnitude of rape is not known. The actual estimates of rape are lower than the reported.¹³⁴ Panzi hospital reports having treated 48,482 women who have been victims of extreme sexual violence by 2015.¹³⁵

The perpetrators of rape in the DR Congo include the Rwandan and Ugandan armed groups and foreign armies, including those arising from the DR Congo itself. These are reinforced by soldiers recruited from refugee camps from the DR Congo, Burundi, and Uganda.¹³⁶ The eastern borderlands and waters of the DR Congo—from North to South—are full of key mineral and energy resources such as diamond, gold, coltan, copper, cobalt, tin, manganese,

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch/Africa, Women's Rights Project (Human Rights Watch), and Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, eds., *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996), 46.

¹³² UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice* (UN Women, 2011).

¹³³ Susan Bartels et al., “Militarized Sexual Violence in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 28, no. 2 (January 2013): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512454742>.

¹³⁴ Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, and Caryn Bredenkamp, “Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *American Journal of Public Health* 101, no. 6 (June 2011): 1060, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2010.300070>.

¹³⁵ Denis Mukwege and Marie Berg, “A Holistic, Person-Centred Care Model for Victims of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Panzi Hospital One-Stop Centre Model of Care,” *PLOS Medicine* 13, no. 10 (October 11, 2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002156>.

¹³⁶ United Nations, “Letter Dated 12 November 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1533 (2004) Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo...,” 74, 22.

zinc, coal, uranium, and oil—to name only these few. Groups of armed “rebels” are among the main perpetrators of rape as they exploit the natural resources in the borderlands.¹³⁷ The situation of Congo is a war-rape-mining triad.

The vulnerability to which this triad exposes women is without equal, alienating what Meghan Clark calls the “self-determination, self-realization/self-actualization”¹³⁸ of women. It is women’s humanity that is imperiled, their ability to participate in community and to be in solidarity that are hindered. Metz suggests that, in the African ethics, “it is not merely those in a communal relationship with us that matter morally but instead anyone who could enter into one.”¹³⁹ Rape alienates women, their families, and their communities. Rape prevents them from any harmonious relationship and kills both the individual that Metz affirms so strongly as well as the community. The complexity of this alienation needs to be considered in Metz’s view and schematic representation of communion in African ethics, which, though prescriptive, overlooks the many challenges faced by women to move forward towards a flourishing shared way of life. Our orthopraxis speaks about the orthodoxy by which we chose to live.

My aim is not to elaborate on the contrast between the prescriptive representation of communion suggested by Metz and the reality of women or other excluded groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. My aim is to undertake the same prescriptive task as Metz’s, a theological task to suggest a representation that is more inclusive of the reality of women and that ensures that no interest, whether cultural, religious, or economic, comes at the cost of women’s identity and

¹³⁷ Ibid., 174, 38.

¹³⁸ Meghan J. Clark, “Integrating Human Rights: Participation in John Paul II, Catholic Social Thought and Amartya Sen,” *Political Theology* 8, no. 3 (July 2007): 315, <https://doi.org/10.1558/poth.v8i3.299>.

¹³⁹ Metz, “African Communitarianism and Difference,” 111.

dignity. An orthodoxy that affirms the community but whose orthopraxis sacrifices the individual could be read as “We are; therefore, I am not,” instead of “I am because we are” as proponents of Ubuntu suggest.

It is important to note that Metz does affirm the precedence of solidarity against the marginalization of women or that of any other group in society:

identity must be tempered by solidarity, and the latter might often take precedence. Where a traditional practice such as clitoridectomy is patently harmful, the fundamental value of care would recommend criticism and change... Hence, where practices are gendered or otherwise authoritarian and harmful, one who prizes communal relations has clear ground to struggle against them.¹⁴⁰

I agree with Metz that solidarity needs to be the corrective virtue which changes the abusive dimensions of women’s lives within the African worldview. Neither women nor any other social group, such as homosexuals, should be excluded from participating fully in shaping the communal way of life. Moreover, given the fact that participation is a preamble to any harmonious relationship, there is a need to change the schematic representation of communion as suggested by Metz to include the reality of the marginalized groups of Sub-Saharan Africa and to ensure solidarity plays its central role.

It is crucial to look into the ideological and political potential of such a solidarity to face the challenges that abuses of women pose to African religion. This solidarity will not only emphasize that individuals should embrace the whole community, as suggested by Magesa,¹⁴¹ but it will also include the people-centered dimension—suggesting interests in peoples and members of the community.¹⁴² Metz’s vision of communion suggests a more vertical process,

¹⁴⁰ Metz, “The Western Ethic of Care or an Afro-Communitarian Ethic?,” 87.

¹⁴¹ Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred?*, 155.

¹⁴² Vuyisile Msila, “African Leadership Models in Education: Leading Institutions through Ubuntu,” *Anthropologist* 18, no. 3 (2014): 1109.

in which solidarity is the bottom level upon which community can be built up. I argue, however, that for solidarity to effect change, it must take the center place within a horizontal model, where excluded groups such as women and homosexuals would participate fully. A horizontal and inclusive model is more likely to be transformative of a way of life that is currently incoherent with the sacredness of the life of each person and group. Furthermore, the stories of the female victims that I will present in the last chapter will illustrate conclusively why solidarity should take primacy over any way of life that denies women's identity and dignity.

We must retrieve the virtue of solidarity to subvert the negative drives of anthropological poverty that shape women's personhood and participation in society. This retrieval is the task to which I will turn in Chapter Three. I will explore how solidarity is imbued with liberating roles in the ATR. What wisdom or orthodoxy of political participation does this solidarity provide? How can it inspire and motivate women to experience anger (orthopathy), and give rise to practices (orthopraxy)¹⁴³ that are coherent with the interplay between the sacredness of the individual and the collective consciousness of solidarity?

¹⁴³ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 209–10.

CHAPTER THREE: GROUNDING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN HISTORICAL FIGURES AND AFRICAN MYTHS: SOPHIOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

Introduction

This chapter will, firstly, explore the orthodoxy component—the right formulation from the perspective of faith—relying on the mythical goddess figures in African mythology and the ways they provide a theological logico-speculative explanation that illuminates and assigns a rational foundation for the political participation of women in the public sphere. This foundation will be grounded in the sacredness of women's lives and the collective consciousness of solidarity demonstrated by these myths and figures. The chapter will consider Sobrino's suggestion that we reflect on how Jesus' life is in itself is a demonstration of the priority of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, a model by which to correctly formulate our faith. Jesus' life and teaching remind us of the priority of doing the will of the Father, not just proclaiming it.¹

Secondly, I will use an experiential and inductive approach to provide insight from the reality of resistance as performed by female historical figures. These will include the accounts of seventeenth century women in the Kingdom of Kongo:² (1) Kimpa Vita, a young woman, who, with the strength of her faith in God, politically participated in affirming Congolese

¹ Ibid., 157.

² Most of the people who make up the DR Congo (modern) have brothers in neighboring countries. This is the case of Bakongo. Kimpa Vita was born in Angola, but her legacy is legitimately claimed by Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC and Angola, each of which has a piece of the old kingdom of Kongo. The kingdom of Loango, present in Gabon and Congo brazzaville, was a tributary (vassal) of the kingdom of Kongo.

women's *imago Dei* [image of God]. (2) Anne Nzinga, a queen of the Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba (contemporary Angola),³ which were part of the Kingdom of Kongo. (3) The queen mothers, called *mwami kazi*, of the Bushi people of the DR Congo. I will focus on the virtue ethics that the acquired character of these women suggests in relation to their political participation. As Katongole, referencing Mugambi, suggests:

African Christian theology/in the twenty-first century will be characterized by these themes of social transformation and reconstruction. The shift from liberation to social transformation and reconstruction... involves discerning alternative social structures, symbols, rituals, myths and interpretations of Africa's social reality by Africans themselves, irrespective of what others have to say about the continent and its peoples (Mugambi 1995:40).⁴

Thus, this chapter will take on the task of interpreting African myths and extrapolating from the examples of African female historical figures in support for the political participation of women as an avenue for positive social change. This task will provide what Katongole called "a far more promising point of reference in understanding the prospects of African Christian identity" missing in many works of African theologians.⁵

This chapter explores the resistant elements of African traditions that are life-affirming for women and the ways in which they reinforce the idea of women's political participation. It explores the ways figures in African mythology—including Isis (Ancient Egypt) and Mpemba Nzinga (Kingdom of Kongo)—and the historical figures of women suggest an orthodoxy, a practical wisdom through which to address women's anthropological poverty. The chapter assesses the ways such orthodoxy is sophiological⁶ and how the practical wisdom overflowing

³ I refer to Anne Nzinga of the Kingdom of Ndongo and Matamba, actual Angola, because these two kingdoms were part of the Kongo before the Berlin Conference. The latter kingdoms used to be composed of the Bantu people of the Kongo. The people named Bakongo are found in several countries of Central Africa, but used to be one people before the division of Africa by the Berlin Conference.

⁴ Emmanuel Katongole, "A Different World Right Here, A World Being Gestated in the Deeds of the Everyday." *The Church within African Theological Imagination*, *Missionalia* 30, no. 2 (August 2002): 219.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 163.

from it might build up both the individual dignity of individual women and the collective consciousness of solidarity in society—foundations upon which, I claim, women's political participation must be cemented. The chapter will then conclude by assessing how the myths and historical figures provide a theological explanation that illuminates and assigns a rational foundation for the political participation of women.

Daniel Margeurat argues that biblical authors were not mindful in their writing of the complex methodology of constructing narratives. Nevertheless, they did apply—in part consciously, Margeurat would argue—norms of narrative construction that are also found in folktales. These norms belong to the millennium-old art of storytelling.⁷ African myths belong to this art, containing valuable virtue ethics, including those affirming the political participation of women. I argue that the myths of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga, politically charged with such virtue, empower women to rise up. Since the discourses of myths are a form of folktales, to assess the balance between the individual dignity and the collective consciousness of solidarity, I will draw on the methodology of narrative criticism. Before taking up the myths of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga, however, let me introduce the reader to what narrative criticism involves.

Understanding Narrative Criticism

Mark Allan Powell⁸ describes narratology as a set of characteristics that make a text *un récit*, or, “a narrative.” A narrative tells a story. A narrative analysis, therefore, is a method of reading that explores and examines how the narratology of the text is concretized. As he puts it,

⁷Daniel Margeurat, “Entrer Dans Le Monde Du Récit,” in *Quand La Bible Se Raconte*, ed. Daniel Margeurat, Les Editions du CERF (Paris, 2003), 36.

⁸ Professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Mark Allan Powell is editor of the HarperCollins Bible Dictionary.

Basically, narrative criticism interprets the text from the perspective of an idealized implied reader who is presupposed by and constructed from the text itself. Thus, in narrative criticism it is less necessary to know the historical situation of the actual readers for whom the text was originally intended... Unlike rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism does not interpret texts from the perspective of the text's actual, original audience; it is not necessary to know everything they knew in order to understand the text aright. The implied reader, however, does know some things that are not stated in the text... The goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as the implied reader...⁹

Elisabeth Struthers Malbon defines the concept of implied reader even more clearly. She argues that "the implied reader is not a 'person' but the sum total of the competencies that can be deduced from the text as necessary for the text to be read (or heard) and understood."¹⁰ The narrative criticism approach, therefore, allows a non-expert or non-exegete biblical scholars like myself to interpret the text using such competencies suggested by Malbon.

Marguerat and Bourquin consider three useful tools to undertake a narrative criticism as I have already introduced them: the contextualization of the narrative; the *Schéma Quinaire* (Quinary Diagram), which allows us to thoroughly analyze the circumstances of a narrative in five steps; and the evaluation which entails our assessment of the relevance of the text to our actual context. The latter is performed from the reader's perspective.¹¹ Contextualizing the story means considering the historical and socio-cultural circumstances in which it is or was told. Contextualizing a story includes data with factual or metaphorical values that can describe the socio-cultural, political, and economic backdrop against which the story takes place.¹²

The five steps of a story as mapped by the quinary diagram are as follows. First, an initial situation that is to be changed must be identified. The second stage identifies the "tension."

⁹Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Struthers Elizabeth Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: Learning to Listen to the Story," *Catholic Theology and Thought*, no. 72 (Winter 2013): 13.

¹¹Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *La Bible se raconte: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*, Les éditions du CERF-LABOR ET FIDES-NOVALIS (Paris-Geneve-Montreal, 2002), 27–58.

¹²Ibid., 27.

Tension in a story is like a knot which is tied. This is the “knotting” process, which suggests a complication within the story, the disruptive element. It also suggests that the process of passage from the initial situation to a new one is launched. Marguerat and Bourquin call this launching process “nouement.”¹³ They draw this concept from Aristotle's poetics, which argued that any story can get knotted and unknotted.¹⁴ Marguerat and Bourquin also refer to “nouement” as the intrigue of the story. They explain that intrigue can be of two kinds: intrigue of resolution (or, transformation) and that of revelation. In the case of transformation, the intrigue suggests the passage from one state to another, it is about moving from a complex problem to a solution.

The third stage occurs with the transformative action itself. This is the “turning point” or the “pivot” of the story.¹⁵ Transformation can take place punctually or through a long-term process of change. It is then followed by the fourth stage, “denouement” or, literally, the “unknotting” process.¹⁶ It occurs when the “knot” of tension is untied or when the solution to the central problem or conflict is found. It also describes the effects of the transformative action, which, particularly in the context of this dissertation, could consist of passing from a sick state to a state of health, from death to life, from being dependent to becoming independent, from slavery to liberation, or from self-consideration as an inferior being to reaffirming one's dignity and sacredness of life. Regarding the interest of this research, the “denouement” will be concerned with shifting from anthropological poverty to living as risen beings by the means of the “get up” process. The final stage or situation of the quinary diagram

¹³Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *Pour Lire les récits bibliques: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*, Les éditions du CERF-LABOR ET FIDES (Paris-Genève: Les Editions du Cerf, 2009), 56. “Nouement” is a French word which literary means Knotting.

¹⁴Aristotle, *La Poétique: Introduction, traduction, notes, étude de Gerard Lambin* (Paris: L'harmattan, 2008), 83. (1455b, 24–29).

¹⁵Marguerat and Bourquin, *La Bible se raconte: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*, 58.

¹⁶Marguerat and Bourquin, *Pour Lire les récits bibliques: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*, 56.

describes the new state of life that emerges once the tension has been removed and the effects of transformation have taken place.

Finally, the evaluation is the stage in which the reader assesses the relevance of the story to his or her own world. I suggest a sophiological hermeneutic to assess the relevance of the ways in which the sacredness of the individual and the collective consciousness of solidarity are imbued in the myths and historical figures' stories represented herein. To do this, I will first describe what a sophiological reading entails.

SECTION ONE: SOPHIA AS PRACTICAL WISDOM—A THEOPOLITICAL HERMENEUTIC FOR READING THE AFRICAN MYTHS

III.1.1. Introduction—Wisdom/Sophia and Sophia as Practical Wisdom

*Who is Sophia?*¹⁷ Sophia is a Greek term of feminine grammatical gender which means “wisdom.”¹⁸ Shüssler Fiorenza explains that Wisdom/Sophia in the bible—like *Ruach* (Spirit), *Shekhinah* (Presence), and the word *Chokmah* (Wisdom)—is also a grammatically feminine term that means “Lady.” This section will thus build on the biblical stance that Wisdom is the teacher of all virtues, as affirmed in the Book of Wisdom (8:2–8), including justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude.

In biblical literature, Wisdom/Sophia suggests two main theological meanings. In the first one, Sophia is a female personification or figuration of the divine that signifies God's saving

¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, 10th anniversary ed (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 87.

¹⁸ Gilles Quispel, “Sophia,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, Mircea Eliade, and Charles J. Adams, 2nd ed (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 8522.

presence and actions in the world and history of humanity.¹⁹ This is the ontological level. Sophia is God's wisdom who is present in creation.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that Wisdom/Sophia with their female figurations "has been completely erased from the memory of Western Christianity"²⁰ and that Sophia, which was there at the beginning as proclaimed in Proverbs 8:22, became a male figure who took over her role. The attributes of Sophia as personification of wisdom are transferred to the incarnated Logos, who is Christ the Lord according to the Gospel of John. Silvia Schroer reinforces Schüssler Fiorenza's points on the disappearance of Sophia, stating that "the male Logos absorbed the female Sophia (for clearly patriarchal reasons) and so brought about her disappearance."²¹

Sophia also refers to God's Spirit. Elizabeth Johnson points out the concept of *shekinah* as "a term with female resonance that carries forward the biblical understanding of God's Spirit." It suggests a divine presence whose attribute is a "compassionate engagement with the conflictual world."²² She is the source of energy and comfort in the struggle.²³ Johnson thereby explains Wisdom/Sophia as a way of expressing the mystery of God and the Spirit of God in a female symbol.

A second meaning of Sophia in biblical literature resonates with the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom. For Aristotle, "wisdom must plainly be the most finished of the forms of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first

¹⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being," *Nhanduti Editora*, 2009, 3.

²⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 131.

²¹ Silvia Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House: Studies on the Figure of Sophia in the Bible* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000), 120.

²² Johnson, *She Who Is*, 86.

²³ Ibid.

principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles.”²⁴ On the other hand, practical wisdom “is the knowledge...[that] is not concerned with things human and things about which it is possible to deliberate...nor [is it] concerned with universals only—it is concerned with particulars;... with action.”²⁵ Drawing from Aristotle, Trowbridge and Ferrarri affirm that practical wisdom requires virtues whose centerpiece is prudence. *Phronesis* refers to practical wisdom which itself refers to the virtue of prudence. In ancient Greek philosophy, *Phronesis* has to do with the concrete and particular and guides deliberation about what is the right thing to do in a particular situation.²⁶

Practical wisdom therefore resembles or is derived from divine wisdom as a teacher of justice, who shows the way and enlightens leaders of the people, “raising her voice, transgressing boundaries, celebrating life, nourishing.”²⁷ Susara J. Nortjé-Meyer²⁸ explains that both meanings of wisdom are found in all religions and are cross-cultural realities.²⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza reinforces this, arguing that this language of divine wisdom is still significant as it provides a framework to develop a “biblical spirituality of nourishment and struggle.”³⁰

The *Wisdom of Solomon* speaks of Sophia as “the emanation of God’s glory, the Holy Spirit, the immaculate mirror of his energy, nay, even the spouse of the Lord.”³¹ Solomon thought of wisdom as the source of his blessings, his counselor and comfort, and a gift of God

²⁴ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross and Lesley Brown (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 108–9.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Richard Hawley Trowbridge and Michel Ferrari, “Sophia and Phronesis in Psychology, Philosophy, and Traditional Wisdom,” *Research in Human Development* 8, no. 2 (April 2011): 91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2011.568847>.

²⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being,” 10.

²⁸ Department of Religion Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

²⁹ Susara J. Nortjé-Meyer, “Mutual-Mothering as Wise Living or Living Wisely,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (April 21, 2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4637>.

³⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being,” 10.

³¹ Quispel, “Sophia,” 8523.

(Wisd. 7–8). “She is the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the image of his goodness;”³² the one who can do and renew everything (Wisd. 7:26–27) and grants immortality (Wisd. 10:17). She is the Word, Logos, she was there in the beginning, she was with God, and she was God.³³ In her divine function, she reinforces “the assurance of the divine protection”³⁴ She is life itself. She gives life, and saves.³⁵

And thus, the paths of those on earth were set straight
and men were taught what pleases you
and by Sophia they were saved (Wisd. 9:18)

She symbolizes Torah in the book of the covenant; she is intimately close to God, and settles among the people.³⁶ She is a “people-loving spirit, friendly to human beings: “wisdom is a kindly spirit.” She is:

Intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all other intelligent spirits. (7:22–23).³⁷

In *Sirach* 15:2, she is portrayed as a woman, a mother, and a bride. Sirach also affirms that the pursuit and possession of wisdom is the way to happiness (Si. 14,20—15,5).

Johnson argues that the power of the symbolism of mothering is found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Different aspects of being mother, including “conceiving, being pregnant, going into labor, delivering, midwifing, nursing, carrying, rearing,” are all metaphors symbolizing profound depths of divine love towards human beings, including care, comfort, compassion, mercy, etc.³⁸ Johnson adds that “Discourse about holy mystery in the symbols of

³² Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., “God at the Crossroads. A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2004), 194.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House*, 65.

³⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 87.

³⁶ Ibid., 89.

³⁷ Ibid., 94.

³⁸ Ibid., 100–102.

spirit, Sophia, and mother provides a glimpse of an alternative to dominant patriarchal language about God.”³⁹

Several attributes are given to Sophia to explain her theological significance as practical wisdom. Silvia Schroer states that Sophia is a “creative unity.” This unity is seen in her programmatic appeal: “Love righteousness, you ruler of the earth.” Although full justice will be established only by God, Wisdom is the teacher of righteousness which is accessible to all.⁴⁰ “Wisdom is to be sought above all else (8:2–9:18) and kingship is achieved only through Wisdom (6:17–21).”⁴¹ She is the source of life and justice, the one who proclaims the truth, the right and the noble thing to be done.⁴² As Shüssler Fiorenza argues,

Divine Wisdom is a cosmic figure delighting in the dance of creation, a “master” crafts wo/man and teacher of justice. She is a leader of Her people and accompanies them on their way through history. Very unladylike she raises her voice in public places and calls everyone who would hear her. She transgresses boundaries, celebrates life, and nourishes those who will become her friends. Her cosmic house is without walls and her table is set for all.⁴³

In our narrative analysis, I will approach the sum of teachings that can be retrieved from the myths as practical wisdom with relevance to the conflicts of the DR Congo—a context which is similar to that of other countries that formed part of the Kingdom of Kongo at one time. My use of the myths will be limited to the “linguistic, symbolic, hermeneutical level of reflection”⁴⁴ that approaches mythical figures from the perspective of practical wisdom rather than an ontological perspective.

³⁹ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁰ Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House*, 108–9.

⁴¹ John S. Kloppenborg, “Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom,” *Cambridge University Press on Behalf of the Harvard Divinity School* 75, no. 1 (January 1982): 64.

⁴² Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, “God at the Crossroads. A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia,” 189.

⁴³ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being,” 10.

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 178.

III.1.2. Theopolitical Significance of Sophia for the African Myths

A myth is a tale that seeks either to give an answer to an enigma of existence or to explain the origin of things. Myths are not considered to be scientific, nor can they be considered to be the result of an irrational human imagining informed by merely human instincts (impulses or drives). Myths are informed by faith and beliefs in the sacred or the transcendent. They are very close to history and are products of the times and places from which they were told.⁴⁵ Yet, they might also suggest regulatory moral principles whose relevance goes beyond their own geographical setting. As Katongole explains, it is distorting to agree with the negative connotation that modernity accords to myths. Modernity looks at myths as if they were only “superstition and fictitious legend” or “a way of knowing which is less than scientific and thus less true.”⁴⁶ Myths go beyond knowledge and embrace a greater vision.

Myths therefore are stories of epic dimensions, stories that invite their hearers to participate and become part of drama that extends beyond one's small world... Myths therefore are stories of transcendence and as such offer hope and purpose for one's life.⁴⁷

Epistemology of myths: Myths as speculative and globalizing systems of knowledge.

According to mythologists Jean-Loïc Le Quellec and Bernard Sergent, the function played by myths changes according to the schools promoting them. Le Quellec and Sergent therefore advise us not to generalize the knowledge drawn from them. Other ethnologists attribute to myths two types of function: pragmatic and performative. They agree, however, that myths do play more than a pragmatic role in providing a social and a ritual model; they provide the

⁴⁵Wyatt MacGaffey, “Crossing the River: Myth and Movement in Central Africa” (International symposium Angola on the Move: Transport Routes, Communication, and History, Berlin, 2003), 10.

⁴⁶ Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa*, 79.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

guiding principles for comportment and the means to socially integrate individuals within a community.⁴⁸

Louis-Vincent Thomas explains that there is no society without imagination. A myth-narrative responds to a society's imagination. Each society expresses ideas about what its purpose, wishes, aspirations, and fantasies are. Each society relies on a system of representation that defines things and peoples, determines identities and roles, fixes the objectives to pursue, and helps different groups to pursue life according to their own specificities. Black African myths, likewise, play two roles: they seek to provide the meaning of things and the purpose of beings. They also seek to provide norms and codes to guide behavior.⁴⁹ MacGaffey reinforces this when he states:

A myth's explanatory value consists in the story's reduction to a simple, orderly form of a situation that is not only uncertain as to the facts but politically charged. It acquires operative value in a given context because the pattern it locates in the past is deemed to explain and legitimate the present.⁵⁰

Myths thereby express an ideology in traditional societies. They constitute a language or a universal discourse through which principles of personified metaphysics such as chaos, emptiness, strength, etc. provide meaning to our more literal reality.⁵¹

Myths as reference to common ancestors. Myths define the same origin for all, determine the normative system that regulates aspects of existence, identify the object of people's beliefs, determine the principles guiding behavior, and the mode of relations between individuals themselves and between individuals and other groups. Myths do also convey a vision of the

⁴⁸Jean-Loïc Le Quellec and Bernard Sergent, *Dictionnaire Critique de Mythologie* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2017), 861.

⁴⁹Louis-Vincent Thomas, "Mythes Africains d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui," in *Rencontres de religions: actes du colloque du Collège des Irlandais tenus sous les auspices de l'Académie royale irlandaise, juin 1981*, ed. Proinsias Mac Cana et al. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), 75.

⁵⁰MacGaffey, "Crossing the River: Myth and Movement in Central Africa," 1.

⁵¹Thomas, "Mythes Africains d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui," 76.

world and the ways in which groups in a social and historical context should relate to such a vision. They justify a collective sensibility.⁵² I argue that African myths should be used, therefore, to critically assess the oppressive traditional patriarchal gender norms towards African women.

Myth as normative systems that guide behavior. Black African myths suggest an archetypal model of what must be done regarding moral or practical wisdom as well as religious ritual. They provide indications with such a binding force of conviction that they end up functioning as imperatives. In their essence, myths must be regarded as collective good essentially transmissible from one generation to another. Such a transmission is performed through sayings repeated at important social events such as the enthronement of a king, circumcision, a girl's first menstruation, and mourning. The norms and codes of behavior suggested by myths are also transmitted through songs and dances performed at various celebrations. Thus, generally, myths justify the foundations for hierarchies in society, redistribution of roles and powers between women and men, including the belief in the "supposed"⁵³ superiority of men over women.⁵⁴

For my purpose, I chose two myths to analyze—those of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga—because, first, they are both concerned with the theopolitical dimension of the conception of women's leadership.⁵⁵ Second, they both display the ways African religion functions as a way of life, showing that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the "distinction between political and ritual roles, so important to those for whom the separation of church and state seems obvious, cannot be made."⁵⁶ Symbiosis between the political and the ritual in African religions may help in

⁵²Ibid., 75.

⁵³ Emphasis Mine.

⁵⁴Thomas, "Mythes Africains d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui," 76–77.

⁵⁵MacGaffey, "Crossing the River: Myth and Movement in Central Africa," 2.

⁵⁶Ibid., 5.

understanding the scope of the interplay of individual dignity with collective consciousness of solidarity.

Even though the myth of Isis originated in North Africa, it can be considered as part of the African common heritage and has influenced, at least to some degree, Sub-Sahara Africa. Théophile Obenga states that, "today's living black African societies... still retain quite a few archaic lifestyles directly traceable to the ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilizations of the Nile."⁵⁷ Rather than considering all of Obenga's arguments to justify this influence, I consider two facts that show it is reasonable to assume that the Isis myth has influenced the region of Nubia and also Sub-Sahara Africa.

The first fact has to do with the ancient Egyptian geographical setting and trade relations with neighboring countries. Through these, ancient Egypt was related with "neighboring countries to the South (Nubia), to the west (Libya), in the Mediterranean (Crete), Mesopotamia, Anatolia,⁵⁸ and got its supplies of gold from Coptos and Kush (Nubia).⁵⁹ Besides, Nubia is at the crossways between Egypt and black Africa.⁶⁰

The second fact is that the writings of two ancient authors, Lucius Apuleius and Diodore of Sicily, speak of Isis as a divinity which was worshipped and venerated all over the world,⁶¹ including by the Ethiopians who live in the North of Meröe.⁶² It is important to note that the city of Meröe is located about two hundred kilometers north of Khartoum in modern Sudan⁶³

⁵⁷ Théophile Obenga, *African philosophy: the Pharaonic period, 2780-330 B.C.* (Penguin, Senegal: Per Ankh, 2004), 225.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 290.

⁵⁹ See Also, Drovetti Collection, Cat. Nos. 1879, 1969, Egyptian Museum, Turin.

⁶⁰ Obenga, *African philosophy*, 273.

⁶¹ Apuleius, *The XI. Books of the Golden Ass Containing the Metamorphose of Lucius Apuleius*, trans. William Adlington (London, D. Nutt, 1893), 233.

⁶² E. H. Warmington, ed., *Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes II (Books II (Continued) 35-IV, 58*, trans. C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge, Massachusetts: William Heinemann LTD; Harvard University Press, 1935), 107. Book III. 8. 5-9. 222

⁶³ Jacob F. Ade Ajayi and John Middleton, eds., *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara. 3: Literature to Réunion* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 145.

and that Sudan shares its southern borders with the northeast border of the DR Congo. There is some indication that the myth of Isis may have influenced the African myths.

Regardless, the key point of this section is not to prove the influence of the myth of Isis in Sub-Sahara Africa; rather it is to show the relevance of African myths to the idea of political participation of women in Sub-Sahara Africa in general and the DR Congo in particular. A sense of the theopolitical relevance of the myth of Isis for Sub-Sahara Africa, including the DR Congo, can be drawn from the common cosmological features found in African myths despite the diversity of culture in the African continent. As Suzan Rasmussen argues,

There are some widespread motifs or common themes in many African myths and cosmologies: they concern deities; the creation of the universe, the origin of humans, human institutions, and values; the coming of death; animals; heroes and leaders; and powerful mediating figures associated with reproduction, sacred power, and conversion of natural into cultural substances.⁶⁴

These features are found in general in African myths such as the Dogon myth (Mali), the Fang myth (southern Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and northwest Gabon),⁶⁵ and the Fon myth (Benin).

These myths affirm creation as a divine function par excellence and this function is often performed by a genderless god/God. To illustrate, the Dogon creation myth is concerned with the conditions of life and death.⁶⁶ It provides imagery of a triadic, personified metaphysic cosmogony, which can easily be considered as corresponding to or even equivalent to the expression of the Trinity in Christian religion. In the Fon myth, “the Fon creator-god *Mawa* is usually seen as female, but has both male and female traits.”⁶⁷ For Mercy Amba Oduyoye, what

⁶⁴ Susan Rasmussen, “Myth and Cosmology,” in *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara. 4: Rhodes to Zulu, Index*, ed. Jacob F. Ade Ajayi and John Middleton (New York: Scribner, 1997), 250.

⁶⁵ Diagram Group, ed., *Encyclopedia of African Peoples* (New York: Facts on File, 2000), 80.

⁶⁶ Thomas, “Mythes Africains d’Hier et d’Aujourd’hui,” 76.

⁶⁷ Diagram Group, *Encyclopedia of African Peoples*, 85.

interests her in African myths most is the divine origin of both male and female.⁶⁸ I share Oduyoye's interest, but for the purpose of this research, I will approach the myths of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga looking at their theopolitical dimension.

This political dimension is seen in Rasmussen's points when she argues that, in general, African myths and cosmologies share the same conception of the person and agency which supports a view of humanness that promotes "a balance between collective identity as a member of society and personal identity as a unique individual."⁶⁹ Oduyoye reinforces this point, arguing that the Nigerian myths do challenge women's exclusion from participating in the "art of divination" and in politics. This reading of the lives of the goddess empowers women to participate in public life and provide their own wisdom.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, cosmological African myths do not always promote women's agency. Among the cosmological myths, Oduyoye gives an example of the myth of Oludumare and Obatala in which a Supreme God sends sixteen male divinities and one female divinity to supervise and direct affairs on earth. The males ignore the female and things went wrong. But the Supreme God reminds them about a missing piece: the female divinity. She was finally included but ultimately sent her son to represent and act on her behalf. As Oduyoye puts it: "She declines involvement."⁷¹

In the myth of Isis, Horus plays the same role by the end, taking over from Isis. So, for Oduyoye, myths may be written to contain the power of women.⁷² They can be "structured to make sure that all female rebels are duly contained. These myths are society's way of pleading

⁶⁸ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 22–23.

⁶⁹Rasmussen, "Myth and Cosmology," 253.

⁷⁰ Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 35.

⁷¹ Ibid., 22.

⁷² Ibid., 31.

with women to put community welfare above their personal desires.”⁷³ Consequently, by referring to the rich resources of the myths, I am not arguing that they are the perfect model. They are not meant to describe, from a philosophical view, how African societies were or should be. Instead, I mean to use them to reconstruct the values that are particularly salient in them and relevant to mobilize women's political participation in the modern era.

Building upon the above overview, my assessment will be concerned, on the one hand, with the relevance of the female deities and their role in creation myths to political mobilization of women. I argue that gender balance in the conception of divinity in ATR is a powerful resource to help women arise and move out of their anthropological poverty. On the other hand, I will consider the interplay between collective consciousness of solidarity and the sacredness of the individual as suggested by the myths.

SECTION TWO: READING AFRICAN MYTHS IN LIGHT OF SOPHIA AS PRACTICAL WISDOM.

Reading African myths in light of the virtues that Sophia as practical wisdom suggests could be a powerful means to bolster political participation of women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Shüssler Fiorenza raised an important question:

how can one recover the traces of this submerged sophiological tradition in such a way that the rich table of Divine Wisdom once again provides spiritual food and drink, nourishment and strength in the struggles to transform kyriarchal relations of exploitation and marginalization?⁷⁴

Moreover, we must also ask: can we read these myths in such a way that they help women to get up and arise from their anthropological poverty? My narrative criticism of the myths and

⁷³ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 163.

the stories of historical figures constitute a response to the concern over how to recover the theopolitical dimension of their sophiological values. Thus, using narrative criticism, I will focus on the function of the myths as teachers of virtues and will conclude by assessing the ways these virtues may move women to get up and confront their anthropological poverty. I will also conclude by assessing the ways these virtues inform the interplay between a collective consciousness as promoted by Ubuntu and the dignity and sacredness of each woman.

III.2.1. Narrative Criticism of the Myth of Isis

1. Contextualizing the Myth of Isis and its Relevance for Sub-Sahara Africa

The context of the myth of Isis overlaps the African (Egyptian) mythology, ATR, Christianity, and Greek mythology. Scholars argue that the name Isis appears as early as the fifth dynasty (2456–2325 BCE) and in the *Pyramid Texts* at the end of the Old Kingdom (2650–2152 BCE). She is the personification of the throne; the concept of Isis means “the one who has ruling power.”⁷⁵ The Isis story had undergone several interpretations including, “a stoicizing interpretation, but she preserved, like the Christian Sophia, personal aspects and maintained the ability to save individuals from disaster and to grant favor to supplicants.”⁷⁶

Through a Hellenization process, Isis also became a Greco-Roman goddess thanks to the economic trading activities of the Greek merchants with Egypt beginning in the seventh century BCE. In Greece, Isis is also a Greek name for the temple of the Goddess, functioning as a symbol of a place where dwells science and knowledge of what is in the cosmos. As a Goddess, Isis also suggests the quest for justice and the revelation of divine things. Isis is represented as a mother, daughter, and the sister and wife of Osiris. She is also pictured as the

⁷⁵ Sarolta a. Takacs, “Isis,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, Mircea Eliade, and Charles J. Adams, 2nd ed (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 4557.

⁷⁶ Kloppenborg, “Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom,” 70.

female divinity with the most decisive role in the story facing all the misfortunes experienced by the male divinity figure Osiris. She not only mourns him; she fights with the arms of virtue against the vices and power of Typhon, the personified evil who killed him. The myth deals, therefore, with the role of Isis in the socio-political context in which evil imposes itself. It displays the conflicts of good against evil, love over that of hatred, and liberation over imprisonment.⁷⁷ Below is an excerpt of Plutarch's account of Isis and Osiris.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," in *Moralia*, vol. V (the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1936), secs. 15–19, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/A.html.

⁷⁸ ...1.3. One of the first acts related of Osiris in his reign was to deliver the Egyptians from their destitute and brutish manner of living.⁶⁸ This he did by showing them the fruits of cultivation, by giving them laws, and by teaching them to honour the gods. Later he travelled over the whole earth civilizing it without the slightest need of arms, but most of the peoples he won over to his way by the charm of his persuasive discourse combined with song and all manner of music. Hence the Greeks came to identify him with Dionysus.

During his absence the tradition is that Typhon attempted nothing revolutionary because Isis, who was in control, was vigilant and alert; but when he returned home Typhon contrived a treacherous plot against him and formed a group of conspirators seventy-two in number... Typhon, having secretly measured Osiris's body made ready a beautiful chest of corresponding size artistically ornamented, caused it to be brought into the room where the festivity was in progress. The company was much pleased at the sight of it and admired it greatly, whereupon Typhon jestingly promised to present it to the man who should find the chest to be exactly his length when he lay down in it. They all tried it in turn, but no one fitted it; then Osiris got into it and lay down, and those who were in the plot ran to it and slammed down the lid, which they fastened by nails from the outside and also by using molten lead. Then they carried the chest to the river and sent it on its way to the sea through the Tanitic Mouth...

1.4...Isis, when the tidings reached her, at once cut off one of her tresses and put on a garment of mourning in a place where the city still bears the name of Kopto. Others think that the name means deprivation... "But Isis wandered everywhere at her wits' end; no one whom she approached did she fail to address..."

1.5 Thereafter Isis, as they relate, learned that the chest had been cast up by the sea near the land of Byblus and that the waves had gently set it down in the midst of a clump of heather. The heather in a short time ran up into a very beautiful and massive stock, and enfolded and embraced the chest with its growth and concealed it within its trunk. The king of the country admired the great size of the plant, and cut off the portion that enfolded the chest (which was now hidden from sight), and used it as a pillar to support the roof of his house. These facts, they say, Isis ascertained by the divine inspiration of Rumour, and came to Byblus and sat down by a spring, all dejection and tears; she exchanged no word with anybody...

1.7. In the first place where she found seclusion, when she was quite by herself, they relate that she opened the chest and laid her face upon the face within and caressed it and wept...

1.8. As they relate, Isis proceeded to her son Horus, who was being reared in Buto, and bestowed the chest in a place well out of the way; but Typhon, who was hunting by night in the light of the moon, happened upon it. Recognizing the body, he divided it into fourteen parts and scattered them, each in a different place. Isis learned of this and sought for them again, sailing through the swamps in a boat of papyrus. This is the reason why people sailing in such boats are not harmed by the crocodiles, since these creatures in their own way show either fear or their reverence for the goddess.

The traditional result of Osiris's dismemberment is that there are many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt; for Isis held a funeral for each part when she had found it. Others deny this and assert that she caused effigies of him to be made and these she distributed among the several cities, pretending that she was giving them his body, in order that he might receive divine honours in a greater number of cities, and also that, if Typhon should succeed in overpowering Horus, he might despair of ever finding the true tomb when so many were pointed out to him, all of them called the tomb of Osiris. ...

I reference Plutarch's account of Osiris and Isis because we do not have access to the "original" Isis myth, only to various cultural interpretations. I also reference him because he was himself often referenced by Christians such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea, who read and admired him.⁷⁹ Although, as suggested by Nortjé-Meyers, "there is no consensus among biblical scholars that... a goddess myth such as Isis is the matrix for the wisdom sayings in the New Testament,"⁸⁰ biblical scholars seem to agree on the fact that the Wisdom Book of the Hebrew Bible shows connections to a personification of a female Wisdom/Sophia. The myth of Isis is considered by scholars such as *Theophile Obenga and Nortjé-Meyer* to be an influence on the African philosophy of Ubuntu that, as argued in Chapter Two, is a relevant resource for women's political participation in Sub-Saharan Africa,

1.9. Later, as they relate, Osiris came to Horus from the other world and exercised and trained him for the battle. After a time, Osiris asked Horus what he held to be the most noble of all things. When Horus replied, "To avenge one's father and mother for evil done to them," Osiris then asked him what animal he considered the most useful for them who go forth to battle; and when Horus said, "A horse," Osiris was surprised and raised the question why it was that he had not rather said a lion than a horse. Horus answered that a lion was a useful thing for a man in need of assistance, but that a horse served best for cutting off the flight of an enemy and annihilating him. When Osiris heard this he was much pleased, since he felt that Horus had now an adequate preparation...

Now the battle, as they relate, lasted many days and Horus prevailed. Isis, however, to whom Typhon was delivered in chains, did not cause him to be put to death, but released him and let him go...

2.1 Therefore the effort to arrive at the Truth, and especially the truth about the gods, is a longing for the divine. For the search for truth requires for its study and investigation the consideration of sacred subjects, and it is a work more hallowed than any form of holy living or temple service; and, not least of all, it is well-pleasing to that goddess whom you worship, a goddess exceptionally wise and a lover of wisdom, to whom, far her name at least seems to indicate, knowledge and understanding are in the highest degree appropriate.... [Typhon] tears to pieces and scatters to the winds the sacred writings, which the goddess collects and puts together and gives into the keeping of those that are initiated into the holy rites, since this consecration, by a strict regimen and by abstinence from many kinds of food and from the lusts of the flesh, curtails licentiousness and the love of pleasure, and induces a habit of patient submission to the stern and rigorous services in shrines, the end and aim of which is the knowledge of Him who is the First, the Lord of All, the Ideal One. Him does the goddess urge us to seek, since He is near her and with her and in close communion. The name of her shrine also clearly promises knowledge and comprehension of reality; for it is named Iseion, to indicate that we shall comprehend reality if in a reasonable and devout frame of mind we pass within the portals of her shrines...

⁷⁹ Frederick E. Brenk, "Plutarch," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, Mircea Eliade, and Charles J. Adams, 2nd ed (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 7201.

⁸⁰ Nortjé-Meyer, "Mutual-Mothering as Wise Living or Living Wisely," 2.

particularly in the DR Congo, even if it is not to be found lived-out consistently. Such an influence can be situated in the “essence of the moral ideal in Ancient Egypt”: *Ma'at*.⁸¹

For the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, *Ma'at* is a virtue, one of the core beliefs of the Egyptian religion and ethics system that constituted the foundation of social interaction in Ancient Egypt. *Ma'at* suggests three main values: act for each other, speak and listen to each other, and think of each other. It, like Ubuntu, is about solidarity and care for each other. Gerlinde Baumann, in turn, sees *Ma'at* as “a norm of behavior.”⁸² Similarly, for Obenga, “Maat was the principle coordinating all values”⁸³ and the basic, transcendental moral law that could be summarized as “Justice-Truth”⁸⁴ in the Egyptian pharaonic period. For Molefi Kete Asante, *Ma'at* means truth, justice, righteousness, harmony, balance, order, and reciprocity.⁸⁵

Maulana Ntabezita Karenga,⁸⁶ after examining the *Ma'atian* theology, ontology, anthropology and social practice, concluded that *Ma'at* constitutes a “rich resource for philosophic reflection and modern moral discourse”⁸⁷ regarding social justice that influenced the vision of morality in black Africa. Such an influence is justified by the many trading relations between both North-Africa and Sub-Sahara Africa to the Nubians, including the connections with Ethiopia, the Horn, and the east African coast.

Mark Horton argues that the trading between North-Africa and Sub-Sahara Africa opened up the opportunity for “the transmission of religious knowledge, and with it, artistic, legal, and

⁸¹ Maulana Ndabezitha Karenga, “Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics” (California, University of Southern California Los Angeles, California University of Southern California Libraries 2015-02-13, 1994), x.

⁸² Gerlinde Baumann, “Ancient Egyptian *Ma'at* or Old Testament Deed-Consequence Nexus as Predecessors of *Ubuntu*?,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 2 (June 8, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i2.1429>.

⁸³ Obenga, *African philosophy*, 603.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁸⁵ Molefi Kete Asante, “The Philosophie of Afrocentricity,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (New York, NY, U.S.A: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 235.

⁸⁶ Previously known as Ron Karenga, an African-American professor of *Africana studies*, activist and author

⁸⁷ Karenga, “Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics,” xi.

administrative connections”⁸⁸ were made. For Horton, sources of evidence of such connections include written and archaeological materials [first dates to the 6th century] and oral traditions.⁸⁹ Besides, it is important to note that the Nubian culture is identified as particularly African in its foundation and in its expression.⁹⁰

I am interested specifically in the similarity (of values) between Ma’at and Ubuntu, which have already been shown by many scholars. Ramathate Dolamo affirms the links between Ma’at and Ubuntu when he states: “the notion of botho/Ubuntu started in Egypt as far back as 1500 BCE.”⁹¹ Dolamo identified seven values as expressing the culture of Ma’at, including “truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity and order.”⁹² Gerlinde Baumann, citing Assmann, who quoted the proverb “I am what I am because of who we all are,” explains that the latter proverb is not a recent African saying, rather it is connected to the Ancient Egyptian concept of Ma’at.⁹³ Thus, Ubuntu values are in harmony with the principles of Ma’at, as Nortjé-Meyers explains:

proponents of *Ubuntu* link *Ubuntu* core values (community; respect; *seriti/isithunzi* [vital/moral force]; sharing; caring; belief in a divine world) to the values of the Egyptian principles of morality enshrined in the forty prescriptions or admonitions of Ma’at.⁹⁴

Thus, Ma’at is in harmony with the African philosophy of Ubuntu: “I am because we are.” Since this dissertation attempts to construct an ethics system for women’s political participation that is both Christian and African, however, it is also relevant to grasp how Ma’at is related to the Christian conception of Wisdom/Sophia and practical wisdom. Karenga, in

⁸⁸ Mark Horton, “Medieval Links with Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara. 2: Edo to Literacy*, ed. Jacob F. Ade Ajayi and John Middleton (New York: Scribner, 1997), 34.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 30–31.

⁹⁰ Diagram Group, *Encyclopedia of African Peoples*, 165.

⁹¹ Ramathate Dolamo, “Botho/Ubuntu: The Heart of African Ethics,” *Scriptura* 112, no. 1 (2013): 2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Baumann, “Ancient Egyptian *Ma’at* or Old Testament Deed-Consequence Nexus as Predecessors of *Ubuntu*?”

⁹⁴ Nortjé-Meyer, “Mutual-Mothering as Wise Living or Living Wisely,” 4.

referencing Obenga describes the domains of Ma'at which allow us, first, to grasp how Ma'at is linked to the Christian conception of Wisdom/Sophia as personification of wisdom. He explains:

The understanding of Maat as an interrelated order of rightness in the course of its development in Kemetic intellectual history evolves from the conception of Maat as a constitutive part of creation itself, both as a goddess or divine spirit and as a conceptual personification of order, rightness, truth, justice, etc.⁹⁵

This latter understanding is emphasized in the myth of Isis and Osiris, where Isis undertakes a variety of roles as mother, wife, giver of life, and protector. As the Platonist philosopher and rhetorician Licius Apuleius (125–170 AD) reinforces, referring to Isis's words:

I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistresses and governess of all the Elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of powers divine, Queen of heaven, the principal of the Gods celestial, the light of the goddesses: at my will the planets of the ayre, the wholesome winds of the Seas, and the silences of hell be disposed; my name, my divinity is adored all over the world in divers manners, in variable customs and in many names...⁹⁶

The variety of roles played by Isis is considered “an expression of the inclusiveness and completeness of the Divine.”⁹⁷ This inclusiveness in the conception of God is in harmony with the Christian concept of Wisdom/Sophia as personification of wisdom.

There are also political and social dimensions of Ma'at to consider, which display the link between this concept and the Christian concept of practical wisdom. In the political area, “Maat is justice and in opposition to injustice;” and in the social dimension, Ma'at focuses on “right relations and duty in the context of community.”⁹⁸ Indeed, Ubuntu's emphasis on humanity, bounty, benevolence, and justice parallels the attributes of *Ma'at* in its political and social dimensions.

⁹⁵ Karenga, “Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics,” 11.

⁹⁶ Apuleius, *The XI. Books of the Golden Asse Containing the Metamorphose of Lucius Apuleius*, 233.

⁹⁷ Karenga, “Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics,” 651–52.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 10.

2. A Sophiological Reading of Isis—The Imagery of Sophia in the Myth of Isis

Other similarities between Isis and Wisdom/Sophia are striking and worth noting. Schüssler Fiorenza explains that some of the patterns and similarities between Isis and Sophia are in terms of “reflective mythology” and that the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* designed his book to refer to the structure of the Isis aretologies.⁹⁹

Kloppenborg supports the above point, explaining that the perspective in the Isis myth remain biblical. He points out the similarities between the Wisdom/Sophia in the biblical texts and the Isis narratives. Drawing from the Book of Solomon he states that,

What is distinctive in the Wisdom of Solomon is (1) the saving role of Sophia, corresponding to Isis's major function; (2) the selection of events which the author used as examples of this role; and (3) the allusive re-telling of these events in such a way that they resonate with the mythic pattern characteristic of the Isis-Horus cycle. The biblical account is thereby allowed to participate in the mythic power of the symbol of a savior deity, but without acquiring the explicit aspects of the Egyptian myth.¹⁰⁰

Isis, like Sophia, is the giver of life through her active agency in reviving Osiris and in feeding the young Horus. Drawing from the book of Kings, Kloppenborg continues that,

Sophia is presented as the divine agent by which the king first attains kingship (6:20–21), by which he rules (8:10–16; 9:10–12), attains wisdom (8:2–21), influence and power (8:12–15), eternal kingship (6:21) and immortality (8:13, 17). It can scarcely be a coincidence that Isis performs precisely the same functions.¹⁰¹

Another similarity is that of the correspondence between Isis and the parable of the woman who lost a coin and diligently sweeps the house in her search for it (Luke 15:8–10).¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Wisdom Mythology and the Christological Hymns of the New Testament,” in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert Louis Wilken and University of Notre Dame, Studies in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity, no. 1 (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 33.

¹⁰⁰ Kloppenborg, “Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom,” 72.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 74–75.

¹⁰² Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 181.

Further resemblances have to do with the maintenance of moral and social order. Kloppenborg explains that, just as the *Wisdom of Solomon* claims the establishment and maintenance of moral and social order by the kings, so the Egyptian goddess Isis longs to preserve the moral and social order, establish what is right, distinguish good from evil, and maintain order and law on earth through the agency of the rulers. For Kloppenborg, Isis was extremely virtuous, and she offered parallels to the mention of the four Christian cardinal virtues, which are found in Wisdom 8:7,¹⁰³ which says:

Or if one loves righteousness,
whose works are virtues,
She teaches moderation and prudence,
righteousness and fortitude,
and nothing in life is more useful than these.

Furthermore, the Egyptian Ma'at is reported to have inspired the imagery of Sophia in Proverbs 8:2–3.¹⁰⁴ As Nortjé-Meyer puts it, “the ‘embodiment of Ma’at as the principle of cosmic and social order, maintains justice, ordaining laws for humanity and filling the world with good order and righteousness.’”¹⁰⁵ Considering the similarities to the cardinal virtues listed above, scholars argue that the myth of Isis might have influenced the Christian concept of Wisdom more than we imagine. As Shüssler Fiorenza puts it, “like the Goddess Isis, so Divine Wisdom is represented as using the proclamatory “I am” style for announcing her universal message of salvation”¹⁰⁶

Another striking similarity is that of Isis's acts of forgiveness. Isis forgives Typhon, a personification of evil who did terrible things against her, her husband Osiris, and her son Horus. Instead of taking revenge on Typhon for the wrong he has done to her loved ones, she

¹⁰³ Kloppenborg, “Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom,” 77–78.

¹⁰⁴ Quispel, “Sophia,” 8522.

¹⁰⁵ Nortjé-Meyer, “Mutual-Mothering as Wise Living or Living Wisely,” 3.

¹⁰⁶ Shüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 161.

restores wrong deeds into something new and is concerned with restoring Typhon himself to a right relationship with God.

Even though there are many patterns of Isis in pseudo-Solomon biblical structures, it is important to mention the differences between the Isis of the Egyptian myth and the Wisdom/Sophia of the Hebrew Scriptures. Kloppenborg points out one difference which is worth noting. In Pseudo-Solomon, Sophia is not the mother of kings as Isis is the mother of Horus. Sophia in Pseudo-Solomon remains the gift of God while Isis in Plutarch is “exceptionally wise and a lover of wisdom” imbued with the highest degree of philosophy that she has displayed through her knowledge and understanding.¹⁰⁷ Besides, scholars report problems suggested by the comparison of the Egyptian Isis and the biblical Wisdom/Sophia. For example, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that it is difficult to develop the terminology of Isis-Sophia without having a sense of falling into ditheism. Even from the biblical perspective, as can be seen in the book of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the struggle of characterizing Wisdom as a divine powerful figure leaves one with a sense of falling into ditheism.¹⁰⁸

Further, Isis perpetuates the role of the Greco-Roman women as housewives and mothers because she is portrayed as the one who stayed at home while Osiris was dedicated to civilizing and teaching the Egyptians.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, though some scholars agree upon the fact that the biblical image Wisdom/Sophia “has incorporated goddess language and traditions,”¹¹⁰ they recognize that it is theologically problematic to presuppose that Isis is the historically primary source for Wisdom-Sophia in biblical writings.

¹⁰⁷ *Isis and Osiris by Plutarch*, section 2.

¹⁰⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 134.

¹⁰⁹ Theodore Ziolkowski, “The Dismembered Body in Myth and Literature: Isis and Osiris and the Levite of Ephraim,” *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 2 (June 2017): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-3865373>.

¹¹⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being,” 4.

My attempt, through narrative criticism, is to lift up the practical wisdom that can be recovered from the myths of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga to “transform kyriarchal relations of exploitation and marginalization...”¹¹¹ as Fiorenza has suggested, and to inform participation of modern African women in societies marked by anthropological poverty like that of the DR Congo. The section to follow is an attempt to respond to these concerns: what practical wisdom can be recovered from mythic traditions and how such wisdom can be a resource to empower women to rise.

3. The Quinary Diagram—Myth of Isis

The following is the quinary diagram which will trace the initial situation, tension, transformation, denouement, and effect for the myth of Isis, from which my analysis will proceed.

Actualizing the wisdom regarding the saving role of Isis. In the initial situation, the intriguing element (nouement) to be transformed (denouement) is the death of Osiris. The tension is symbolized by the coffer; whose beauty is only external and which attracts Osiris. He lets himself be trapped by the external beauty of evil, which leads to death. There are several other sources of tension in the story that have to do with the imprisonment of Osiris: trapped and killed in the coffer, then thrown into the waters, and then cut into pieces and thrown again into the waters where his lost body must be found and restored.

The transformative process or pivot, the movement to liberation that provides a practical wisdom, is performed by the goddess Isis: liberating Osiris from evil, as symbolized by the three successive tensions articulated within the story. Marguerat calls this *dispositif*

¹¹¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 163.

*d'enchâssement*¹¹² or, literally translated “embedding device.” The denouement or unknotting process is repeated for each of the three tensions. Isis resolves the situation each time, but because Typhon's evilness does not stop, she keeps going through “denouement en denouement,” whose effects are signaled in the story. The story is therefore a continual restoration from death to life.

One of the effects is that victory in the battle against evil is gained at the end; “many were continually transferring their allegiance to Horus,” the son of Isis, including those who were sleeping with evil like Typhon's wife, and were restored.

4. Relevance of the Myth of Isis to the Political Participation of Women

I suggest that the myth of Isis is relevant in the war zones of the DR Congo, where women and their daughters are cut into pieces in many forms. In the same context, daughters, sons, and husbands are killed or taken away, forced to enter into rebellious movements that feed mining exploitation. In mining zones, husbands and sons end up literally buried alive by landslides. Others are buried alive and killed in the atrocities of wars, as was the case of 14 women and 1 man who were buried alive in Mwenga and 109 persons massacred in Kasika in 1998 in the DR Congo.¹¹³

These are examples of dehumanizing and meaningless suffering that constitutes a challenge to Christianity not only in Africa, but anywhere the sacredness of life is trampled on by the atrocities of war and the abuses of basic rights. To what extent does Isis's practical wisdom provide resources against such senseless suffering and continued anthropological impoverishment like that in the DR Congo? My response is that the story of Isis conveys two

¹¹²Daniel Margeurat, “Entrer Dans Le Monde Du Récit,” in *Quand La Bible Se Raconte*, ed. Daniel Margeurat, Les Editions du CERF (Paris, 2003), 29.

¹¹³Mgr Sébastien-Joseph Muyengo Mulombe, *Au pays de l'or et du sang*, MédiasPaul, Sursum Corda 2 (Kinshasa, 2014), 31–34.

main ideas: First, it affirms the dignity and sacredness of life of the individual man and woman. Second, it suggests the virtue of fortitude through Isis's endless endeavors to save Osiris. This fortitude is required to empower women's political participation to resist the forces of evil that trap them in the dehumanizing conditions of anthropological poverty. These conditions can be summarized as the DR Congo's Typhon coffer that, by multiple forms of anthropological impoverishment, buries people alive.

In the following section, I will assess the relevance of the gender balance portrayed in the myth of Isis to how we should refer to God and the virtue of fortitude as a corrected formulation of belief for the political participation of women. Isis is "at the crossroads of 'proper' gender roles,"¹¹⁴ "transgressing boundaries,"¹¹⁵ and teaching fortitude. The central question of the following section is: how does the wisdom that emerges from Isis's model of fortitude reinforce the idea of political participation of women in the context of meaningless suffering of the DR Congo? As I said in introducing the methodology of this work, I rely on Aquinas' definition of fortitude because he provides Christian foundations for the concept that could help sustain political participation in a context of suffering.

III.2.2. Actualizing the virtue of fortitude in the myth of Isis—Recalling Thomas Aquinas's thought on fortitude

According to Aquinas, fortitude gives strength to one's mind in order to resist obstacles, but in a distorted form, it can also lead the will to disobey reason when one is subjected to the greatest evil. Fortitude implies standing firm against all types of assaults, even the danger of death. Fortitude controls fear and tempers audacity. Aquinas further distinguishes fortitude of mind,

¹¹⁴ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, "God at the Crossroads. A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia," 193.

¹¹⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being," 10.

which allows a person to follow reason in the midst of assault and great danger, and fortitude of body, which permits one to overcome and remove dangers that the body faces.¹¹⁶

In the myth of Isis, fortitude in this sense is emphasized in many ways. First, fortitude orders one to not give up when one's conscience is pure. As Isis puts it, "Believe what is true: believe. Do not give up. If your conscience is pure you can be of good courage."¹¹⁷ This call resonates with Paul's encouragement "to go on in pure conscience and not give up, holding the mystery of the faith" (Ephesians 3:10).¹¹⁸ For Reginald Eidied Witt, the phraseology used in the latter verse would appeal to any reader whose background was Isiac.¹¹⁹

The allegory of Isis searching for Osiris's body in the profundity of the Nile water is a metaphorical example to train one's imagination not only on the "mystery of faith" in the dignity and the preciousness of the thing that is being sought, but also on the power of fortitude to make such an affirmation in the context of anthropological poverty like that in the DR Congo.

The allegory with Isis's search suggests something beyond searching for a dead body. It is about affirming the unlimited value of men and women; affirming that their dignity goes beyond the conditions that impoverish them to death. To reaffirm such dignity, yes, one should brave winds and tides like those of the three-dimensional factors of anthropological poverty. The political participation of women in such conditions requires them to brave the profundity of the waters of death as found in anthropological poverty.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.IIa IIae, q. 123, art. 1–12.

¹¹⁷Reginald Eidied Witt, *ISIS in the Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 266.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.bibleref.com/Ephesians/3/Ephesians-3-10.html>.

<https://www.bibleref.com/Ephesians/3/Ephesians-3-10.html>.

¹¹⁹Witt, *ISIS in the Graeco-Roman World*, 262.

Why should a woman of the DR Congo be so paralyzed by wars and rape? Why should she be paralyzed by fear of suing her husband who abuses her? Why should she be paralyzed by the astonishing absence of women in decision-making positions in her country? Why should she be paralyzed by the resistance of men who hold power in academic institutions and resist integrating her although she has already had the fortitude to acquire the necessary education and degrees? One of the powerful messages in the allegory of Isis is the call to women of the DR Congo to fear no more and to brave winds and tides to pursue a truth that liberates. As Plutarch puts it, "For we believe that there is nothing more important for man to receive, or more ennobling for God of His grace to grant, than the truth."¹²⁰ Pursuing this truth requires wisdom and fortitude.

Pursuing truth in this context means affirming the dignity and sacredness of the lives of women as well as of men, as Isis's journey demonstrates. It is a very demanding process. Even when dignity seems lost, cut to pieces, and thrown into the Nile Water by new forms of slavery, colonization, and enslaving traditions, it must be reconstituted. It should not be given up. This is what my account of political participation is about. Political participation of women in the context of anthropological poverty is the reconstitution of dignity, the putting together of broken bodies and spirits in order to get up by the power of faith and rise from the death of their anthropological poverty.

III.2.3. Actualizing the inclusive gendered understanding of God in the myth of Isis

The third theme grounding the orthodoxy of women's political participation in Isis's story is the affirmation of a genderless God and the appropriateness of both male and female personifications of God. Isis is not the only female image displaying the genderlessness of God

¹²⁰ *Isis and Osiris* by Plutarch, section 1.

in African traditions. Dube and Njoroge mention several others. Among the Ga people in southeastern Ghana, God is known as Ataa Naa Nyonmo, meaning a God who is a Father and Mother at the same time.¹²¹ God is represented as mother among several of the peoples of Sudan and Zimbabwe, including the Nuba, the Ndebele, and the Shona.¹²² As Oduyoye puts it,

Although the gender of God does not have a big role to play in African religious language, questions of a gendered or non-gendered understanding of God have become a crucial point in the global theological dialogue, and the African religious experience can contribute to the discussion. However, God is named in any African language, in the traditional African experience, God is not transferred directly or indirectly onto human beings as the *imago Dei*. While the African myth of "destiny" is related to God, it is not said to mirror God in any way and, if it does, the relation is with the individual woman or man and not with the abstract of gender.¹²³

Oduyoye reminds us, thereby, that in ATR, we find specific and functional genderlessness as well as male and female names for God. She explains that for this reason, "most African women and men would say that the gender of God is irrelevant to their theology and spirituality."¹²⁴ I argue that the symbolism of a female goddess, like Isis, doing good, restoring, bringing life from death, forgiving, facing evil in order to reconstitute the dignity of man, husband, son, brother... speaks volumes. The idea that "the symbol of God functions"¹²⁵ is very important for any theology and It influences the political. It is relevant to political theology and spirituality, especially as related to the political participation of women in the Sub-Saharan African context of conflict and anthropological poverty.

A tradition that pictures a woman—whether a goddess or simply a political leader—as the one who restores, counterbalances the limitations placed on our shared image of women by

¹²¹ Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube Shomanah, eds., *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), 141.

¹²² Ibid., 144.

¹²³ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Calling the Church to Account: African Women and Liberation," *Ecumenical Review: A Quarterly* 47 (1995): 483.

¹²⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Introductions in Feminist Theology 6 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 43.

¹²⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*.

patriarchal African proverbs.¹²⁶ Such a tradition can definitively and positively influence relational morality towards women's roles in modern African society. Not only could God be portrayed in feminine form in ATR but there were actually female priestesses in African traditional religion. These precedents clear the way to value women's sacredness of life and dignity as greatly as that of men. Sacredness and dignity are the very reason women cannot be excluded from association not only with Christ's priestly roles in the church but also with public political roles in society. Besides, their wisdom teaches fortitude in the midst of torment without which no political participation can be feasible in the Congolese context.

Transgressing boundaries to attain proper gender roles

The goddess imagery of Isis and the roles she plays in public, "at the crossroads of proper gender roles,"¹²⁷ and "transgressing boundaries,"¹²⁸ contradict the proverbial portrayal of women according to which women are only meant for home, kitchen, and bed to satisfy husbands' demands. It challenges the idea of a woman as "a peanut seed"¹²⁹ to increase the clan, with new children and to play only the mothering role. Isis's model refutes the patriarchal conception that women can judge well only in private but not in public matters, as suggested by many traditional sayings in the DR Congo. Thus, just as Njoroge and Dube argue that it is "patriarchy [that] has created God in man's image,"¹³⁰ I add that it is also patriarchy that has created the oppressive traditional proverbs. There is a need to retell the practical wisdom that lies behind the myths, and it is relevant to underline the female imagery and genderless imagery

¹²⁶Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 84.

¹²⁷ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, "God at the Crossroads. A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia," 193.

¹²⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being," 10.

¹²⁹Schipper, *Source of All Evil*, 23.

¹³⁰Musa W. Dube Shomanah, "Talitha Cum Hermeneutics of Liberation: Some African Women's Ways of Reading the Bible," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mūtūa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 142.

of God here in order to counterbalance the power of oppressive proverbs in the culture and their negative effects on women's political participation.

I maintain that the imagery of the divinity of Isis and her personification as a mother, a daughter, a sister, wife, protector, and a giver of life affirms the sacredness of life of every single individual woman, whether she is a mother, wife, daughter, or sister. Such sacredness, which embraces both divinity and humanity, grounds the dignity and the right of every individual man and woman to participate in society.

Finally, Isis reinforces the idea of "Sophia-Spirit,"¹³¹ affirming faith in God as a "combative, argumentative, and emancipatory praxis that seeks the well-being of all."¹³² Isis provides means for restoring both the body and soul of the perpetrator, as she does for Typhon. Women's political roles, therefore, must aim at transforming human beings, men and women alike, victims and perpetrators,¹³³ in order to create a new society where motherhood, sisterhood, daughterhood, wifeness, or simply friendship are recognized and restored in their dignity and sacredness.

¹³¹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 156.

¹³² Ibid., 163.

¹³³ There is an extensive literature on the topic of restoration of victims and perpetrators in the area of restorative justice, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, such as "The Role of Forgiveness in Reconciliation and Restorative Justice: a Christian Theological Perspective" by Stephen Pope, 2014; *Public forgiveness in post-conflict contexts*, by Bas van Stokkom, Neelke Doorn, and Paul van Tongeren, 2012; *Just and unjust peace: an ethic of political reconciliation*, by Daniel Philpott, 2012

III.2.4. Narrative Criticism of the Myth of Mpemba Nzinga.

1. Contextualizing the Myth of Mpemba Nzinga

The myth of Mpemba Nzinga is situated within a context of the migration of the Kongo people and their struggle for a just distribution of fruitful lands. Below is the myth as transcribed by the ethnologist J. Van Wing:¹³⁴

When our ancestors' mothers and fathers settled in Kongo (= San Salvador), their descendants multiplied in such a way that soon the lands were lacking for the cultures. Then the elders of the clans went to find the mother Mpemba Nzinga. The latter listened to their complaints and cut off the palaver: from each clan a leader with his wives and children and a certain number of subjects would leave to conquer other lands. The following days preparations were made for the trip. When they were finished, Mpemba Nzinga dismissed her children. To those of Mpangu she gave a dog to lead them, and she pointed to the east and north-east direction. They set off, preceded by their dog. At sunset, their guide stopped, the caravan did as he did. The animal was interrogated, but it was in vain; he remained silent. From there our elders called the dog of Mpemba Nzinga the silent dog. From there also come the following proverbs: *what the dog sees, dies in his heart, take a dog, from his mouth you will not hear a word*. A dog is like a ghost, even if you beat him, he will refuse to answer. The dog thus remained silent; where he laid down, a leader settles with his clan. At sunrise, the dog went on his way again, walking until the evening as sure of his way. The people followed him, and rested where he rested. Where the dog laid, a clan stared. Thus, walked the dog, until all the clans were fixed: one step, one way a day. From there our elders have said the proverb: *The dog has four legs, but he cannot follow two paths*.¹³⁵

According to historians, this story occurs within the context of extensive migrations of the Bantu civilizations, motivated by "agricultural and metallurgical skills."¹³⁶ It is set at the origin of the kingdom of Kongo, in perhaps the thirteenth century,¹³⁷ when social organizations were dynastic, implying a different political structure that was not based on clans. The kingdom was then a mixture of "elements of migration, assimilation, imitation, commercial competition, and

¹³⁴ J. Van Wing writes this myth in French, the translation from French to English is mine.

¹³⁵ J. Van Wing, *Etudes Bakongo. Sociologie - Religion et Magie* (Leopoldvillense: Praep. Vic. prov. Afric. Centr., 1959), 44-45.

¹³⁶ MacGaffey, "Crossing the River: Myth and Movement in Central Africa," 2.

¹³⁷ Jean-François Cuvelier, *L'Ancien Royaume de Congo. Fondation, découverte, première évangélisation de l'ancien royaume de Congo. Règne du grand roi Alfonso Muembo Nzinga*, Desclée de Brouwer (Paris-Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946).

local ambition.”¹³⁸ The context of this myth, therefore, is political, regarding the Kongo migration and the sharing of habitable land.

2. Practical Wisdom in the Myth of Mpemba Nzinga— Recalling Aquinas's Thoughts on Prudence

This myth resembles several patterns of Sophia as practical wisdom. I will limit my sophiological reading of Mpemba Nzinga, therefore, to its teaching on the virtue of prudence. Prudence reveals means to resist the tyranny that could have arisen on the journey of the ancestors in this myth. Although from a different time and culture, Thomas Aquinas offers a basic definition of prudence that is applicable here and is relevant to the enhancement of political participation in the DR Congo.

For Aquinas, prudence is a virtue of practical reason, one that assists in the acquisition of knowledge. It is the work of prudence to apply right reasoning to action.¹³⁹ To be prudential is to reason well, for prudence is “wisdom about human affairs” and about “human good.”¹⁴⁰ It is a virtue according to which moderation is imposed; it directs one's means in a good direction, assigning them the tasks of right counseling and judgement “concerning the means to attain the due end.”¹⁴¹

In addition, Aquinas speaks of political prudence as the means by which rulers seek the common good rather than their personal interest, providing the necessary means for their people to live a good life providing even more than the necessary resources for the community to defend itself against threats.¹⁴² In brief, political prudence leads rulers to ensure the practical means to promote the good life of their people. Thus, prudence and political prudence

¹³⁸MacGaffey, “Crossing the River: Myth and Movement in Central Africa,” 3.

¹³⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 47, a. 47.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., IIa-IIae, q. 47, a. 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., IIa-IIae, q. 47, a. 4, 7, 10.

¹⁴² Ibid., IIa-IIae, q. 47, a. 10.

constitute in themselves the means to ensure the interplay between the individual dignity of women and the collective consciousness.

In Sophia's appeal to the love of righteousness as the source of life and justice, she affirms a sense of creative unity as already explained.¹⁴³ In the context of the myth of Mpemba Nzinga, first, the people need to be aware of a goal, the means to achieve it, and some rational direction by which to strive towards it. They make free choices about the appropriate actions, directions, and moments to be taken. Such awareness and rationality are directed by prudence, the attribute of Sophia that appears as practical wisdom. It is the role of Sophia, similarly to Mpemba Nzinga in this myth, to teach prudence in order to maintain a moral social order and justice. The virtue of prudence, therefore, is crucial to sustain the process of rising up.

III.2.5. The Quinary Diagram— Myth of Mpemba Nzinga

The initial situation in this story describes a community with basic needs for resources to live a good life. The knotting factor is that there are not sufficient lands for everyone and for all the clans to survive. How will land sufficient for everyone be redistributed peacefully? Here we are dealing with intrigue towards a resolution. In addition, in mythological language, the possession of new lands suggests a process of rebirth into faith.

Like in the myth of Isis, it is a female leader, mother Mpemba Nzinga, who proposes a way out or the turning point: going away to look for lands. In this myth, all the people go together and take the same route with one single guide—a dog who is a metaphorical figure warning about the prudent path to be taken. Andrea Musolff, Fiona MacArthur, and Giulio Pagani define a metaphor as “one of the cognitive and linguistic devices that carry cultural knowledge and beliefs.”¹⁴⁴ The dog is, then, a figure that will provide an epistemology of resolution of the

¹⁴³ Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House*, 108–9.

¹⁴⁴ Musolff, Macarthur, and Pagani, *Metaphor and Intercultural Communication*, 131.

intrigue posed by the search for new land. They find the first spot of land, but all together, in the same spot, which is not sufficient for all the clans, an event that keeps the tension alive. Thus, the process toward rebirth does not take away tensions. There is a need to continue searching. The intrigue of resolution continues as long as all the people are not settled. Additionally, the act of stopping on the part of the guide dog, without the people knowing why, suggests an intrigue of revelation, which needs to be unknotted, in addition to the intrigue of resolution.

The first unknotting moment occurs when the guide decides to continue the same way the following day, but not with all of them. One group has to settle in the first place while the rest continues the journey. This suggests an unknotting and transformative moment, which is re-actualized several times until each group is settled in a land. This process of repetition suggests that what is sought is the regeneration of the group,¹⁴⁵ which demands a continued re-actualization. Finally, all the different groups are peacefully settled in different lands.

My assessment of the wisdom of political participation conveyed in the myth of Mpemba Nzinga is not an attempt to compare Mpemba Nzinga with Wisdom/Sophia, as though they are part of one cultural tradition. These two are not related historically as Isis is to Wisdom/Sophia. My purpose is rather to lift up the practical wisdom suggested by the dog metaphor and show how it is similar at the literary and imaginative levels to the way of wisdom shown by Sophia.

The dog teaches the virtue of prudence in order to maintain moral and social order and establish what is right even given scarcity of resources. The prudence taught by the dog metaphor is crucial for political participation of women in the context of conflict and

¹⁴⁵ Mircea Eliade and Willard R. Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion: [The Groundbreaking Work by One of the Greatest Authorities on Myth, Symbol, and Ritual]*, A Harvest Book (San Diego: Harcourt, 1987), 81–82.

anthropological poverty as it forms and guides a continual process of getting up: it is only by continually taking the road again and again that the people unknot the bonds of their anthropological poverty and arise.

III.2.6. Evaluation of the Myth of Mpemba Nzinga in Light of Political Participation

The orthodoxy or “true belief” component in this myth is displayed in the epistemology implied by the participants’ experience. First, Mpemba Nzinga: whether we consider her as a mythical goddess figure or just a leader, like the guide dog, she provides the people with necessary wisdom to walk together in searching for new lands. Mpemba Nzinga symbolizes, here, the collective consciousness that is raised in order to come into a new faith, in order to be reborn while affirming the sacredness of each group. Thanks to her wisdom, they all together embrace the journey. No single group has to be sacrificed for the benefit of the other.

Second, the repetitive gesture and practice of the dog guide stopping for a group to settle in a land is revelatory. It suggests women must stop and think about what God wants for the wellbeing of all. Addressing anthropological poverty in the context of the DR Congo requires more than sheer capabilities; it is a faith journey that needs to be continually embraced. Knowing about women’s rights is important for this endeavor, but it also requires women to draw from other African sources of wisdom—to drink from the source of virtue. Any political participation to be undertaken outside this process will be a failure in the sense that it may perpetuate the same anthropological poverty that it means to address. To use Augustine’s ideas, the participation of members of a political society “can only be rightly ordered and virtuous if they place love of God at the center. If not, self-love takes over, and morality and politics are reduced to pride,

the quest for worldly honor, and the drive to dominate others (*libido dominandi*)”¹⁴⁶—especially, I’d argue, the drive to dominate women.

The guide dog is also the metaphor for the spiritual move that is needed to reaffirm the humanity and sacredness of women. In this context, the *libido dominandi* (as defined by Augustine above), manifested through the ongoing enslaving, oppressive, colonial and patriarchal traditional gender norms that marginalize women or exclude them from political participation. In order to get up and arise, women and men must learn to stop at each step and repetitively recalibrate their route, again and again; making sure Wisdom/Sophia is still the mover guiding them and not a human desire for power for the sake of power. The process needs to be re-actualized continually, rooted and re-rooted in Wisdom/Sophia as the spirit mover, that which guides towards prudence and inclusion of both women and men, in order to affirm the orthodoxy of the sacredness of every individuals, woman and man, within a larger community. One cannot be affirmed without the other.

Musolff, MacArthur, and Pagani also explain that “metaphor has a feature of being laden with subjective elements that mirror speakers’ feelings towards things, actions, events or other people.” Animal metaphors are a good example of this; the behavior of dogs in particular is often used to represent human behaviors and feelings and the kind of events and situations in which they find themselves. The dog metaphor affirms the figure of Lady Wisdom of the biblical book of Proverbs as she too is personified as a guide who takes the side of the people at the crossroads and cries out, appealing to all the children of men (Prov. 8:2–4). She rules kings and makes lawgivers who can listen to her establish justice (8:15), she walks along with righteous and her paths are of justice (8:20). For its part, the dog metaphor in the myth of

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, Hendrickson Publishers ed (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), sec. IV.4, XIV.28, XIX.17.

Mpemba Nzinga affirms the collective consciousness as a cultural, ideological, potentially political reality with power to mold behavior and personalities; the collective here is meant to achieve communal purpose.¹⁴⁷

Reaching new lands is another metaphor that suggests building up the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of peace. Prudence is needed for such an end. As Aquinas explains, prudence helps resist tyranny because if one takes good counsel and follows it, one will be more attentive to the needs of others, avoiding placing oneself at the center. Just as the quest for additional resources makes human beings kill each other as it happens all too often in the DR Congo and elsewhere in contemporary times (for example, during the Rwandan genocide), the people of this myth could have fought against each other. Or, they might have revolted against the guide dog—who in metaphorical ways compelled them to find a peaceful way out. They could have refused to obey such wisdom and returned instead to their original point of departure. Yet, they chose to continue to follow the practical wisdom revealed by the guide dog. Such a choice, as Rivera explains, is a virtuous work of wisdom that results in prudence.¹⁴⁸ It is an invaluable teaching by which to face the anthropological poverty and arise.

¹⁴⁷ Richards, *Yurugu : An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 5.

¹⁴⁸ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, "God at the Crossroads. A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia," 192.

SECTION THREE: FEMALE KONGOLESE HISTORICAL FIGURES AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Introduction

This section uses an experiential and inductive approach to the reality of resistance in the stories of two women from history. There were plenty of female elites and queen mothers who had a final say in important matters. Some examples of these include Tassin Hangbe of Dahomey (seventeenth century), Queen Abla Pokou of Ghana, Ndeté Yalla of Senegal, Malan Alua of the Ivory Coast, and la Kehena of Aurès in the Maghreb, who guided the Berber resistance against the conquest of the Maghreb in the Arab and Islamic expansion (eighteenth century). They also include the women of Nder in Senegal, Ranavalona III of Madagascar and Tinubu of Nigeria (nineteenth century). Other women led messianic movements like Kimpa Vita (seventeenth century), Nongquase, prophetess of the Xhosas people of South Africa (nineteenth century), and Alice Lenshina, founder of the Lumpa church in Zambia (twentieth century, around 1953).¹⁴⁹ Others were warriors like the “Amazones” of Dahomey who were active fighters (in the nineteenth century from 1818).¹⁵⁰

These include the accounts of seventeenth century women in the Kingdom of Kongo:¹⁵¹

(1) Anne Zingha, a queen of the Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba (contemporary

¹⁵¹Most of the people who make up the modern DR Congo have their brothers in neighboring countries. This is the case of Bakongo. Kimpa Vita was born in Angola. But her legacy is legitimately claimed by Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC and Angola, each of which has a piece of the old kingdom of Kongo. The kingdom of Loango was present in Gabon and Congo Brazzaville was a tributary (vassal) of the kingdom of Kongo.

Angola),¹⁵² which were part of the Kingdom of Kongo, and (2) Kimpa Vita, a young woman, who, with the strength of her conviction in the need for an enculturated faith in God, politically participated in affirming Kongolesse women's *Imago Dei* (image of God). On the one hand, these women show the way the African communal ethos (particularly, the emotional aspects of cultural behavior) and a sense of patriotic responsibility to Africa have been dampened by the collusion of Christianity with local power, as discussed in Chapter One. On the other hand, the two women also display what it means to get up and rise against this, affirming the interplay of dignity and the sacredness of life with the collective consciousness in the context of the kingdom of Kongo, marked as it was by anthropological poverty.

My reading of these historical figures' stories will consider the practical wisdom that they suggest regarding the passion of anger required to face anthropological poverty. Anger, therefore, is relevant to help women transgress abusive gender and cultural boundaries in the context of anthropological poverty. This section aims to show that despite the factors that perpetuate anthropological poverty, there were already women who played a religious and political role in the Kingdom of Kongo around the sixteenth to the eighteenth century when slavery was still in full swing and missionaries were dedicated to Christianizing the kingdom. I will use the same method as the previous section, namely, narrative criticism.

III.3.1. Narrative Criticism of Anne Zingha's Story

1. Contextualizing the Story of Anne Zingha.

Anne Zingha was born in 1582 from her father Zingha Mani a-Ngola and her mother Guengela Cocombe, one of Zingha Mani's wives. Zingha Mani was the eighteenth king of Matamba and

¹⁵² I refer to Anne Zingha of the Kingdom of Ndongo and Matamba, actual Angola, because these two kingdoms were part of the Kongo before the Berlin Conference. The latter kingdoms used to be composed of the Bantu people of the Kongo. The people named Bakongo are found in several countries of Central Africa, but used to be one people before the division of Africa by the Berlin Conference.

Dongo. These two regions were part of the Kingdom of Kongo but became independent (coming to be called Angola later on). These regions, especially the Luanda coast, were characterized by commercial activities led by the Portuguese under the complacent eye of the missionaries. As discussed in the first chapter, these missionaries generally did not take offense at the developing slave trade, in which men, women, and children were sold as merchandise with the complicity of local chiefs.

Matamba and Dongo were known for furnishing Portugal not only with slaves but salt, shipped from Kongo to Brazil. Zingha Mani did business with the Portuguese but, at the same time, was wary of them. Soon, the kingdom was threatened by the Portuguese from outside as well as several rebellious movements from within. Anne Zingha was already very perspicacious despite her youth, and her father often had her in his company, even during combat. She was then thirty-five five years old with a son. She became renowned as the “warrior queen of Matamba.”¹⁵³ The king realized that Anne had a warrior's character while his son Ngola, who was three years older, feared confrontation. The king died in 1617 after losing the region of Dongo. Despite the King's statement according to which Anne Zingha was alone worthy of his inheritance,¹⁵⁴ however, Ngola inherited Matamba.

Anne Zingha continued resisting her brother's poor decisions in leading the kingdom and, as a result, she and her offspring were considered a threat to her brother's kingship. The latter had her son killed, put her through a violent treatment to eliminate her ability to give birth to produce an heir, and forced her into exile. While Anne Zingha was in exile, Ngola lost all battles against the Portuguese and was forced to enter into negotiations with them. He then

¹⁵³ J. A. Rogers and John Henrik Clarke, *World's Great Men of Color*, 1st Touchstone ed (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 247.

¹⁵⁴ Jacqueline Sorel and Simonne Pierron Gomis, *Femmes de l'ombre et Grandes Royales: Dans La Mémoire Du Continent Africain* (Paris: Présence africaine, 2004), 198.

sought the help of Anne Zingha, who was identified by the royal court as the only one who could handle such a mission. In this way, Anne Zingha came back into political affairs.

As the above context shows, Anne Nzinga had several motives to be angry. First, at the mistreatment by her brother toward her; second her being excluded from an inheritance despite her father's will; and third, at the slave trade with the complicity by the local chiefs. Before proceeding to our narrative criticism, however, it is relevant to revisit some of Aquinas's insights on anger, which may be helpful for the purpose of this research.

1. The Passion of Anger in the Myth of Anne Zingha—Recalling Aquinas's Thoughts on Anger.

For Aquinas, anger expresses the aspiration to hurt another for the sake of vengeance. It implies that if injustice has been done to one, just vengeance seeks to punish the unjust. Aquinas references Augustine, saying that the idea of punishing injustice expresses the hope of correcting the unjust and therefore makes the object of anger good. In this sense, anger is different from hatred, which pursues evil. He adds that anger becomes hatred when it persists for a long time, but that hatred is far worse than anger because hatred desires evil for the sake of evil.

Further, for Aquinas, there is a relation between anger and reason. Anger that is moderate obeys reason in the sense that it shows the desire of denouncing injury done to one. Non-moderate anger, on the other hand, can obstruct reason. Both, the moderate and non-moderate anger, are considered to be natural to the human being. Among the effects of anger, Aquinas first names "choler," which arises quickly. The second is "bitter," which manifests in people who retain anger for a long time. The third pertains to "rancor." People who are feeling rancor seek retaliation and do not rest until they have avenged the wrong done to them.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 46, a. 1–8.

With regard to the causes of anger, Aquinas states that anger is accentuated by remembering the wrong done to one. All the causes of anger have to do with a slight, which is reduced to three main things: “contempt” (particularly unmerited contempt), “spiteful treatment,” and “insolence.”¹⁵⁶ All of these motivations are manifest in Anne Zingha's trajectory.

2. The Quinary Diagram—Anne Zingha

Anne Zingha is a woman who, from an early age, transgressed the boundaries of the traditional gender norms. She is a free spirit. There are several tensions within her story, however. The king is the initiator of the first of these: the disruptive influence of being brought into war while still a younger woman.

A second tension is the mistreatment of Anne Zingha by her own brother. This tension suggests that her brother considered her powerful and dangerous to his throne. It also suggests that a woman could reverse a man's power even in the sixteenth century. The third tension and several others are displayed by Zingha's return to power. She is recognized by her own people as a political leader. She was oppressed, she resisted, but ultimately used the same means as her own oppressors. She succeeded in making herself be understood as equal to the Portuguese, and demanded negotiations to be held as one between equals. To do so, scholars report that Anne Zingha, having been given a chair that put her almost at the Portuguese's feet, used her own slave as a chair to be able to speak from the same level as the Portuguese.¹⁵⁷

Other tensions suggest that Anne Zingha, after succeeding in her mission as mediator for her brother, managed to get her brother engaged in unnecessary wars and sent an army to kill him in order to take over his throne after also killing his son. The authors explain that she did

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., IIa-IIae, q. 47, a. 1–4.

¹⁵⁷ Sorel and Pierron Gomis, *Femmes de l'ombre et Grandes Royales*, 201.

this to avenge herself for the death of her own son and the loss of her ability to give birth, but also because her brother was an unfit ruler. Then, she turned against the Portuguese who were still controlling Angola. She led an army herself with arrows, while the Portuguese fought with firearms.¹⁵⁸ She manipulated and killed in order to impose her own power.

Anne Zingha used unethical means to impose her power to the extent that it would be problematic to cast her as representing the kind of wisdom we should seek to ground our political participation in. She might have been consumed by non-moderate anger and motivated by bitterness and hatred, seeking evil to avenge the evil done to her in her relationships with her brother. Regardless of whether Zingha's anger was motivated by her being hurt by her brother in their interpersonal relationship to power or by the injustices inflicted on her peoples by the Portuguese, several transformative actions and statements in her story reveal a historical precedent of women taking political power in traditional Kongo and transgressing oppressive gender norms.

Other norms, by contrast, reinforce women's political power in the myth of Anne Zingha. These norms can be read in the king's statement: "*Elle seule est digne de mon heritage.*"¹⁵⁹ This is a revolutionary political statement in a context in which heirs and leaders were perceived to be men. Zingha's resistance to her brother or to the Portuguese is also teaching something transformative. Her resistance and recognition as political leader constitute the denouement in her story. She fought for liberation from the grip of the Portuguese until she was eighty-one years old. She finally succeeded in negotiating the signing of a peace treaty in 1657. There is no doubt that Anne Zingha resisted anthropological poverty. But, by holding slaves herself and killing for the sake of power, she is also a cautionary example of the

¹⁵⁸ Rogers and Clarke, *World's Great Men of Color*, 247.

¹⁵⁹ "She alone is worthy of my inheritance" Sorel and Pierron Gomis, *Femmes de l'ombre et Grandes Royales*, 198.

internalization of the same anthropological poverty which continues to characterize most Sub-Saharan African countries to date. She is said to have fully embraced Christian faith by the end, but she may have done so as a political strategy for reaching peace for her regions.

3. The Relevance of Anne Zingha's Leadership for the Political Participation of Women

Regardless of Zingha's unethical methods of gaining power, which are just like those of the local chiefs of her traditional society and of the male leaders of the contemporary DR Congo, Anne Zingha still has a lot to teach regarding women's political participation in the context of anthropological poverty considering the concepts of agency and political participation (in the form of governance) that she embodies. Anne Zingha shows that, contrary to the oppressive patriarchal proverbs, women did build up their homelands and lead armies to ensure the independence of their own countries.

While lifting up Anne Zingha's political capabilities of governance, it is important to note that the orthodoxy of political participation that she displays suggests immoderate anger which obstructs reason. Her methods are contrary to prudence, which guides practical reason in deliberations about what the right thing to do is in a particular situation. For example, Zingha chooses to kill the innocent son of her brother to take power and denies "any attribute of humanity"¹⁶⁰ to a fellow woman who she uses as a slave. The latter shows that, in addition to the colonial slave trade, the slavery that was practiced among Africans themselves was also anthropologically damaging.

Besides, using another person as a slave to resist being treated as slave is a hint of an imprudent action suggesting the way the anthropologically impoverished can perpetuate their

¹⁶⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* /, 182.

poverty as Zingha did it despite her efforts to liberate her people. The story of Zingha shows how, although anthropological poverty is rooted in historical factors, including slavery, it is not stagnant as a product of an unchangeable past but rather it is continuously being reinforced or broken down by the actions of contemporary people. This will be illustrated with further details in Chapter Five. Zingha's story also suggests that to tip the interplay between individual sacredness and the good of the community, anger alone, though moderate, does not suffice, there also is a need for prudence.

I argue that women's political participation cannot affirm woman's individual dignity by denying the dignity or enslaving another. Even if I am talking about the slavery of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries which was practiced as a way of life, I advocate a political participation that affirms the sacredness of every single life. Such participation cannot coexist with slavery under any form it might take in any time period—including the current period. To this point, the experience of political participation exemplified by Kimpa Vita provides a much more empowering orthodoxy.

III.3.2. Narrative Criticism of Kimpa Vita's Story

1. Contextualizing the Story of Kimpa Vita.

The Kingdom of Kongo fell into the hands of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, after Diego Cão reached it in 1483.¹⁶¹ While Europe was torn by the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), the Portuguese and Dutch were fighting for control of the Kingdom of Kongo, which at the same time was beginning to be depopulated by the slave trade. The desperation of the people

¹⁶¹Claude Wauthier, *Sectes et Prophètes d'Afrique Noire* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 17.

of Kongo led to the increase of prophetic initiatives in the region,¹⁶² including those of Kimpa Vita (also called Dona Beatrice).

Kimpa Vita was born around 1682,¹⁶³ a descendant of an upper-class background, at a time in the Kingdom of Kongo when the average life expectancy was thirty-five years, “about the same as in Europe or Asia at that time.”¹⁶⁴ People in traditional Africa were not poor, as the missionaries and colonial powers tend to suggest. In fact, in 1704, when Kimpa Vita began her prophecies, the infant mortality rate was lower than the European average. The Kongolese were known for their aptitude for their fabrics and for working with iron. The kings themselves were blacksmiths and skilled farmers who could grow any sort of grain.¹⁶⁵

Kimpa Vita's politico-religious activities developed when the provinces of the Kingdom of Kongo were torn by wars between rival kings over the slave trade. She was a “gifted Nganga,” a healer or prophetess in the ATR, someone with a spiritual “knowledge” or “skill” that relates to religious matters, or “spiritual mediators.”¹⁶⁶ Her upper-middle class background and spiritual gift gave her a consciousness of both the religious and socio-political problems of her society. She was committed to the “Kimpasi society,” which literally means “suffering society,” a kind of spiritual practices to address social problems, including physical and spiritual healing.¹⁶⁷

Kimpa Vita's message is seen by theologians, historians, and anthropologists as a call for political and religious restoration of the Kingdom as well as the building of a more humane

¹⁶²Ibid., 22.

¹⁶³Magloirer Mpembi Nkosi, *Kimpa Vita: la fille de Ne Kongo* (Paris: Anibwé, 2012), 280.

¹⁶⁴John Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Anthonian Movement, 1684–1706* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 137.

¹⁶⁵Wauthier, *Sectes et Prophètes d'Afrique Noire*, 21.

¹⁶⁶Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 57.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 55–56.

society.¹⁶⁸ Her account of anger is more related to what Michael P. Jaycox calls “social anger,” referring to “instances of this emotion that arise in social groups and entire communities, which may be taken as distinct from the instances of anger that arise in the context of interpersonal relationships” and which is often concerned with “systemic injustice.”¹⁶⁹ In this sense, Jaycox argues that social anger is a political phenomenon.

Indeed, the social anger displayed in Kimpa Vita's religious and political activities inspired her to organize the Antonian movement, which questioned the missionaries as well as the political power in place in the year 1700. As Musa Dube maintains, Kimpa Vita's message is the “typical example of a discourse of resistance, a decolonizing reading of the Bible, and a scramble to regain her land by re-reading the text for decolonization.”¹⁷⁰ The example of Kimpa Vita suggests the kind of practical wisdom that informs political participation and provides the means to address anthropological poverty. She provides a model for what I coin “resistant anger,” i.e., that which drinks from the power of faith in God to lead one to continually face and defy the threat of death.

2. The Quinary Diagram—Kimpa Vita

In 1704, Kimpa Vita had a vision of saint Anthony, who gave her the mission to restore the Kingdom of Kongo.¹⁷¹ Based on this vision, she believed she was possessed by Saint Anthony from whom her movement took the name: the Anthonian movement. She was 20–22 years old when she created and led this movement, which was political and religious in the sense that it

¹⁶⁸ Simone Schwarz-Bart, “Beatrice Kimpa Vita: The Joan of Arc of Kongo, Burned Alive in the Year 1706,” *In Praise of Black Women* 1 (n.d.): 212.

¹⁶⁹ Jaycox, “The Civic Virtues of Social Anger,” 124.

¹⁷⁰ Dube Shomanah, “The Scramble for Africa As the Biblical Scramble For Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives,” in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mūtūa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 6.

¹⁷¹ Wauthier, *Sectes et Prophètes d'Afrique Noire*, 23–24.

aimed at ending civil war, reestablishing the broken Kingdom of Kongo, and stood firmly against the slave trade and against the “blanchization” of the Christian message [bearing white cultural burden]. She is considered by some scholars to be a pre-figure of modern African democracy.¹⁷²

Kimpa Vita is an example of what it means for actual human historical figures to rise up, “raising her voice, transgressing boundaries”¹⁷³ of the non-enculturated understanding of God. She also transgresses boundaries by claiming that revelation of the divine should not be the privilege of white, colonial missionaries.

The knotting process in the story of Kimpa Vita occur in the challenges of the dialogue between her embrace of Christian religion and her role as prophetess. This nouement is also seen in her struggle to enculturate the Christian message in relation to the Kongo's ways of approaching the mystery of suffering by referring to God and “spiritual entities.” Healers practiced social and individual mediation on behalf of the people, which involved helping people deal with issues concerning “health, luck, or the economic success or failure of a community.”¹⁷⁴ For healers, suffering usually resulted from the collective violation of a taboo, offending a common ancestor, or abusing the common good. In essence, they attempted to help people understand their suffering using Africa's languages and myths.

Another knotting situation surrounding this figure is that Kimpa Vita is a healer; something taken by the Christian religion as pagan and satanic in the 1700s. This shows the serial transgressions of boundaries in which Kimpa Vita was engaged, which I argue cannot occur

¹⁷²Thornton, *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony*, 1–2.

¹⁷³ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Towards a Feminist Wisdom Spirituality of Justice and Well-Being,” 10.

¹⁷⁴Thornton, *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony*, 55.

without social anger and resistant anger toward the religious and political systemic institutions that exclude groups, including women.

Kimpa Vita's social anger as resistant anger is seen in her claim to be St. Anthony himself, and her insistence that "Kongo needed black saints."¹⁷⁵ She began the Antonian movement that promoted the enculturation of the Christian message and liberation of the Kingdom of Kongo. The movement witnessed several wars that enslaved millions of people. She stood against the Church for making religion a central component in the competition over the export of slaves.

Thornton explains that while Kimpa Vita was considered as a witch by the Capuchins, she, in turn, opposed them because she believed there was something wrong with a religion that could preach God's words in a context of slavery without condemning it. The slave trade of Africans increased even after the execution of Kimpa Vita in 1706. As Thornton puts it, "in fact, of the 5,226 Africans brought into Barbados between May 1713 and May 1714, some 1,500 were re-exported to other colonies."¹⁷⁶ Thus, Kimpa Vita's resistance to slavery seems to have been more significant than it is reported.

The Capuchin priests, since their arrival in the Kingdom of Kongo in 1645, were dedicated to eliminating the practices of witchcraft of the black "pagan" people, including those of Kimpasi society and their healers. For the Capuchins, Kimpasi society practices and their initiates were evil.¹⁷⁷ As the local kings tried to use the church as a means to gain political control, the denouncement of Kimpasi society as evil increased disputes between church and state. For the kings, Kimpasi society was already part of the social and political mechanisms of governance; they could not get rid of it without resistance on the part of the people.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 160.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 209.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 71–73.

The transformative actions in the story of Kimpa Vita are twofold: religious and political. The religious dimension of transformation undergone by the Anthonian movement puts focus on enculturation. Whether the movement was heretical or prophetic, it was revelatory in two ways. First, it called on the Christian missionaries to consider the primacy of conscience over works and sacraments. As its *Salve Antoniana* suggests,

God wants an intention; it is the intention that God grasps. Baptism serves nothing, it is the intention that God takes. Confession serves no purpose; it is the intention that God wants. Good works serve no purpose, intention is what God wants.¹⁷⁸

For Kimpa Vita, therefore, God speaks to people in their own context, confirming to her that there are black saints on earth as well as in heaven. She also affirms that in heaven, there is no color; God does not choose people according to their skin color.

Denouement or the unknotting process in Kimpa Vita's story can be located in the founding of the Antonian movement. Thornton states that, "Dona Beatriz' followers began to build a new political order based on her teaching."¹⁷⁹ This was done through the spread of the movement by the little Antonian movement, which reached out of São Salvador. In the final stage of the story, Kimpa Vita is killed, yet there is a raised consciousness on the part of her followers and beyond that sanctity is a grace that can be granted by God to anyone—white or black—and that it is important to clarify one's intention when it comes to one's actions.

The movement established by Kimpa Vita continued to be practiced and preserved by many faithful followers for several years more. Her liberating ideas continued to inspire cultural movements such as that of Bernard Dadié, who considered Kimpa Vita's motivations purely

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 116.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 161.

political. In 1969, some Congolese did ask the Vatican to revise Kimpa Vita's dossier and to canonize her.¹⁸⁰

3. Relevance of the Story of Kimpa Vita to the Political Participation of Women

Schüssler Fiorenza while affirming the authority of Scriptures, states that "Inspiration—the life-giving breath and power of Sophia-Spirit—does not reside in texts: It dwells among people. Sophia did not cease once the process of canonization ended. She is still at work today."¹⁸¹ This stance is helpful for a critical discernment and evaluation of the leadership of African women historical figures, especially Kimpa Vita.

a. Kimpa Vita's politico-religious mission versus political participation

Kimpa Vita took political participation further. She was able to see, by the year 1700, the intermingling of the religious into the political and recognized the liberation and enculturation of religious expressions as a way to restore political accessibility. Her movement also dealt with the restoration of the Kingdom of Kongo, torn apart by rival kings and the enslavement of the people. It resisted the missionaries as they made God white and "blessed the slave ships."¹⁸² Thus, Kimpa Vita is an example illustrating Dube's claim that, "women in the early church were not always silent, submissive and confined to the domestic sphere...."¹⁸³

Kimpa Vita was acting as a liberator, empowering people with the practical wisdom behind the enculturation of faith inspired by ATR and a way of life that could not separate church and state. The kings had to stop their rivalry, come together, and rebuild the Kingdom. They had to play their role in liberating the people taken away by slavery. ATR had resources to reach

¹⁸⁰Martial Sinda, *Le Messianisme congolais et ses Incidences politiques: kimbanguisme, matsouanisme, autres mouvements* (Paris: Payot, 1972), 57.

¹⁸¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 156.

¹⁸² Schwarz-Bart, "Beatrice Kimpa Vita: The Joan of Arc of Kongo, Burned Alive in the Year 1706," 208.

¹⁸³Njoroge and Dube Shomanah, *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 14.

such a goal; the spiritual realm just had to inform the state's vision and practices through Kimpa Vita's participation and her practical wisdom regarding making unity out of variety.

Thus, the political participation of African women finds in Kimpa Vita a model of what it means to arise from the many anthropological poverties that characterized her society: slavery, collusion of colonial power and missionaries, and oppressive gender norms. As Claude Wauthier explains, Kimpa Vita occupied the front of the politico-religious scene of the Kingdom of Kongo for at least two years before her death.¹⁸⁴ Her mission was political; she gave herself the mission of addressing the suffering of her people, first as a healer through the Kimpasi society system, then as mediator toward the rival kings and against slavery.

For Martial Sinda, Kimpa Vita was a political figure because she committed to help rival kings, who were deprived of personality and ambition, to resist the enslavement of their own peoples. This enslavement obviously included the slave trade, but also the religious annihilation of ATR towards which Kimpa Vita's social and resistant anger was turned. For this reason, she was brought before the ecclesiastical courts and burned alive for heresy.¹⁸⁵ As Fiorenza explains, "the religious spirit which has animated women in all ages... has made them, by turns, martyrs, apostles, warriors, and concluded in making them divines and scholars."¹⁸⁶ It is such religious spirit that lay at the core of Kimpa Vita's resistant anger and drove her to stand up against the religious message that blessed the slave ships.

¹⁸⁴Wauthier, *Sectes et Prophètes d'Afrique Noire*, 23.

¹⁸⁵Sinda, *Le Messianisme congolais et ses Incidences politiques: kimbanguisme, matsouanisme, autres mouvements*, 41.

¹⁸⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said* Quoted in Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart, published by Friends of Freedom and Virtue, Boston, 1835; reprinted in *Spiritual Narratives*, ed. Sue E. Houchins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 77.

b. Kimpa Vita's use of hierophany and political participation

Another wisdom suggested by Kimpa Vita that can inform the political participation of women may be grasped through the emblem of the *nsanda* tree that she wore. Karl Laman defines the word *nsanda* as referring to a piece of cloth, in general, but also to a huge tree with many branches, known as ficus, in certain cases. Ficus trees can be found in the midst of rivers.¹⁸⁷ They embody spiritual meaning for several African cultures as holy trees.¹⁸⁸ For example, for the Bahema people, in the northeast of the DR Congo, ficuses are primarily reserved for planting on tombs to express belief in the continuing life of the dead. It is therefore prohibited to damage or vandalize a ficus.

For Bujo, the purpose of a ficus planted on a tomb is to incorporate the person who is at rest in the tomb into the community.¹⁸⁹ In a river or on a tomb, a ficus seems to play the role of rendering a sacred world present to the secular one. It reminds us of the sacredness of life. In symbolizing vitality, power, and consistency, a *nsanda* image is powerful because it reinforces belief in the continuity of life even after death. Here, the *nsanda* belongs to the category of "hierophany," a sacred object. Richards reinforces this point, saying: "cultural identification and ideological commitment are bases for political consciousness."¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the *nsanda* worn by Kimpa Vita was a manifestation of the African religious position that the Christian church refused to legitimize, treating it as pagan and evil. In the Kingdom of Kongo, the *nsanda* is a holy tree.¹⁹¹ Thus, wearing the *nsanda* was a symbol affirming one's belief in the holiness of all as granted by God, but also affirming political power in the sense that the

¹⁸⁷Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français, avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite kikongo*. A-L, 725.

¹⁸⁸Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 12.

¹⁸⁹Bénézet Bujo, "Reasoning and Methodology in African Ethics," in *Catholic Theological Ethics, Past, Present, and Future: The Trento Conference*, ed. James F. Keenan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 150.

¹⁹⁰ Richards, *Yurugu: An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 6.

¹⁹¹Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 12.

sacred power of *nsanda* was influential, politically speaking. In fact, the influence of a *nsanda* lay in the vitality, power, and consistency that it represented.

Eliade and Trask add that for a modern occidental, it is difficult to accept that the sacred can be manifested in stones or trees. But a stone or tree which is sacred is venerated because it embodies the sacred, not for itself. According to both Eliade and Trask, “for those who have religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany.”¹⁹² A hierophany is a revelation of a sacred place.¹⁹³ Kimpa Vita wearing the *nsanda* suggests that this emblem was a religious and a political symbol.¹⁹⁴

Kimpa Vita takes up positions against the fact that blacks were not allowed to have their own voices to express the ways they themselves experience relationships with God. For her, white saints could not be the only saints, black ancestors were also saints; black people were as capable of becoming saints as white people were. Kimpa Vita echoes—already, at the end of the sixteenth century—the affirmation *Dominus Iesus*, according to which Christ's revelation and love are revealed throughout the riches contained in religions of the peoples, even though these religions may contain “gaps, insufficiencies and errors.”¹⁹⁵ Christ's salvific work is also seen in the peoples' quest to work for the Kingdom, which is concerned with the liberation of the peoples from evil¹⁹⁶ and the dehumanization of anthropological poverty. Kimpa Vita's mission can be inscribed in such a quest, no matter the religion through which she worked.

¹⁹² Eliade and Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 12.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, “Declaration ‘*Dominus Iesus*’ On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church.” (Vatican City : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 8.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 19.

No religion is perfect. Yet, religions continue to inform peoples' behavior, especially the ATR, which functions as a way of life. It is the work of theologians to provide the means for people to drink from the riches of these religions and assess their insufficiencies in relation to the universal salvation granted by God to all peoples—only through this is it possible to recover its sophiological forces to get up and rise.

This chapter argues that fostering women's political participation in the context of anthropological poverty in Sub-Sahara Africa, particularly the DR Congo, requires more than simply strengthening their technical capabilities. Women's political participation in such a context requires a foundational centerpiece: an interplay between the individual dignity of each woman and a collective consciousness of solidarity. This balance is constructed through a variety of practical wisdom that is provided by the practical wisdom of some African mythological figures and that of some Kongolesse women historical figures.

The sophiological reading of African mythology underlines the need for the virtue of fortitude in women's endeavors towards political participation in order to unseal the coffer of anthropological impoverishment—represented by the many sociocultural, patriarchal, religious, economic, and political boundaries in place in contemporary DR Congo. This reading also emphasizes the need for prudence in order to avoid perpetuating vices that entertain anthropological poverty. Women who are anthropologically impoverished need space to listen to Sophia, the spirit mover, to be able to build up social and resistant anger that allows them to make liberating and dignifying choices—choices which do not seek vengeance or power for the sake of power, but which seek the interplay between each woman's individual dignity and the collective consciousness of solidarity.

A movement of contemporary women who get up and put together the pieces of their broken bodies cannot take place without these women daring to transgress the boundaries of

anthropological impoverishment. Liberating fortitude helps resist dehumanizing suffering to stand firm against the many factors of anthropological poverty that keep women trapped in the coffer of death. Mythological stories of restoration and salvation, as read in the stories of Isis and Mpemba Nzinga, display the same story of salvation as the story of Jesus, in which God, one and the same God, is the protagonist. He, like the protagonists of the African myths, provides resources that empower women to get up from death.

There are significant empowering resources regarding the participation of women in society in Christian thoughts and in Scriptures. The following chapter will explore some resources reinforcing women's political participation in Christian theology, with a focus on feminist biblical literature, a "discipleship of equals," and on Catholic social teaching. The latter will be read through Kenneth Himes's "ethical coordinates lenses" to value the extent to which Catholic social teaching grounds the rights and responsibilities of men and women to participate in society equally. My assessment of Catholic social teaching will also look at the way this teaching can also inhibit the political participation of women, however, and I will suggest feminist theologians' and biblical scholars' insights on the "discipleship of equals" as a resourceful corrective to these androcentric components of Catholic social teaching. The New Testament references on the "discipleship of equals" will provide a biblical grounding for "true Christian discipleship and ministry"¹⁹⁷ that is independent of sex, gender, ethnicity, or race. Building upon this selection, I will point out the extent to which Scriptures can bolster gender equality and political participation of women in church and society.

¹⁹⁷ Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND IN SCRIPTURES

Introduction

My ethic for the political participation of women calls them to fully live the reality of being made in the image of God; it reinforces feminist scholars on the gravity of “the continuing injustice of subordination done to women in God’s name”¹ and the need to restore and advocate for women’s true humanity within Christian Scriptures and teaching. I argue that this ethic is a sustainable way of making a preferential option for the poor and improving the quality of women’s lives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The challenges that women face in trying to participate in decision-making processes and the governance of institutions—including constitutional committees, parliaments, public administrations, and the judiciary—are tangible across regions. The data on leadership and political participation reported by the United Nations Women Commission show that, globally there is a slow increase of women’s representation in decision-making positions. For example, overall, women’s representation in national parliaments has increased globally from 11.3% in 1995 to 24.3% in February 2019. In addition, by June 2019, the world counted eleven women serving as Heads of State and twelve serving as Heads of Government (the same as 2016). Across regions, the UN reports that, by February 2019, women in parliaments (single, lower, and upper houses combined) represented 42.5% in Nordic countries; 30.6% in the Americas;

¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 43.

27.2% in Europe; 23.9% in sub-Saharan Africa; 19.8% in Asia; 19% in Arab States; and 16.3% in the Pacific.²

The 1994 African Platform for Action—adopted by the fifth Regional Conference on Women and sponsored by the UN in Dakar—demonstrated that African women were absent in decision-making levels until 1993.³ Since then, even though the number of women in parliament and public leadership roles in Africa is still among the lowest in the world, women's representation in decision-making roles has increased throughout Africa. Aili Mari Tripp, professor of Political Science and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison⁴ provides data showing that African countries have some of the highest rates of representation of women in politics. This significant shift is due, among other factors, to the adoption of the quota system (a policy that requires a percent of women's representation in decision-making positions in different areas) applied by more than half the countries on the continent in the last two decades.⁵

Yet, I argue that this shift in the data does not display the whole picture of women's participation in politics and leadership positions on the African continent. As P. Deferrari, professor of world religions and ethics courses at the Catholic University of America, posits:

Promoting the dignity and welfare of women, however, calls for more than simple changes in administrative policies. It demands changes in cultural attitudes and social structures both on the part of the industrialized nations that participate in

² UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation," June 2019, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>.

³ United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, "African Platform for Action. Adopted by the Fifth Regional Conference on Women: Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace," November 16, 1994, 13.

⁴ Professor Aili Mari Tripp's teaching and research interests are in African politics, comparative politics, and gender studies in an international context. Accessed on December 1st, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/aili-mari-tripp>.

⁵ Aili Mari Tripp, "Women in Politics in Africa Today," DIA, Democracy in Africa, December 9, 2013, <http://democracyinafrica.org/women-politics-africa-today/>.

[conceptualizing and administrating] development programs and on the part of third-world countries intended to benefit from the programs.⁶

I argue that “promoting the dignity and welfare of women” also requires consideration of what the Ugandan academic Sylvia Tamale said about the political power of African women: “what we have are women in power without power!”⁷

In the Congo, the concept and practice of power by Congolese women are strongly informed by the cultural patriarchal beliefs in which Congolese society and women themselves have been shaped. I will illustrate this statement throughout the chapter by referring to a few examples of female Congolese leaders. Thus, my account of the political participation of women goes beyond their representation in politics and leadership positions to embrace their cultural setting, which, as argued in previous chapters, is characterized by anthropological poverty. For Engelberg Mveng, anthropological poverty is coherent with the Catholic ethicist Meghan Clark's insights on the alienation of the person's three selves.

Meghan Clark's anthropological understanding of participation considers the “self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization of the human person”⁸ rather than simply “membership”⁹ or leadership. My account of political participation is concerned with the affirmation of these “three selves” within women regardless of their position in society. It expands the idea of what “politics” constitutes beyond governmental structures. I argue that the dynamics informing political participation of Congolese women in general and those informing their being in power without power in particular, are significantly influenced by

⁶ Patricia DeFerrari, “Seeking Full Dignity: Catholic Social Teaching and Women in the Third World,” *Horizons* 22, no. 02 (1995): 238, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900029364>.

⁷ Sylvia Tamale as cited in “Women in Politics in Africa Today.” <http://democracyinafrica.org/women-politics-africa-today/>.

⁸ Clark, “Integrating Human Rights: Participation in John Paul II, Catholic Social Thought and Amartya Sen,” 315.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

Christian beliefs, which tend to be androcentric, and by other androcentric, patriarchal beliefs present in the Congolese cultures. The Christian beliefs are shaped by Scripture and other Christian teaching on women's identity and responsibility in society; they then intermingle with androcentric elements of Congolese cultures. To elucidate these intermingling dynamics, I turn to Catholic social teaching and feminist literature on the discipleship of equals.

This chapter then builds on the work of feminist theologians who argue that, though the principle of "discipleship of equals" is affirmed to some degree in Scriptures and Catholic social teaching, there are several factors that deny it in both areas as well. Among them, I include: (1) the traditional association of women with evil and sin; (2) the perception of women as inferior or submissive beings; (3) the ambiguity of the theological anthropology of complementarity, which seems to emphasize essential differences between the sexes over equality of the sexes or the capability of each individual regardless of their gender; and (4) the view of women's capability in terms of John Paul II's concept of the "feminine genius."

This chapter also attempts to take one step forward in showing the profound interconnection between the above four factors and women's political participation in Sub-Saharan Africa. I argue that these factors alienate the "self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization" of women. Such alienation reinforces women's anthropological poverty and negatively influences their political participation, especially in the Congo. Hence, this chapter will use biblical and cultural hermeneutics to foster a contextualized ethic of women's political participation in Sub-Sahara Africa. The Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye argues that "Cultural hermeneutics enables women to view the Bible through African

eyes and to distinguish and extract from it what is liberating.”¹⁰ For Oduyoye, since culture is a “favorite tool for domination,” it “has to become the locus of resistance.”¹¹ I will undertake the same task by reading Catholic social teaching through the eyes of the anthropological poverty of women in the DR Congo, making the Congolese context “the locus” of what I call the “resistant anger” needed to make political change and better women's quality of life.

Some stories illustrating Congolese women's reality will be included to demonstrate how the Church's teaching tends to reinforce women's anthropological poverty and how women internalize such poverty. These stories have relevant moral power; inquiring into stories allows an assessment of the role and influence of the various cultures in communities that are shaping women's participation in society. This chapter will also take this discourse on the theology of women's participation from the level of church, which has been the focus for many feminist theologians to date, to the level of society and politics.

Thus, Section One explores the theological grounds of political participation of women and men in general in the Catholic social teaching after the Second Vatican Council. It builds upon Kenneth Himes' insights on “ethical coordinates” in Catholic social teaching to argue that these ethical coordinates are grounds for the political participation of both men and women in society.

Section Two will explore Catholic social teaching with a focus on those of Pope Leo XIII (before Vatican II), to John Paul II. It will discuss several documents issued during the different papacies throughout history since *Rerum Novarum* (1891). This section will also bring up feminist critiques showing that despite its affirmation of equality of participation of both men

¹⁰ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Feminist Theology in an African Perspective,” in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 11.

and women in all spheres of life, Catholic social teaching after Vatican II still displays ambiguity in the matter of the equality of participation of men and women in society, especially in regard to features like gender complementarity, mothering, and childbearing models. These features, I argue, do negatively influence women's participation in society, especially in the context of women's anthropological poverty. To use Paul VI's words, Section Two will look at the ways women are denied from becoming "artisans of their destiny"¹² and how this denial makes it difficult for them to participate fully in society. This section will also show the ways Congolese women themselves have internalized the inferiority imposed on them to "keep" them in their place or to withhold power from them even when they are in positions of power.

Section Three will explore feminist literature on the discipleship of equals as a response to the challenges of women's political participation in the context of the anthropological poverty of Sub-Saharan Africa. The theology of the discipleship of equals helps fill the gaps in Catholic social teaching's implicit and explicit denial of the "self-determination, self-realization/self-actualization"¹³ of women regarding their political participation in society.

¹² Paul VI, "*Populorum Progressio*," Encyclical on the Development of the Peoples, March 26, 1967, para. 65, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

¹³ Clark, "Integrating Human Rights," 315.

SECTION ONE: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING—EIGHT “ETHICAL COORDINATES”

Introduction

The wisdom on political participation enshrined in Catholic social teaching can be grasped under some broad principles, which Kenneth Himes calls the “ethical coordinates.” Himes considers seven ethical coordinates, namely: authentic humanism, solidarity, common good, justice, human rights, participation, and subsidiarity.¹⁴ Recent Catholic social teaching is lifting up the protection of the environment, or “Our Common Home,” to use Pope Francis’s language in *Laudato Si*, as crucially ethical. I therefore include the protection of the environment as the eighth coordinate. Catholic social teaching also underscores the urgency of the preferential option for the poor, which I will approach as spanning across these eight coordinates. All of these principles are developed over a massive corpus of literature from the magisterium and through the work of other moral theologians.

Building upon some of this literature, I approach political participation as embracing the preferential option for the poor, allowing them to exercise “political influence...for the institutionalization of basic economic and political rights.”¹⁵ This approach calls for the marginalized groups of society to take agency in political life by resisting unjust structures that keep them marginalized.

¹⁴ Kenneth R. Himes, *Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation, and Cooperation*, Theology in Global Perspective Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 294–305.

¹⁵ David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*, Woodstock Studies 4 (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 155.

My reflections on the ways Himes' ethical coordinates ground my vision of political participation will start from the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*,¹⁶ to limit their scope. Yet, it is important to note that it only since Leo XIII's papacy has Catholic social teaching laid grounds for political participation of women and men, understood as a right and a duty. *Pacem in Terris* lays out these ethical coordinates in a way that reverberates through Catholic social teaching to our time, and it strongly affirms human dignity as the foundation for participation in public life. I also rely on other documents, including *Gaudium et Spes* and *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and *Laudato Si'*.

In *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII provides foundations for political participation in the relationships between ruled and rulers and in reinforcing the freedom of citizens to act according to one's conscience. Participation in public life is, by this account, an inherent way for citizens to live up to their dignity¹⁷ and affirm their authentic humanism.

IV.1.1. Authentic humanism

Authentic humanism emphasizes integral human development in relation to human dignity, education, just social structures, and the right and duty of participation in society in addition to a person's material needs. It is a holistic concept, concerned with how well people are living and flourishing both as individuals and social beings. It affirms that the dignity of a person is granted by God and insists that a human person can be protected only in community.

¹⁶ John XXIII, "*Pacem in Terris*," Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, (April 11, 1963), paras. 26, 32–33, and 72–73, w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/.../hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 61.

Similarly, authentic humanism includes the rights of human beings to be respected equally because they are all equals in God's eyes.¹⁸ As Meghan J. Clark explains, recent Catholic teaching insists on the fact that the participation of citizens in economic and political life within society "is essential to the realization of the dignity and freedom of the person"¹⁹ and is "absolutely crucial for both human rights and solidarity."²⁰ In other words, no one should be considered more valuable than another and both men and women should participate in solidarity to lift up human dignity.

IV.1.2. Solidarity

In Catholic social teaching, *solidarity* is a response to the need for interdependence. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* defines solidarity as "this firm and constant determination to work for the common good; that is, for the good of all and each because we are all responsible for all."²¹ It is a vision of solidarity that cannot be achieved without participation. Paul VI, in *Populorum Progressio* affirms that it is a duty of all to address the development of the people in all its dimensions.²² Solidarity is also about addressing the unequal distribution of the good of society and includes solidarity with the poor. It builds up the common good, which would be undermined if people's active participation were hindered.²³

¹⁸ Himes, *Christianity and the Political Order*, 294–95.

¹⁹ Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2014), x.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," On the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, December 30, 1987, para. 38, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

²² Paul VI, "PP," para. 1.

²³ Séverine Deneulin, "Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to Development And Gaudium Et Spes: On Political Participation and Structural Solidarity," *Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge, UK*, n.d., 13.

In *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope Paul VI makes a strong call to action, emphasizing that people, including the poor, must be in charge of their destiny and must be agents of the future, working for the common good.²⁴ There is a need for the creation of just structures in which the poor themselves participate rather than depending on charity. As Gudorf puts it, “participation of all in decision making is the procedural justice that is absolutely necessary for the creation of substantive social justice.”²⁵

Himes points out that Pope John Paul II understood solidarity as a virtue that invites us to accept the other as our neighbor. The pope also recognized that we are all responsible for each other—no matter what our social standing. For Pope John Paul II, solidarity is the opportunity for humanity to become a family and build peace. Solidarity is a moral measure that helps globalization foster not the wealth of a few powerful people but the wellbeing of the entire human family, including the marginalized. Solidarity is not an attitude resulting from feelings of pity or compassion; it is a moral obligation that helps people to participate appropriately in order to meet the needs of others and the common good.²⁶ Thus, true solidarity must embrace a preferential option for the poor.

In order to know what good should be promoted for individuals and communities, Himes recommends an inductive approach for each community. Such an approach promotes

²⁴ Paul VI, “*Octogesima Adveniens*,” Apostolic Letter, May 14, 1971, 5, 12, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html.

²⁵ Christine E. Gudorf, “Commentary on *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes 1950- et al. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 335.

²⁶ Himes, *Christianity and the Political Order*, 295–97.

subsidiarity, meaning that norms are contextualized and particularities of local communities are considered.²⁷

IV.1.3. Subsidiarity

The principle of *subsidiarity* is an important ground for political participation in Catholic social teaching. Subsidiarity promotes that matters be handled by the lowest possible level of society or at the lowest level competent authority. Pope John XXIII argues that the power relationship between rulers and citizens must be administered and balanced through the principle of subsidiarity.²⁸ This principle guides the role and function of the state; it is a way of guaranteeing the right of participation and the right of development for all. Subsidiarity suggests that “it is the public interest to harvest the genius of all citizens and citizen groups.”²⁹ Subsidiarity implies fostering initiatives at the individual and local level so that the freedom and responsibility of citizens' political participation might not be supplanted and so the powers of rulers and ruled are well-adjusted.³⁰ Part of the goals of this project of imagining an empowering ethic of political participation for women is to lead women to be full agents, monitoring the powers of rulers for the wellbeing of the entire community.

The divine origin of political authority, as understood in Christian moral theology, does not give authorities the power to make unjust demands and laws.³¹ Citizens are allowed to obey the demands of the political authority only when such demands conform to moral order. Hence,

²⁷ Ibid., 299.

²⁸ John XXIII, “PT,” 26., 140.

²⁹ Daniel C. Maguire, *Ethics: A Complete Method for Moral Choice* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 60.

³⁰ Catholic Church, ed., *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, USCCB Publishing, no. 5–692 (Città del Vaticano: Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; [Distributed by] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), 187.

³¹ John XXIII, “PT,” 51.

political participation includes resisting any demand of political authority that is contrary to moral law. This includes resisting any unjust law, such as those promoting the welfare of the wealthy at the expense of the poor and other that goes against the common good.

IV.1.4. Common Good

Pope John XXIII acknowledges that political authorities have an obligation to safeguard political institutions for the *common good* as well. It is incumbent on citizens to collaborate in such an endeavor and to respond to the demands of the community in line with right reason and their consciences. Such collaboration can be performed individually, collectively, or through systems of representation. Individuals or groups are called to choose their rulers, define the form of their state, set up limits and boundaries to the exercise of authority, and to make sure there will periodically be alternation in political power. Political authorities, in return, must fulfill their obligations in providing equitable and humane conditions³² and basic goods to their subjects such as “food, shelter, health care, relationship with God and other persons, physical integrity, and security.”³³ Failure to do so constitutes grounds for citizens to question the authority and to demand that their rights be respected.³⁴ Such questioning and demands are matters of political participation.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II emphasizes that people have to advocate for themselves so that the goods they need may be made available to them.³⁵ Indeed, to be in charge of one's destiny is also to participate and advocate for one's self. For the council, participation of the

³² Ibid., paras. 52 and 69.

³³ Ibid., para. 58.

³⁴ Ibid., para. 79.

³⁵ Paul VI, “GS,” para. 7.

people is required to act against excessive social and economic inequalities, to make social justice and international peace a reality.³⁶

Furthermore, *Gaudium et Spes* insists that respect for the fundamental equality of the rights of men and women is the duty of all and stands against any form of discrimination based on race, sex, nation, religion, or social condition.³⁷ In order to counter such discrimination, there is a need for political engagement from both women and men to change the structures which abuse human rights.

IV.1.5. Human Rights

Human rights are seen as an expression of the affirmation of fundamental human dignity and are for the sake of the common good in Catholic teaching. As Pope John Paul II once put it, “the recognition of the dignity of every human being is the foundation and support of the concept of *universal human rights*. For believers, that dignity and the rights that stem from it are solidly grounded in the truth of the human being’s creation in the image and likeness of God.”³⁸ In *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII’s approach to human rights embraces civil, political, and economic rights.

Himes states that civil and political rights are conventional basic rights that reflect cross-cultural values. He also adds that these latter cross-cultural values must be respected by all domestic and international businesses as well as by both local and central governments.³⁹ Tanzanian Catholic moral theologian Laurenti Magesa reinforces Himes’s insight by

³⁶ Ibid., paras. 29–30.

³⁷ Ibid., paras. 29, 1, 60.1, and 60.3.

³⁸ Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations,” May 26, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19950526_mongellapechino_en.html. Section 2.

³⁹ Himes, *Christianity and the Political Order*, 301.

expressing that such a cross-culturalism of human rights requires the participation of all. Thus, according to Magesa, “the struggle for human rights... focuses on what unites us as human beings... [in these struggles]... everyone is a subject, bound and acting together for the same objective.”⁴⁰ Political participation is therefore a means of fostering human rights.

IV.1.6. Participation

In order for anyone to exercise the right to participation, it is necessary to have the right to information, education, and freedom in place first. *Gaudium et Spes* reaffirms the equality of men and women, counting the right to political participation among the basic human rights alongside “the right to life, food, shelter, security, clothes, health care, social services, [and] free initiatives...” *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that these rights are grounded in the dignity of the human person, which is inalienable. Such dignity is central because it is granted by God alone to every human being; it is the key basis for communion between human beings.⁴¹ As former DePaul University president John T. Richardson once put it, “the realization of the individual person’s destiny and good order in society would be impossible without these rights,”⁴² especially the right to participation.

For Himes, the lack of participation available to people all over the world in the decisions that affect their lives harms their wellbeing and is a serious injustice.⁴³ *Participation* is a means to consider the voices that tend to be ignored and silenced.⁴⁴ Christians are thus called to

⁴⁰ Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, “The Missing Voices of Women,” in *Catholic Theological Ethics, Past, Present, and Future: The Trento Conference*, ed. James F. Keenan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 49.

⁴¹ Paul VI, “GS,” para. 12.

⁴² John T. Richardson, *Readings in Catholic Social Teaching: Selected Documents of the Universal Church, 1891–2011* (2015), 7, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=960972>.

⁴³ Himes, *Christianity and the Political Order*, 301–2.

⁴⁴ John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris*,” Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, April 11, 1963, 33, w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/.../hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

participate in the sanctification of the world and to build “a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.”⁴⁵ Christians are called to contribute to making an equitable distribution of the goods of the earth a reality and to opt for a self-sacrifice “holy and pleasing to God.”⁴⁶ They do this by resisting the forces of wickedness and the darkness of the world, by involving themselves in temporal concerns, adhering to the norms of justice, and favoring practices of the virtues.⁴⁷

IV.1.7. Justice

The need for justice is claimed strongly by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, where he describes what political participation should look like. For Benedict, political participation is the quest for justice that promotes a share in a community's goods rather than leading people to depend on charity. It is impeding the state from functioning as a “bunch of thieves” as Augustine suggests: “a State which is not governed according to justice would be just a bunch of thieves.”⁴⁸ It is a commitment to love God and neighbor with *agape* (divine love), which is grounded and shaped by faith.⁴⁹ Benedict XVI reaffirms that charity requires of every Christian to participate in working for the common good according to each one's vocation and influence in society. For Benedict XVI, this participation is the institutional and even political path to charity.

⁴⁵ Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964, para. 36, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., paras. 31–36.

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, “*Deus Caritas Est*,” Encyclical Letter to the Bishops Priests and Deacons Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Love, December 25, 2005, para. 27, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html; Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei*, Early Church Classics (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge ; New York : Macmillan, 1943), bk. IV.4.

⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, “*DCE*,” paras. 1, 7, 15, 16, and 27.

Richard Leonard, an Australian Jesuit priest, mentions two principles of social action provided in *Deus Caritas Est* that are crucial for the idea of participation of men and women. These are: (1) “the right and duty of all persons to develop their qualities and talents to the fullest degree possible”⁵⁰ and (2) “the struggle against injustice [gender injustice, in this case] must be a peaceful struggle, one that works for the development of humanity as God intended it and for the good of all.”⁵¹ These principles ground the task of political participation of all as a path for peace.

IV.1.8. Protection of “Our Common Home” and a Preferential Option for the Poor

Finally, Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* calls upon all to participate in protecting “Our Common Home” against human activities causing global warming and its disastrous consequences on all forms of life. He underlines that responsibilities need to be identified and differentiated in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. Pope Francis demands active participation of all members of the community and suggests we embrace new processes that consider respect for the local cultures, the rights of the people, their socio-historical development, and that fight global warming.⁵²

Pope Francis views the participation of men and women as a means to safeguard the environmental canopy of our common home. He states that political participation of the peoples must go beyond what is required by laws and regulations to ensure that justice is done to the habitat and that the negative effects of economic interests do not degrade the

⁵⁰ Richard Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women* (Ottawa, ON, Canada: Novalis, St Paul University, 1995), 23.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Francis, “*Laudato Si'*,” Encyclical on care for Our Common Home, May 24, 2015, para. 144, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

environmental canopy of the poor.⁵³ For, as he puts it, “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.”⁵⁴ Such a view reinforces participation as a way of making the option for the poor.

Participation is therefore about building up the solidarity and love of preference for the poor, which the popes argue constitutes a path to peace. This path requires us to resist imprudent decisions and replace dictatorial governments with democratic ones in order to make people’s participation possible.⁵⁵ Participation in building democratic states must be done by everyone; it is a task to be “guided by a Christian conscience” that must be rooted in moral law.⁵⁶ A democratic society must be built on non-negotiable principles; it succeeds only when based on the correct understanding of the human person. No political participation should undermine the fundamental ethical requirements. Participation must be at the service “of the human person and of true human progress.”⁵⁷

For the African bishops, participation is a conscious effort to correct the moral mistakes, failings and shortcomings of our social institutions, cultures and systems. It also must correct grave injustice, denounce corruption, and allow dialogue on conflicts in the Great Lakes region in Africa.⁵⁸ Thus, the fact that Catholic social teaching promotes the principle of participation

⁵³ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, “SRS,” paras. 36, 39, 44, and 47.

⁵⁶ Joseph Card. Ratzinger and Tarcisio Bertone, “*Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith*,” on some questions regarding The Participation of Catholics in Political Life, November 21, 2002, para. 1, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html.

⁵⁷ Ibid., para. 5.

⁵⁸ Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SCEAM), “*Gouvernance, bien commun et transitions démocratiques en Afrique*,” 2013, paras. 22, 24, 30, and 38, <https://www.comboni.org/app-data/files/allegati/997.pdf>.

of men and women in society is not to be questioned. However, the Church's teaching on women's participation is ambiguous and must be carefully assessed.

Section Two will undertake this task of scrutiny. As Gudorf explains, the Church's "public-realm teaching on women since the early 1960s has focused on the equality of women, their right to be accorded equal education, work, pay, and political rights and to be protected from discrimination against their gender."⁵⁹ However, there is still some ambiguity on women's roles in Catholic social teaching, even after Vatican II. Vatican II proclaims that equality of rights of men and women must go with their equal dignity, but it does not specify equality of functions.

SECTION TWO: THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Introduction

Even though Catholic social teaching affirms equal dignity between men and women, it has made other non-egalitarian statements that undermine this project, especially before Vatican II. It assumes that women's and men's functions complement one another instead of being equal to one another. Trying to equalize them is like going against nature and against women's virtue, by this rhetoric.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Christine E. Gudorf, "Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women," in *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, ed. Charles E. Curran, Margaret A. Farley, and Richard A. McCormick, Readings in Moral Theology, no. 9 (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 270.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

To assess how Catholic social teaching imperils women's political participation in society with these positions, I first consider the views of John Paul II (then Karol Wojtyla) regarding alienation. For him, alienation is essentially "the negative of participation, for it renders participation difficult or even impossible"⁶¹ and is "an estrangement of a human being from [their] humanness."⁶² Second, I consider Meghan Clark's perspectives on alienation. She explains that alienating persons is more than excluding them:

Alienation has much graver consequences than simply the peril in which it places the reality of (or perhaps more appropriately, the possibility of) true human community; alienation attacks personhood. It involves a loss of identity and personhood.... What alienation or marginalization robs individuals of is their humanity and, therefore, systems of alienation are not only dehumanizing but they are also depersonalizing.⁶³

This understanding of alienation not only as dehumanizing but also depersonalizing resonates with Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty. When anyone is denied the ability to realize his or her very self as a person, participation is impossible. For Clark, social alienation leads to the fact that, though people may be able to interact with each other, they cannot fully interact with others "within the larger community from which they are excluded."⁶⁴

Third, I consider ways through which women come to internalize concepts of their inferiority as moral truth and how such internalization alienates their political consciousness.

Kochurani Abraham, a feminist theologian from India, argues:

When women internalize the patriarchal assumptions of their subordinate status that condition their identity construction, they tend to become "politically

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, Catholic Thought from Lublin, v. 4 (New York: P. Lang, 1993), 206.

⁶² John Paul II, *Toward a Philosophy of Praxis: An Anthology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 55.

⁶³ Clark, "Integrating Human Rights: Participation in John Paul II, Catholic Social Thought and Amartya Sen," 304.

⁶⁴ Clark, "Integrating Human Rights," 304.

unconscious,” which is a state of dialectical amnesia where social actors collude with their own oppression even when it exposes them to self-contradiction.⁶⁵

Building upon the above insights, this section argues that Catholic social teachings before Vatican II reinforce the alienation of women's political consciousness through four patriarchal tenets: (1) the traditional view of women as inferior beings, sinful, and the weaker sex by nature; (2) the affirmation of domestic roles for women and the expectation of submissiveness of women/wives toward men/husbands as affirmed in the Pauline household codes; (3) the ambiguity of the complementarity model; and (4) the view of women's capability in terms of “feminine genius.” These factors work to reinforce the alienation or depersonalization of women as noted by Clark and reinforce women's anthropological poverty as understood by Mveng. I will explore the ambivalence of Catholic social teaching in regard to participation of women in further discussion of these four factors as they arise.

IV.2.1. Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903)

Rerum Novarum—“Of New Things” (1891)—introduced the modern wave of social encyclicals, delivered in a context of the poverty experienced by many workers and of the growth in power of both capitalist and socialist movements. In this context, the issue of working women was not yet at stake. Nonetheless, in addressing the influence of industrialization on family life, *Rerum Novarum* is the first encyclical to publicly declare that women are more fitted to domestic and mothering roles.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Abraham Kochurani, “Resistance: A Liberative Key in Feminist Ethics,” in *Feminist Catholic Theological Ethics: Conversations in the World Church*, ed. Linda Hogan and A. E. Orobator, Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 102.

⁶⁶ Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” Encyclical on Capital and Labor, May 15, 1891, para. 62, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

For Leo XIII, the principle that would bring about a just society was “a just wage” for male workers that would allow them to provide for their wives and children. Women were put into the same category of weaker beings along with children, who were incapable of doing hard work, which had to be performed by men in accordance with ideas on men's natural strength. For Leo XIII, the idea of differentiation in the natures of men and women calls for women to be modest and dedicate themselves to the good upbringing of children and the welfare of the family.

IV.2.2. Pope Benedict XV (1914–1922)

Even though Benedict XV devoted many of his encyclicals to war and peace, he does reinforce Leo XIII's views on women fitting domestic roles. Benedict XV affirmed that because of the deplorable perversity of war and the decline of religion, women have lost their feminine modesty and their piety. They imitate men by devoting themselves to occupations contrary to their nature, assuming masculine and public roles, and rejecting the domestic duties for which they were born.⁶⁷

IV.2.3. Pope Pius XI (1922–1939).

As tradition has it, women always belong to someone, first to their fathers before marriage then to their husbands. In *Casti Connubii* (1930), Pius XI, drawing from Ephesians 5:22–23, suggests maintaining the order of nature in marriage. As he puts it, “Let women be subject to

⁶⁷ Benedetto XV, “*Natalis Trecentesimi*,” Epistola Natalis Trecentesimi del Papa Benedetto XV alla Reverenda Madre Angela di Nostra Signora, Superiora Generale dell'Unione Romana delle Vergini Orsoline, nel Trecentesimo Anniversario della Fondazione della Famiglia Religiosa, 1917, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/letters/1917/documents/hf_ben-xv_let_19171227_natalis-trecentesimi.html.

their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church."⁶⁸ He continues that,

The man is the ruler of the family, and the head of the woman; but because she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, let her be subject and obedient to the man, not as a servant but as a companion, so that nothing be lacking of honor or of dignity in the obedience which she pays.⁶⁹

These statements display the anthropological complementarianism that is still in function in current Catholic social teachings. Pius XI declares a woman's throne is the walls of the home and that she is raised to that throne by the Gospels. Pius XI strongly stands against feminist liberalism. He claims such liberalism is harmful for the woman herself.⁷⁰ According to Helman, Pius XI considered the feminist movement for equality as "crimes against women, God, and the Christian family."⁷¹ For him, some inequality between men and women is necessary to ensure a right order of the home, family, and society.⁷² By Christine Gudorf's account, Pius XI was even against female athletics because he considered them a threat to women's virtue.⁷³

Pius XI, in dealing with marriage, reaffirms that a woman must obey a man and refers to such obedience as "honorable and trusting." He stands against any emancipation of women—whether in the domestic, social, physiological, or economic sphere. He affirms that any form of emancipation from the obedience that a woman owes to a man in this view of marriage is a false liberty and a crime. He strongly suggests that a woman should not be free to administrate

⁶⁸ Pius XI, "*Casti Connubii*," Encyclical on Christian Marriage, December 31, 1930, para. 26, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html.

⁶⁹ Ibid., para. 29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., paras. 74–75.

⁷¹ Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 14.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

⁷³ Gudorf, "Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women," 70.

her own affairs in these areas without “the knowledge and against the wish of her husband.”⁷⁴ This statement does not only deny to women a basic right but also constitutes an obstruction to their freedom to participate in society.

In *Quadragesimo Anno*—“On the Fortieth Year” (1931)—Pius XI stood against child and female labor as an abuse perpetrated to increase production in light of the economic depression of the 1930s. He insisted on the wrongness of abusing the tenderness of children and the “limited strength” of women. He stood for a dignified wage for the whole family, “just wages”⁷⁵ or a “family wage,”⁷⁶ which was meant to sustain the whole family so that women would not be forced to work outside of the home instead of assuming their domestic responsibilities, including caring for the children.⁷⁷ This stand is not quite a demand for social justice, even though it may include one; rather it is once more the reinforcement of the Pauline household codes and the affirmation of an ontological view of women as a weaker sex by nature.

IV.2.4. Pope Pius XII (1939–1958)

Pius XII, on the other hand, affirms equality of wages between men and women and the participation of women in political life for the good of the society. He acknowledges that women have a sacred duty and power to model public opinion using their rights as citizens.

⁷⁴ Pius XI, “*CC*,” para. 74.

⁷⁵ Pius XI, “*Quadragesimo Anno*,” Encyclical on reconstruction of social order, May 15, 1931, para. 71,74, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

⁷⁶ Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women*, 16.

⁷⁷ Pius XI, “*QA*,” paras. 28, 71.

Yet, he reminds that they should not be working in the public sphere, for they are needed at their homes to care for children and husbands as a greater contribution for the common good.⁷⁸

In *Davanti A Questa* (1941), Pius XII reinforces the views of his predecessor, Pius XI, affirming that women were created to be mothers and that this role is majestic and incomparable in educating children to become responsible adults.⁷⁹ In his 1945 address on women's duties in social and political life, he expresses his view of the complementarity of men and women as based on their different sexes:

As children of God, man and woman have a dignity in which they are absolutely equal....To have vindicated and proclaimed this truth, and to have delivered woman from a slavery as degrading as it was contrary to nature, is one of the imperishable glories of the Church. But man and woman cannot maintain or perfect this equal dignity of theirs unless they respect and make use of the distinctive qualities which nature has bestowed on each sex: physical and spiritual qualities which are indestructible, and so co-ordinated that their mutual relation cannot be upset without nature itself intervening to reestablish it. These peculiar characteristics which distinguish the sexes are so obvious to everybody that nothing short of willful blindness, or a doctrinaire attitude as disastrous as it is utopian, can ignore or fail to see their importance in the structure of society.⁸⁰

Moreover, in his Allocution to the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, held in 1947, in standing against divorce, Pius XII calls on women to have faith, especially that which is "expressed in acts of humility, prayer, and sacrifice." He reminds women to be stronger; first, because they share "the weakness of a fallen nature." But, second, because Satan continues to push Eve to fall calling on women to resist "the temptations and

⁷⁸ Pius XII, "The Allocution to the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues," September 1947, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/papal-directives-for-the-woman-of-today-8962>.

⁷⁹ Pius XII, "Davanti A Questa. The Pope Speaks to Mothers: Address of Pope Pius XII to the Concourse of Women of Catholic Action and Their Helpers from All the Dioceses of Italy," trans. Canon G.D. Smith, 1941, <https://www.ecatholic2000.com/cts/untitled-347.shtml>.

⁸⁰ Pius XII, "Questa Grande Vostra Adunata: Women's Duties in Social and Political Life: Address of His Holiness Pope Pius XII To Members of Various Catholic Women's Associations," October 21, 1945, sec. I. "On Distinctive and Complementary Qualities of the sexes", <http://catholictradition.org/Encyclicals/questa1.htm>.

seductions of [their] own tendencies.”⁸¹ Hence, Pius XII seems to argue that women might have a special sinful nature when compared to men, even though they all share in the same weak human nature.

He vehemently upholds the traditional view of women as the weaker sex and reinforces the complementarity model as grounded in the Pauline household codes. For Pius XII, where complementarity is disregarded, the common good and social and spiritual harmonies are compromised. Richard Leonard comments that for Pius XII, taking care of the family, establishing the home, and arranging for the man's wellbeing are laws of nature, duty, and obligation for a Christian woman.⁸² By this account, it is also the law of nature for a Christian woman “to assure the family of a peaceful life together.”⁸³ As Gudorf reinforces, Pius XII does not recognize the fact that women entering public life provides them with access to basic human rights, rather, “he hoped that, for the good of the family, women would not exercise all their new-found rights.”⁸⁴

Besides, for Pius XII, women's prudential judgement cannot be fully reliable. As he states,

It is not so much that each sex is called to a different task; the difference is rather in their manner of judging and arriving at concrete and practical applications. Take the case of civil rights, for example; at the present time they are equal for both sexes. But just think how much more intelligently and effectively these rights will be used if men and women pool their resources in using them. The sensibility and delicacy which are characteristic of the woman may perhaps bias her judgment in the direction of her impressions, and so tend to the prejudice of wide and clear vision, cool decision, or far-sighted prudence; but on the other hand, they are most valuable aids in discerning the needs, aspirations, and dangers proper to the sphere of domestic life, public assistance, and religion.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Pius XII, “*Papal Directives For the Woman of Today*,” sec. I. “A Lively and Supernatural Faith”.

⁸² Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁴ Gudorf, “Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women,” 67.

⁸⁵ Pius XII, “*Questa Grande Vostra Adunata*,” sec. II. “The Duty of Women to Take part in public life today.”

Pius XII, here, gives a list of all the disastrous consequences that can occur from mothers entering the workforce, including those who were obliged to work because of the wars.⁸⁶ Women should accept their duty as mothers, according to him, because motherhood is an opportunity for them to be saved.

In addition, Pius XII presents the Mother Mary as an example to maintain the model of spiritual mothers and protectors of the homes. He lays a Mariological view (a view centered on the virtues of Mary, the mother of Jesus) of women upon which John Paul II later builds his discourse on women's virginity as the highest virtue. As Leonard puts it, for Pius XII and John Paul II,

Woman as virgin is the highest calling and closest to God. Woman as wife and mother is the fulfillment of the natural order created by God. Wives and mothers must fulfil domestic duties as their social responsibility. The single woman is a mystery, but she should devote herself to *feminine* occupations.⁸⁷

This Mariological vision of women and the praising of married women more than single women are also seen in John XXIII's writings as well as John Paul II's.

IV.2.5. Pope John XXIII (1958–1963)

In *Mater et Magistra* (1961), John XXIII stands against the inhuman working conditions to which women and children are subjected and reiterates the need for institutions to protect the rights of workers, especially its weaker members who are women and children.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., II. "A wide field of action open to women in public life." Ibid.

⁸⁷ Leonard, *Beloved Daughters*, 20.

⁸⁸ John XXIII, "*Mater et Magistra*," Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress, May 15, 1961, paras. 7, 13, 20, 62, 215, 219, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html.

In *Pacem in Terris* (1963), John XXIII acknowledges the right of men and women to active participation in political life as an inviolable right.⁸⁹ He encourages women to take public roles according to their potential for the good of society.⁹⁰ However, John XXIII also reiterates the views of his predecessors, stating that women must be given the kind of works that allow them to fulfill their duty as wives and mothers⁹¹ and demanding that their domestic roles be respected.⁹² As Gudorf states, John XXIII assumes that “hierarchy is natural;”⁹³ the work force must operate in such a way that women can still place their family as their first priority. Thus, John XXIII and his predecessors expand women's traditional mothering and special genius to saving humanity by helping men.

IV.2.6. Pope Paul VI (1963–1978)

In *Gaudium et Spes*, Paul VI affirms women's awareness of their rights and considers their holding of public functions as a positive development. *Gaudium et Spes* provides a few examples of the fundamental rights of women which must be guaranteed by certain institutions, such as the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace the type of life they wish, and to have access to education and culture in the same ways as men. Paul VI acknowledges that women now work in every sphere of life and calls on all to bolster their participation in political life. He affirms that women and men must perform activities for the benefit of society “in harmony with the dignity of the human person without distinction of race, sex, nation, religion, or social circumstance.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ John XXIII, “PT,” para. 26.

⁹⁰ Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women*, 21.

⁹¹ John XXIII, “PT,” para. 19.

⁹² Ibid., para. 41.

⁹³ Gudorf, “Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women,” 69.

⁹⁴ Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women*, 22.

Although Paul advocates that women are equals to men and, by this principle, have full rights “to participate in cultural, economic and social life,” he does not explain how such participation of women will be harmonized with previous teachings, according to which women are the heart of the home. For Christine Gudorf, Paul VI assumes that equality of participation for women in all spheres of life can and should simply be added to the traditional domestic roles of women without reconsidering this domestic role.⁹⁵ Indeed, Pope Paul insists that domestic roles of women must be preserved.⁹⁶

In his famous assertion of “development” as the new name for “peace” in *Populorum Progressio*—“The Progress of Peoples” (1967)—Paul VI reaffirms the equality of men and women to participate in this crucial development of the world. In *Octogesima Adveniens*—“On the Eightieth Year” (1971) of *Rerum Novarum*—Paul VI reaffirms the aspiration of every man and woman to equality and participation as fundamental cornerstones of human dignity and freedom.⁹⁷ He reinforces equal rights and shares in the responsibility to participate in political life, but warns against any “false equality which would deny the distinction with woman’s proper role.”⁹⁸

Another ambivalent perspective offered by Paul VI is the *complementarity model* in the matter of women’s roles in church. Paul VI’s Apostolic Letter *Ministeria quaedam* (1972), which was written a year after *Octogesima Adveniens*, affirms that the minor orders must be performed by those preparing to be ordained deacons or priests, excluding the participation of women as lectors and readers.⁹⁹ Such exclusion is part of what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

⁹⁵ Gudorf, “Commentary on Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum).,” 336, 339.

⁹⁶ Paul VI, “GS,” para. 52.

⁹⁷ Paul VI, “OA,” para. 22.

⁹⁸ Ibid., para. 13.

⁹⁹ Leonard, *Beloved Daughters: 100 Years of Papal Teaching on Women*, 24.

calls “kyriarchy,” which she distinguishes from patriarchy. Patriarchy is domination of men over women, focusing on a gender-dualistic model that reinforces the centrality of men and marginalization of women (male oriented/androcentric symbolic gender). Kyriarchy, on the other hand, is a socio-political system of domination and subordination that is based on the “the rule of master, lord, father, or emperor.”¹⁰⁰

I argue that the kyriarchal Church has a negative impact on the political participation of women in societies such as the DR Congo. In the DR Congo, the Church and its teaching have moral power. Moreover, the leaders of the church, like the bishops and priests, are seen to embody the practical wisdom (*phronesis*) of the wise person as suggested in Aristotle's politics, who deliberates well in order to promote the good of the whole.¹⁰¹ Fiorenza suggests the “discipleship of equals” as a “reconstructive model of struggle” to set free the liberating impulses of the biblical traditions from the androcentric grips of the kyriarchal Church.¹⁰² I too turn to the “discipleship of equals” in the following section as foundational for women's political participation in society.

IV.2.7. Pope John Paul II (1978–2005)

John Paul II argues, first, that “even though man and woman are made for each other, this does not mean that God created them incomplete”¹⁰³ and, second, that “woman complements man,

¹⁰⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xix.

¹⁰¹ Aristotle, W. D. Ross, and Lesley Brown, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰² Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 27.

¹⁰³ John Paul II, “*For the XXVIII World Day of Peace. Women: Teachers of Peace*,” January 1, 1995, para. 3, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121994_xxviii-world-day-for-peace.html.

just as man complements woman.... Womanhood expresses the 'human' as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way.”¹⁰⁴

In *Familiari Consortio*, John Paul II reaffirms that women should be allowed to participate in public roles but argues they must still be valued as mothers and wives to reach their full potential. As Lisa Cahill argues, by tradition, Catholic social teaching endorses the fact that all members of society, men and women, “have distinct personalities that are equal but complementary,”¹⁰⁵ which ultimately does imply inequality. *Familiari Consortio* praises women's work outside their homes as “a vital cultural contribution,”¹⁰⁶ but Catholic tradition always regards domestic responsibility to apply to women more than men. As Kenneth Himes clearly states, “the functions of parenting and homemaking are still closely attached to women in a way that is not the case when papal teaching speaks of men and their social tasks.”¹⁰⁷

John Paul II uses the Apostolic-Petrine principle to justify certain roles as being instituted by Jesus himself for men (like priesthood), not as domination but as service. On this he grounds the complementarity of women and men.¹⁰⁸ Whereas Lisa Cahill, in her comment on *Familiaris Consortio*, insists that the realities of family life do “contribute to the renewal of society as well as of the Church,”¹⁰⁹ I argue that the reverse is true in the context of the DR Congo. In the DR Congo, while the teaching of the Church has moral power in family life and society, it intermingles with the traditional gender norms of the society to the detriment of

¹⁰⁴ John Paul II, “Letter to Women, Apostolic Letter,” June 29, 1995, para. 7, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html.

¹⁰⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Familiaris Consortio (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes 1950– (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 387.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 391.

¹⁰⁷ Kenneth R. Himes 1950–, *Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching*, Responses to One Hundred and One Questions on Catholic Social Teaching (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 103.

¹⁰⁸ John Paul II, “Letter to Women, Apostolic Letter,” para. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Cahill, “Familiaris Consortio (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family),” 384.

women. An examination of this intermingling allows us to grasp how a collusion of Church and colonial power could be possible as explained in Chapter One. It is also difficult to separate the influence of Christian teaching from the influence of androcentricity in African traditional gender norms, as can be seen in the proverbs developed in Chapter Two.

In his writings, John Paul II makes the basic principles of complementarity very clear. In *Laborem Exercens*—"On Human Work" (1981)—John Paul II praises women who are able to both work and dedicate themselves to educating their children and demands that women acquire the social benefits that they deserve. Nonetheless, he warns that the working women should not overlook their nature, i.e. that of being mother. As John Paul II puts it, "The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role."¹¹⁰

Although the mothering role is both procreative and necessary, the excessive emphasis placed on it can become harmful in a context of anthropological poverty. The ability of women to politically participate in society is even more smothered in the DR Congo, where the average birth-per-women reaches five to six children. Political participation is even more stifled when mothers and children are left without sustainable (or any) healthcare, as in the DR Congo. As feminist theologian Anne Arabome explains, the "official magisterium continues to view women through the narrow lens of maternity and motherhood... paying little attention to the sad reality that maternity and motherhood often form a deadly combination for women in

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, "*Laborem Exercens: On Human Work on the Ninetieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*," To His Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate to the Priests to the Religious Families to the sons and daughters of the Church and to all Men and Women of good will, September 14, 1981, para. 19, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

developing countries.”¹¹¹ For Arabome, therefore, being a mother in Africa is something dangerous. Nonetheless, motherhood has been the praised natural vocation of women through the many years of Church teaching.¹¹²

Pope John Paul II acknowledges that men and women are equal as witnesses and actors “in regard to the ‘mighty works of God.’”¹¹³ He brings up the sublime model of Mary's womanhood and Mary as model. In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, he affirms *Theotokos* (or, the “theological significance”) of the Mother of God, Mary, who embodies union with God by being herself the locus of incarnation. Thus, just as Mary had a special vocation and took her place in Christ's messianic service,¹¹⁴ women too are allotted a special vocation. Moreover, in this sense, they represent the whole of humanity. As Cahill puts it, this is “a complementarity schema of male and female identity in which women's dignity hinges on a unique vocation quintessentially realized in Mary the Mother of God.”¹¹⁵ I argue that these Marian principles and complementarity model negatively influence women and men's relationships and consequently the participation of women not only in Church but also in society.

As Mary Anne Case, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago Law School, explains, the anthropology of complementarity shifts from shaping the behavior of the faithful to influencing secular law in more ways than we might expect.¹¹⁶ For Case, this anthropology is

¹¹¹ Anne Arabome, “When a Sleeping Woman Wakes: A Conversation with Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium about the Feminization of Poverty,” in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 60.

¹¹² Cahill, “Familiaris Consortio (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family),” 364, 369.

¹¹³ John Paul II, “*Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year*,” 1988, para. 16, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., para. 5.

¹¹⁵ Cahill, “Familiaris Consortio (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family),” 390.

¹¹⁶ Mary Anne Case, “The Role of the Popes in the Invention of Complementarity and the Anathematization of Gender,” *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (March 29, 2016): 165, <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10124>.

largely the product of John Paul II's theology, which builds upon that of his predecessors, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, and especially Benedict XVI.¹¹⁷ It "may have started out, not just ended up, in a sphere closer to the political than the noumenological."¹¹⁸ Indeed, the teaching of the popes as that of Scriptures do not only influence the spiritual matters, but also the political and social areas in many parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In *Centesimus Annus* (1991), John Paul II acknowledges the rights of men and women to participate equally in society, but again he insists that "women should do work that takes into account their nature, circumstances, and abilities."¹¹⁹ He reminds that it is wrong to abandon this task to take paid work in society because homemaking is a woman's nature.¹²⁰ The pope praises the woman who wakes up earlier to provide for everyone clothing and food while the husband is working as advisor in the team of leaders somewhere outside the home.

Ecclesia in Africa (1995) and the church encyclicals and exhortations published in the 2000's are even more forceful about the urgency of participation of both men and women in building up democratic societies. For them, the political participation of women is not to be questioned, but they also lift up the view of women's capability in terms of the "feminine genius" as society itself needs the feminine genius. For John Paul II, it is "profoundly unjust" to prevent women "from developing their full potential and from offering the wealth of their gifts."¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁸ Case, "Complementarity and the Anathematization of Gender," 164.

¹¹⁹ John Paul II, "*Centesimus Annus*," Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, May 1, 1991, para. 7, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

¹²⁰ Ibid., paras. 19 and 29.

¹²¹ John Paul II, "*Ecclesia in Africa: On the Church in Africa and Its Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000*," *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the bishops priests and deacons men and women religious and all the lay faithful*, 1995, para. 27, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html.

To illustrate, in its 2004 letter to the bishops of the Catholic church on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) affirms that, ontologically, women are imbued with a fortitude by God that propels them to "contribute to the growth and protection of the other."¹²² The letter also affirms that "women should be present in the world of work and in the organization of society, and they should have access to positions of responsibility which allow them to inspire the policies of nations and to promote innovative solutions to economic and social problems."¹²³ Yet, as Edward Collins Vacek argues, the CDF's letter lifts up marriage as a space of collaboration for wives and husbands¹²⁴ and their primary model is that of Mary, characterized by "listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting."¹²⁵ For the CDF, society could become violent where the "feminine genius" is lacking. Consequently, for their "genius" women should be at all levels of organization of society and access positions of responsibility to inspire politics and promote innovation.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, once more, the CDF calls for a schedule that allows women to devote time to family and education of children as well. The Congregation overlooks the fact that this should be so for men who are working as well; both men and women should work out a schedule which allows them to dedicate time to their family. Thus, the letter seems to overlook the collaboration of men and women in society.

IV.2.8. Pope Francis (2013–)

Pope Francis has adopted a more positive attitude regarding the inclusion of women in high positions of church life. His appointment of Mary Melone, the Franciscan sister, in 2014 as the

¹²² Ratzinger and Bertone, "CDF," para. 13.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Edward Collins Vacek, "Feminist And the Vatican," *Theological Studies*, no. 66 (2005): 160.

¹²⁵ Ratzinger and Bertone, "CDF," para. 16.

¹²⁶ Ibid., para. 13.

first female Rector of the Pontifical University Anthonianum in Rome illustrates this positive attitude. His position on the participation of women in society is also more positive. Yet, Pope Francis' stance on gender is not at all disassociated from the ambivalence of his predecessors.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reaffirms that the dignity of each person and the common good are the two pillars that ought to shape economic policies. He praises the contributions to society made by women, emphasizing distinctive skills that women "tend to possess" compared to men, which he identifies as an "expression in motherhood" such as "sensitivity, intuition and other skills." Like his predecessors, he encourages a feminine presence in the workplace and in society because of the need of the "feminine genius" in these places.¹²⁷ He explains,

I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. Yes, we risk taking a step backwards. The removal of difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution.¹²⁸

Mary Anne Case explains that, even though Pope Francis does not repeat Benedict XVI stance against gender or John Paul II's excessive emphasis on the complementarity model and motherhood, he does share their conservative views on these themes.¹²⁹ For him nothing changes in fundamental doctrine, only in pastoral approach:

When we speak of complementarity between man and woman in this context, let us not confuse that term with the simplistic idea that all the roles and relations of the two sexes are fixed in a single, static pattern. Complementarity will take many forms as each man and woman brings his or her distinctive contributions to their marriage and to the formation of their children—his or her personal richness,

¹²⁷ Francis, "*Evangelii Gaudium: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*," Apostolic Exhortation to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful, 2013, para. 103, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

¹²⁸ L'Osservatore Romano, "Creativity and Courage," *At the General Audience Pope Francis speaks about the complementarity of man and woman*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/creativity-and-courage>.

¹²⁹ Case, "Complementarity and the Anathematization of Gender," 167.

personal charisma. Complementarity becomes a great wealth. It is not just a good thing but it is also beautiful.¹³⁰

Anne Arabome argues that there seems to be “little or no recognition of women as playing the role of subordinate human beings”¹³¹ in the above comments on the complementarity model. Indeed, Pope Francis praises complementarity, arguing that we must not take it as attributing static (hierarchical) roles to men and women but rather as encouraging women to bring out their “personal contribution,”¹³² echoing the same ideas as those on the “feminine genius.”

Yet, it is important to note that in *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis has a very positive view on complementarity that goes beyond the gender stereotypes that have characterized most of the social teachings before and after Vatican II. He states that “masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories” and explains that there are many areas that have been considered as masculine or feminine but which women's works in the former and men's works in the latter have demonstrated should not be categorized by this masculine/feminine binary. To wit, he also advocates that childcare (traditionally a feminine task) is the responsibility of both men and women.¹³³

For Arabome, Pope Francis does recognize that women are doubly poor but he does not express the many ways through which the Church itself contributes to such poverty.¹³⁴ The “genius” of women sounds positive and affirms many good qualities that women can aspire

¹³⁰ Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, “*Pope Francis Address to Participants in the International Colloquium on the Complementarity between Man and Woman*,” Zenith, November 17, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141117_congregazione-dottrina-fede.html.

¹³¹ Arabome, “When a Sleeping Woman Wakes,” 59.

¹³² Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, “*On the Complementarity between Man and Woman*.”

¹³³ Francis, “*Amoris Laetitia*,” *On love in the family*, 2016, para. 286, https://w2.vatican.va/.../papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en...

¹³⁴ Arabome, “When a Sleeping Woman Wakes,” 59.

to.¹³⁵ Yet, it is problematic in that, as Elisabeth Johnson states, “women are pre-ordained to social roles of loving, nurturing, and caring for life, while their capacity for thought and active leadership are counted of little worth.”¹³⁶ The language of feminine genius is thus an excellent example of the tendency of the popes' teachings to overlook women's cognitive and leadership capacity.

Moreover, this “genius” language has been taken up by the bishops of Africa even more strongly. They call for a greater presence of women in leadership positions to “give added flavor to African political life,”¹³⁷ they still affirm mothering as the first vocation of women. They call on the people to respect women as mothers¹³⁸ and protectors of life¹³⁹ as well as on the Church in Africa to foster pastoral work and services for women. The African bishops seem to overlook, however, the need for respect for female political leaders as models of fortitude, prudence, and productive anger to enact positive social change, as displayed by the historical and contemporary female figures discussed in Chapter Three.

The African bishops acknowledge, especially with reference to consecrated women, women's “‘genius’ of gentleness, tenderness and openness to hearing the Word like Mary, the sister of Lazarus (cf. *Jn* 11) and the Samaritan women (cf. *Jn* 4), or of service to others, like Martha (cf. *Lk* 8; *Jn* 11).”¹⁴⁰ They also resort to the tenderness of women as a gift to be used for the sake of reconciliation and peace in Africa. The “feminine genius” approach, therefore,

¹³⁵ Vacek, “Feminist and the Vatican,” 170.

¹³⁶ Elisabeth A. Johnson, *Feminism and Sharing the Faith: A Catholic Dilemma* (University of Tulsa, Warren Center for Catholic Studies, 1994), 113–14.

¹³⁷ SCEAM, “*L'Eglise en Afrique au service de la reconciliation, de la justice et de la paix: IIème assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique*,” 2006, para. 138, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20060627_ii-assembly-africa_fr.html.

¹³⁸ Ibid., para. 30.

¹³⁹ Ibid., para. 52.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 114.

might have its value as one avenue of political participation but distracts overall from the capability approach needed to bolster participation of women in society.

Thus as with the popes, the bishops of Africa tend to reaffirm that “the primary functions of women are to be wives and mothers; men assume public political and economic roles outside the home; and the socioeconomic status of women is dependent on that of their male family members, especially their husbands.”¹⁴¹ Among the values of the African cultural heritage that are being promoted, the African bishops cite a respect for women as mothers,¹⁴² and confirm men as breadwinners, husbands and head of family.¹⁴³

There is no doubt that Catholic teaching affirms that participation, regardless of gender, concerns an affirmation of the dignity of every person before God.¹⁴⁴ Yet, Catholic teaching does implicitly deny equal participation of men and women through its fear of a potential decline in the domestic, mothering, and childbearing roles among women. Among ideas of equality displayed in *Laborem Exercens* and *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the concept of women's genius and the endeavor to preserve motherhood prevails overall. I, however, argue that political participation for women must emphasize women's capability, not their “feminine genius.” No matter how important mothers are in their homes, fathers are as important as mothers for the development of mature and stable children.

The traditional view of women as inferior beings and the weaker sex by nature, the affirmation of domestic roles for women and the expectation of their submissiveness, the ambiguity of the complementarity model, and the view of women's capability in terms of the

¹⁴¹ Cahill, “Familiaris Consortio (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family),” 387.

¹⁴² SCEAM, “*Gouvernance*,” para. 30.

¹⁴³ Ibid., para. 118.

¹⁴⁴ Catholic Church, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 144.

“feminine genius,” are dangerous. They are likely to deny women their political participation in the context of anthropological poverty of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mary Anne Case argues that the First Vatican Council provided the foundations for anthropological complementarity, which not only assumes physical and psychological differences between men and women but also ontological differences. For Case, the First Vatican Council suggested sexual stereotypes that have become a factor limiting the opportunities for women in most secular laws.¹⁴⁵ Gudorf concurs with Case, arguing that “gender complementarity in papal teaching... assumes that traits and roles are essentially sex-based.”¹⁴⁶ I argue that this assumption works to reinforce women's anthropological poverty in countries like the DR Congo where it very much intermingles with the traditional gender norms. Section Three will explore how the “discipleship of equals” can address such intermingling.

¹⁴⁵ Case, “Complementarity and the Anathematization of Gender,” 156.

¹⁴⁶ Gudorf, “Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women,” 75.

SECTION THREE: THE DISCIPLESHIP OF EQUALS WITHIN THE SCRIPTURES

Introduction

This section relies on the work feminist biblical scholars Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth Johnson, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye as they put Scriptures, gender, androcentricity, and patriarchal features into dialogue with one another.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza frees the liberating impulses of biblical traditions and shows that the early church was not simply characterized by patriarchic models but also by the discipleship of equals. On one side, she presents some biblical texts as denying gender equality and, on the other side, some as affirming it, thereby affirming the discipleship of equals. She argues that the Bible and early Christian history confirm that women had a political role and power in the early Church and society. She indicates that “women were not marginal in the earliest beginnings of Christianity; rather, biblical texts and historical sources produce the marginality of women.”¹⁴⁷ She is a key resource in showing the extent to which the dignity of women is affirmed in biblical texts.

This section argues that the dignity affirmed in biblical texts and sustained in the discipleship of equals is an invaluable resource through which to address Catholic social teaching's shortcomings regarding women's political participation in society. My exploration of these biblical resources will emphasize Oduyoye's cultural hermeneutics.

¹⁴⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xx.

IV.3.1. Discipleship of Equals and Cultural Hermeneutics

Oduyoye is a key resource for cultural hermeneutics regarding biblical texts within African cultures. According to Oduyoye, there are various definitions of what culture means and entails in its multiple dimensions: national, home, religious, regional or ethnic. Gerald A. Arbuckle argues that “a culture is a pattern of meanings, encased in a network of symbols, myths, narratives and rituals, created by individuals and subdivisions, as they struggle to respond to the competitive pressures of power and limited resources in a rapidly globalizing and fragmenting world...”¹⁴⁸ Oduyoye explains that cultural hermeneutics allow us not to take cultures and practices for granted but rather to recognize that ritual and cultural norms are all humanly constructed and are called to change. She uses a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the communal worldview. Oduyoye makes an important point on ATR by explaining the interdependence of religion and culture to which it is important to link the concept of the discipleship of equals and women's identity:

African religion provides a holistic view of life. It enables persons to understand and accept their status and identity and passes on beliefs that explain prevailing conditions. African religion teaches its adherents how to survive and thrive in the world in which they have been placed. This religion undergirds the shaping of the moral, social and the political, and even, at times, the economic. Hence, the moral obligations that weigh so heavily on African women are firmly hooked on to beliefs.”¹⁴⁹

Therefore, beyond the fact that women can be in power, their moral obligations firmly bent towards traditional gender norms.

¹⁴⁸ Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2010), 17.

¹⁴⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, *Introductions in Feminist Theology* 6 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 25.

Oduyoye believes that even though there are aspects of culture which are liberating, “culture is experienced by women as a tool for domination.”¹⁵⁰ She explains that

Under circumstances where the individual's survival depends on staying in the group, the tendency to comply becomes the norm. In African anthropology, as in biblical anthropology, the humanity of the woman is circumscribed by her [femininity], which is rooted in notions that woman is a wife and a mother. This is an inescapable continuum in many cultures.¹⁵¹

To illustrate the above statement, I will provide the story of a woman from the DR Congo, living and working in the United States, well-educated, and conscious in terms of women's rights. She was asked to deliver a speech at a friend's funeral that we were going to attend together. However, her husband asked her not to deliver the speech because that role, he believed, belonged only to men. To use Catholic social teaching's language, there are roles that fit well with the “feminine genius” and those that do not. She agreed with her husband and, in the end, did not deliver the speech. How can such a woman come to obey such a norm as if it were a moral norm? This story also seems to give more importance to the husband-wife relationship over the community of friends or over whoever or whatever else might grant leadership opportunities to women. Such obedience might be taken to be informed by traditional gendered patterns, which I included in Chapter One among the factors of anthropological poverty of women in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. This case is also a cautionary example of the ways the Marian and Petrine principles and traditional gender norms might intermingle to hinder women's participation in society.

Oduyoye concludes that “any interpretation of the Bible is unacceptable if it does harm to women, the vulnerable and the voiceless.”¹⁵² Following on this insight, I will explore biblical

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵² Ibid., 11–14.

discourses in light of the anthropological poverty of women, including the denial of women's "self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization."¹⁵³ I will next explore feminist insights in the biblical resources that reinforce gender equality and discipleship of equals as well as the ways in which they can boost political participation of women.

3.1.1. Biblical Texts Denying Gender Equality

First, Oduyoye affirms that the teaching on women's sinfulness is influenced by the creation story in Genesis. This story is interpreted as presenting femaleness as an opposing principle to maleness that creates distance between God and humanity."¹⁵⁴ In regard to the African context, Oduyoye argues that the injustice done to the humanity of African women has a lot to do with the focus on the assumption that it is by the sin of a woman that humanity became sinful.¹⁵⁵ From Oduyoye's perspective, this assumption influences popular interpretations of biblical texts that ignore women's humanity and focus on their physical appearance as if it were a source of sin, especially the sin against the sixth commandment, which concerns adultery.

The popular religiosity in the DR Congo that refers to women as those who naturally have the ability to deceive men reinforces Oduyoye's points. Usually, people in the Congo refer to the metaphor of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Book of Genesis and the legend of Samson and Delilah in the Book of Judges, to cite only these two. Popular religiosity also understands that it is unfaithfulness to God that brings suffering in the former story and death and destruction in the latter. However, it also concludes that the source of suffering and destruction in both stories is a woman.

¹⁵³ Clark, "Integrating Human Rights: Participation in John Paul II, Catholic Social Thought and Amartya Sen," 315.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 68.

Women's identities are also denigrated or disvalued because of a faulty reading of several other texts of the Bible. These include the account of Sarah being passed off by her husband Abraham as his sister, exposing her to be used by Pharaoh, in order to save the former's life (Gen. 12:10–20 and 20:1–18); Lot's account, offering his virgin daughters to save his male divine guest figures (Gen. 19:1–8); and the murder of the Levite's concubine (Judg. 19:22–30). The other intriguing story is that of Potiphar's wife and Joseph in Gen. 39. The misinterpretation of the fictional, mythical, and legendary stories of the Bible as presenting women as weak and deceiving beings has not been without negative influence on women's voice and authority.

Second, women's submissiveness is reinforced by the Christian teachings that stress marital authority in the family:

Similarly, [too,] women should adorn themselves with proper conduct, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hairstyles and gold ornaments, or pearls, or expensive clothes, but rather, as befits women who profess reverence for God, with good deeds. A woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. Further, Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. But she will be saved through motherhood, provided women persevere in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (1 Tim. 2:12).

Oduyoye explains that it is this “Pauline language that: has been used to shape the tone of a theology of order and of gender.”¹⁵⁶ This theology is still used in the DR Congo and works to dampen women's political participation in society. It is internalized by the DR Congo's women themselves, including those in power, in such a way that even educated women who are already leaders in church and society often focus more on the Pauline household code and on the complementarity model than on models which are liberating.

¹⁵⁶ Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 190.

For Schüssler Fiorenza, biblical texts that emphasize the *paterfamilias* codes reflect a patriarchal selection process and function to exclude women from leadership in the church. The household code, “based on an imperial model for the subordination of all in a household to the *paterfamilias*,”¹⁵⁷ requires submission and obedience as an expression of Christian love from all women.¹⁵⁸ For Fiorenza, such a code “supported slavery and reinforced patterns of the domination of husbands over wives.”¹⁵⁹ It is important to note, the Pauline language is not a message directly given by God. Moreover, this code did not apply only in the past, rather it is still operative in the DR Congo today, alienating women and inhibiting their “self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization.”¹⁶⁰ People—men and women—must be educated to the exegetical task of text analysis in order to grasp the background and impact of biblical text and to apply the right interpretation which is coherent with the contexts of the biblical texts.

Alienation can be seen in the following story of another Congolese woman, well-educated, with a master's degree, a husband, and four children. She is an ordained leader in a Protestant Evangelical Church in the DR Congo. She also preaches in the Baptist Church and assumes a position of leadership in a prestigious international institution. Yet, she believes that one of a woman's tasks is to be the “helper” of a man. To my question of how she reconciles her life as a married woman and her leadership in the Church and society, she replied as follows:

I am a leader in my Church and my work, but I have to fulfill my responsibilities at home. I recognize that God grants authority to a man. In the Garden of Eden, He said to the woman: “I will intensify your toil in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3:16). Then in Ephesians 5:22–24 He says, “Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife; just as Christ is

¹⁵⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 256–57.

¹⁵⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 149.

¹⁵⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 256–57.

¹⁶⁰ Clark, “Integrating Human Rights,” 315.

head of the church. He himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.

It is important to recognize that these biblical texts were literally cited by this leader; this suggests that she is very familiar with biblical texts and that they inform her vision of life and how she conceives her participation in society. She continues that,

Jesus died for the church and a man, in principle a man should accept to die for his wife. I would say that a man's responsibility lies in the fact that God gives him a certain authority. Yet, man did not responsibly assume his role, for this reason, he needs a helper, a woman.

She then adds, "I am not comparing myself to a man, but I argue that a man needs a woman in every sphere, including in the preaching of the Word of God." This example, while being traceable to the Pauline code, can also be easily paralleled within modern Catholic social teaching's romanticization of the family and its view of women's irreplaceable roles within it.¹⁶¹

When a woman—particularly a Congolese woman, reads the Bible—she understands it through the lens of her culture, but there is no doubt that the Bible or Christian teaching on marriage itself is already influencing her relationship to men and her view of herself. As José Ngalula explains, "A good number of African pastoral agents (men and women) advise women never to argue with their husbands because 'Eve was drawn from the side of Adam.'" ¹⁶² To illustrate this point, many women choose not to argue with their husbands and might resign from their jobs, if that were the wish of their husbands, in order to save their marriage and conform with what they believe to be God's will. Fortunately, many Congolese husbands are

¹⁶¹ Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 13.

¹⁶² Ngalula, "Milestones in Achieving a More Incisive Feminine Presence in the Church of Pope Francis," 33.

not willing to ask their wives to stop working outside the homes because the wives' jobs help to cover the needs of the households.

Oduyoye explains that it is mainly under the influence of Christianity and Islam that “a patriarchal God has been enthroned,”¹⁶³ She continues that “the Christian doctrine of man does not do justice to the humanity of women” and that it entered “into the African worldview to aggravate an already grave situation.”¹⁶⁴ At the same time, African “women are products of Africa's holistic worldview”¹⁶⁵ which can easily turn to viewing women from the perspective of the androcentric proverbs I have discussed earlier. Hence, for Oduyoye, African women are “doubly and triply burdened”¹⁶⁶ by patriarchal cultural gender biases and the androcentric biblical texts.

Laurenti Magesa concurs with Oduyoye that there is no distinction between religion and other areas of existence in African religion: “It is a way of life.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, both, patriarchal Christian and African traditional models, including that of complementarity, reinforce inequality in women's lived experience. Indeed, women's internalization of both the damaging interpretations of biblical texts as well as the negative traditional gender norms work to render them doubly anthropologically impoverished in alienating them from “self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization,”¹⁶⁸ and consequently in alienating them from participation in society. Marguerite Akossi-Mvongo, a researcher at Université-Félix-Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, reasons that women's internalization or acceptance of their inferiority, subordination to man's authority, or an

¹⁶³ Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶⁸ Clark, “Integrating Human Rights,” 315.

auxiliary/complementary role to man's is in large part a result of the ministers', priests', and theologians' internalization of these same androcentric readings:

I am often in theological milieu and have been teaching theology to future priests for the past twenty years. I have found that in Catholic circles, a fairly large number of men and women are ignorant of the major biblical and magisterial texts that affirm the dignity of women. By contrast, they have internalized the texts of some of the fathers and doctors of the Church... that imply that women by nature are "inferior," "deficient," and "tempting" and therefore dangerous to men. Those who are not theologically updated, and who are in positions of responsibility, do not imagine women can do anything other than marginal ministries.¹⁶⁹

I refer to this ignorance of biblical texts as "biblical illiteracy" and will assess its negative influence on women's political participation in the Chapter to follow.

Economic needs should not be the sole driving motivation toward women's political participation in society. God affirms women's humanity and sacredness of life, calling them to participate in bringing about God's kingdom—a kingdom of justice and peace—where human beings are granted equal dignity. The affirmation of this tenet is undertaken by feminist theologians through the assertion of a discipleship of equals. As Fiorenza puts it,

If one wants to speak of a discipleship of equals, one has to argue that wo/men have both equal status, dignity, and rights as images of the Divine and equal access to the multifarious gifts of the Spirit, Sophia. Each and every person enriches the discipleship community of equals with different experiences, vocations, and talents. In short, the notion of discipleship of equals seeks to map a radical democratic vision and reality that [offers] an alternative to biblical kyriarchal structures of domination.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, there are more resources in biblical texts to ground political participation of women in society.

¹⁶⁹ Marguerite Akossi-Mvongo, "The Church We Want: Ecclesia of Women in Africa?," in *The Church We Want: Foundations, Theology and Mission of the Church in Africa: Conversations on Ecclesiology*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015), 179–80.

¹⁷⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 114.

3.1.2. Biblical Texts Reinforcing Gender Equality but Overlooked by Church and Society

Fiorenza affirms that “although in rabbinic Judaism women are categorized with children and slaves for legal religious purposes, the biblical stories about women indicate that women were not perceived as minors or slaves in everyday life.”¹⁷¹ Justo L. González, author of several volumes on the history of Christianity, corroborates Fiorenza's view. He affirms that by the end of the second century, the leadership of the church seemed to be entirely masculine but that this appearance is not accurate to the reality suggested by the indications of women's leadership in the New Testament. Philip, for example, had four daughters who “prophesied”—or, preached. Phoebe, for her part, was a female deacon in Cenchreae and Junia was counted among the apostles. Other female ministers were counted among the martyrs. As González explains, a certain governor Pliny informed Trajan that he had ordered that two females — *ministrae* — be tortured.¹⁷²

Fiorenza also shows that the Jesus movement included everyone, including the tax collectors and prostitutes (for examples, see Mark 2:15, Luke 15:2, Matt 11:19, Luke 7:34, and Matt 21:31).¹⁷³ Moreover, Fiorenza continues, one cannot use scriptures to legitimize gender inequality or exclude women from ministry because several references in Scriptures also show that “maleness and femaleness no longer have any significance in the body of Christ.”¹⁷⁴ As Mark 15:40–41 reinforces, “There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome. These

¹⁷¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 109.

¹⁷² Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity. Volume 1: The Early Church to the Reformation*, Rev. and updated [ed.], 2nd ed. (New York: Harper One, 2010), 114.

¹⁷³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 127.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

women had followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him. There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.”

In Paul's mission, women are mentioned as missionaries and leaders who supported the Christian movements in Galilee, Jerusalem, and Antioch and contributed to spreading the Gospel. Fiorenza includes Prisca, Aquila, Phoebe, and “already occupied leadership functions and were on [Paul's] level in the early Christian missionary movement,”¹⁷⁵ Junia was arrested for her preaching activity. Phoebe exercised the authoritative function as Paul's ambassador in Rome, where she was accepted as such. Paul named her as a sister and deacon of the church of Cenchreae.¹⁷⁶ As the Epistle of Paul to the Romans confirms,

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is [also] a minister of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well. (Rom. 16:1–2)

Then, about Junia he says, “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are prominent among the apostles and they were in Christ before me” (Rom. 16:7). In Romans 16:3, Paul greets Prisca and Aquila calling them “my co-workers in Christ Jesus.” Similarly, in verse 7, Paul reaffirms the example of women who not only are apostles but also undergo the same persecution as himself to testify to their faith in Christ. Additionally, Galatians 3:28 eliminates all distinctions between men and women, or at least assumes that they are not of importance. It says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Similarly, 1 Cor. 12:13 emphasizes this by stating that we are all parts of one Body, the Body of Christ. All of

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 170.

these examples suggest the early Church held a different view of the role of women, far from that of the complementarity model stressed so strongly in Catholic social teaching.

Fiorenza argues that women's leadership in the early church in both missionary work and home churches is not questionable, including both for the wealthy and peasant women. These women were not exceptions to the rule. Rather they are the representative examples of all the other women whose narratives did survive the patriarchal and cultural tendency to silence women to reach us in the present.¹⁷⁷ Fiorenza reminds us that Paul himself affirms women's authority within communities as working on equal basis.¹⁷⁸ Prisca's and Junia's roles as wives, for example, are not the focus of their narratives, for they are disciples and apostles.

These are all indications that Jesus confirmed that even women are chosen by God to receive God's blessings and healing. There are also several other women such as Mary and Martha, whom Jesus loved and visited together with their brother Lazarus. Both Mary and Martha play a role in showing different ways of following Him, one by sitting close to him and listening and another by serving him (Luke 10:38–42). There is also Anna, a prophetess who gave thanks to God and talked about Jesus to those who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:36–38). The Samaritan woman at the well runs to testify that Jesus told her everything she had done in her life and that he might be the Messiah (John 4:1–42). There is also the woman who is bleeding (Mark 5:22–29) whom Jesus addresses publicly with affection, calling her “daughter” and praising her faith. Also, the story of the woman who had been crippled for eighteen years (Luke 13: 10–13) and whom Jesus healed, saying she is a “daughter of Abraham.” All of these stories speak volumes about Jesus's liberating approach, giving

¹⁷⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 166–69.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 169–71.

voice to the excluded and marginalized women of every social status. Their examples are foundational for women's political participation in society.

Barbara Reid reinforces Fiorenza's points in arguing that, besides Mary, mother of Jesus, there were women who followed Jesus, ministering to the Gospel, and many others who did what the opening line of "*Dei Verbum*" urges: "Hearing the Word of God with reverence, and proclaiming it with faith."¹⁷⁹ Reid adds that

The Bible itself gives us many examples of women in the Old Testament, women such as Miriam (Ex 15:20–21), Judith (Jdt 16:1–17), Deborah (Judges 5), and Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–10), who hear God's word and utter prophetic proclamations extolling God's saving deeds. In the New Testament, women who hear the word and proclaim it include Jesus' mother (Lk 1:46–55), Elizabeth (Lk 1:25, 39–45, 57–66), Anna (Lk 2:36–38), the woman evangelist of Samaria (Jn 4:4–42), Mary Magdalene and the other Galilean women (Mt 28:1–10; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–2, 11–18), to name only a few.¹⁸⁰

In addition, Anne Arabome reinforces the above points by explaining that Scriptures confirm that Baptism makes us all sharers in equal dignity. Rom. 8:14–17 and Gal. 4:4–6 argue that we all become the body of Christ once baptized and share equal dignity in Christ (Heb. 12:23), enjoying "God's free gift of sonship and daughtership."¹⁸¹ She states that since God himself has already incorporated women by making them part of the one body of the Christ, the Church must also welcome the God-given gift of women. To waste this gift is not only to inhibit women's "self-determination, [and] self-realization/self-actualization,"¹⁸² but it is also to

¹⁷⁹ Barbara Reid E., "Using Scripture to Further Gender Equality," *America, the National Catholic Review*, Women Proclaiming the Word, November 16, 2015, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/articles/women-proclaiming-word>.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid..

¹⁸¹ Anne Arabome, "'Woman, You Are Set Free!': Women and Discipleship in the Church," in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 19.

¹⁸² Clark, "Integrating Human Rights: Participation in John Paul II, Catholic Social Thought and Amartya Sen," 315.

obstruct God's "reconciliation, justice, and peace for all."¹⁸³ This also hinders women's political participation in society.

An example will illustrate this point further. For the last twenty years, in the Congo, there has barely been one religious woman teaching theology at the Catholic University. It is unlikely that there are no religious women capable of teaching theology in the Congolese theological schools. Therefore, one must ask, where are they? Why are they not being hired there?

Arabome notes how God makes men and women share the discipleship of equals, stating that, without discrimination, "the 120 disciples, including many women, received the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire, since they were to be the speakers."¹⁸⁴ Thus, Oduyoye is right when she states that, "whatever is keeping subordination of women alive in the church cannot be the Spirit of God."¹⁸⁵ In light of the Scriptures reinforcing participation and election of women by Jesus Himself, it is clear, as Oduyoye puts it, that "we cannot use scriptures to legitimize the non-inclusion of femaleness in the norm of humanness."¹⁸⁶ Moreover, she warns that the Church cannot continue ignoring the voices of women and their roles in Scriptures. If it does, it cannot be an "authentic voice for salvation."¹⁸⁷

González adds that the early Church gave responsibilities to its widows for different reasons, including the need to take care of themselves lest they remarry with pagans out of financial need and lose their faith. Some of these widows were in charge of catechism, others were ministers leading other groups, etc. There even came to exist such a number of unmarried

¹⁸³ Arabome, "'Woman, You Are Set Free!': Women and Discipleship in the Church," 23.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁸⁵ Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 182.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 181.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 182.

widows in the early Church that the practice eventually gave rise to “feminine monasticism.”¹⁸⁸ González suggests that it is only in the effort to fight heresies in the second century that the Church centralized its teaching and ended up excluding women from leadership.¹⁸⁹

The overwhelming evidence of female teachers, co-workers with Paul, and disciples of Jesus indicates that Christian Scriptures can indeed foster political participation of women, not only as ministers in churches but also as leaders in society. Unfortunately, since religiosities denying the principle of discipleship of equals are given precedence over those affirming it in church practice, the Church's practices are more likely to negatively influence the society's practiced regarding the political participation of women in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa.

Discussion of the burden of anthropological poverty and its negative influence on their political participation in society are missing in Christian theological discourses. This burden is a significant component of women's reality. Addressing the lack of women's participation in decision-making roles in Sub-Saharan Africa requires a moral imagination that addresses the reality of anthropological poverty. Moral imagination draws on a creative and poetic aspect of our brains and provides us with the capacity to construct the worldviews through which we grasp reality.¹⁹⁰ Our moral imagination, in bolstering an ethics of women's political participation, must deconstruct the stories that alienate women from participation.

I suggest a deconstructing imagination drawing from the story of Tabitha (Acts 9:36–41), Jesus's healing of the sick woman (Mark 5: 21–43), and of the woman who was crippled for eighteen years, unable to stand up straight (Luke 13. 10–17). I will assess the agency of these

¹⁸⁸ González, *The Story of Christianity. Volume I*, 114.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Kenneth R. Himes, *Catholic Moral Theology*, vol. Disc 1. Moral Imagination, Topic 2 vols., Moral Imagination, 2009.

women in their quest for liberation. Tabitha's agency suggests the discipleship of women to liberate other marginalized women and demonstrates participation in political life by mature women in a marginalized community in a patriarchal Jewish society. Through the lens of a sophiological hermeneutic and that of *Talitha Cum*, my reading of these women's stories will emphasize the wisdom that arises from their restoration to life, both by Peter and Jesus himself. I term this hermeneutic "*Tabitha Cum*."

IV.3.2. *Tabitha Cum* Hermeneutics

Introduction

Dube and Oduyoye use the *Talitha Cum* hermeneutic of liberation to provide identity to unnamed women, restore a voice to silenced women, render visible the invisible women, and reclaim dignity for the women to whom it is denied. Oduyoye defines the *Talitha Cum* hermeneutic as "an art of living in the resurrection space: the art of continually rising against the powers of death – the powers of patriarchy, the powers of colonial oppression and exploitation, the powers that produce and perpetuate poverty, disease and all forms of exclusion and dehumanization."¹⁹¹ *Talitha Cum* is then a hermeneutic of liberation from the abusive powers.

Musa Dube argues that a *Talitha Cum* hermeneutic of liberation "takes us right back to the heritage of Kimpa Vita of 1684–1706."¹⁹² She adds that, "Theological messages... are also coded into myths, folktales, proverbs, maxims and in ritual practices that are the common

¹⁹¹Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 174.

¹⁹²Musa W. Dube Shomanah, "The Scramble for Africa As the Biblical Scramble for Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mūtūa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 6.

heritage of all Africans whatever their religious affiliation.”¹⁹³ It is incumbent upon African theologians, therefore, to uncover these messages. As Dona Richards says,

As African scholars, it is our responsibility to create systematic theoretical formulations which will reveal the truths that enable us to liberate and utilize the energies of our people. In this view, the self-determinist, the revolutionary, and the scholar are one, having the same objective, involved in the same truth-process.¹⁹⁴

Thus, following Richards and Dube, I undertake the *Tabitha Cum* hermeneutic using the same method of narrative criticism¹⁹⁵ developed in Chapter Three. First, however, I will lay out what the *Tabitha Cum* method entails.

3.2.1. Understanding the *Tabitha Cum* Hermeneutic

The *Tabitha Cum* hermeneutic corresponds to a reading of Tabitha's account that embraces Peter's message to Tabitha to “get up” in Acts of the Apostles (9:36–41) as political. I coin the concept of the *Tabitha Cum* hermeneutic based on that of the *Talitha Cum* hermeneutic. I will expand Dube's and Oduyoye's postcolonial interpretation of *Talitha Cum*, transferring it to Tabitha's narrative by rereading the text of Acts 9: 36–41 in a way that can be used to bolster women's political participation in DR Congo's society.

Both Dube and Oduyoye insist on the liberating power of Jesus for oppressed women and daughters, symbolized by bringing the little Talitha from death to life. For Dube, the call “Talitha Cum—Little Girl, Arise!” (Mark 5:41) empowers women to rise from under the oppressive patriarchal and colonial powers of the past and the present.¹⁹⁶ She urges resistance

¹⁹³Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, 18.

¹⁹⁴ Richards, *Yurugu: An Afrikan-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, 23.z

¹⁹⁵ Marguerat and Bourquin, *La Bible se raconte: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*.

¹⁹⁶Dube Shomanah, “Talitha Cum Hermeneutics of Liberation: Some African Women's Ways of Reading the Bible,” 36.

to oppressive gender norms in both Church and family that keep women in sub-human conditions.¹⁹⁷

Since the Bible has long been used by missionaries in collusion with colonial power to justify the subjugation of women,¹⁹⁸ and since most of biblical texts are patriarchal and imperialist in the sense that “imperialism employs gender relation to articulate ideologies of subordination and domination,”¹⁹⁹ the question of how we should read the Bible so that it plays a liberating role for women is vital. Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-lan maintain that there is a need for a new postcolonial interpretation of the Bible. They maintain that biblical messages are themselves inspired by patriarchy and that “Western interpretation of the Bible has had a direct impact on African realities, ranging from culture to politics to economics.”²⁰⁰

Narrative criticism provides a means of applying a moral imagination to biblical texts that challenges patriarchal and imperialist interpretation. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye explains, our experience as women must shape our re-reading of the Scriptures.²⁰¹ There is a need for a rereading that considers Sub-Saharan African women's anthropological poverty—as resulting from slavery, colonial power, patriarchal Western Christianity, and the subjugating proverbs of African traditional religion as explained in Chapter One and Two. A new reading will bolster *liberating principles* behind women's political participation. This section will explore the

¹⁹⁷Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mūtūa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, eds., *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 34.

¹⁹⁸ Dube Shomanah, “The Scramble for Africa As the Biblical Scramble for Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives,” 6–8.

¹⁹⁹ Musa W. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 73.

²⁰⁰ Dube Shomanah, “The Scramble for Africa As the Biblical Scramble for Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives,” 18.

²⁰¹Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, 19.

question of what orthodoxy of political participation these liberating principles provide, and what orthopraxis and liberating practices (orthopraxis) they suggest.²⁰²

3.2.2. Theopolitical Reading of Tabitha's Account Through Narrative Criticism

My *Tabitha Cum* hermeneutic points to the patterns of resistance evoked by a postcolonial reading of the narrative of Tabitha from the early Christian community. From there, it assesses how these patterns can be used to reinforce the idea of political participation for women living in the DR Congo's modern context of anthropological poverty. As Dube puts it, "women in the early church were not always silent, submissive and confined to the domestic sphere: hence we must tell their untold stories."²⁰³ I argue that the account of Tabitha is illustrative of the balance between the dignity and sacredness of each individual woman's life and the collective consciousness of solidarity, an interplay which this dissertation promotes as a centerpiece for women's political participation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Janice Anderson Cappel²⁰⁴ argues that the story of Tabitha is one of the few surviving accounts that emphasize the active role of women in the first communities of Christians in the early church. For Cappel, this kind of story is told so infrequently that its very infrequency requires us to pay attention to it, questioning it. The questions one asks and the kind of answers one constructs are determined by one's social and historical locations.²⁰⁵ My own attention will turn to exploring the political dimension suggested by the good deeds of Tabitha in Joppa. I suggest that Tabitha's story is not simply a "resuscitation story", but it is to be understood as

²⁰²Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 209–10.

²⁰³Njoroge and Dube Shomanah, *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 14.

²⁰⁴Janice Capel Anderson is a Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Idaho and her areas of research and teaching are early Christianity, biblical Judaism, ethics, philosophy and feminism.

²⁰⁵Janice Anderson Capel, "Reading Tabitha: A Feminist Reception History," *The New Literacy Criticism and the New Testament*, 1994, 109.

a ground for the orthodoxy of women's political participation in facing anthropological poverty.

The model of participation of Tabitha in Joppa does clarify the meaning of what Otto Saki calls a right to collaborate with God in making a better world, rendering it “a more just and more peaceful place.”²⁰⁶ While Tabitha does not act directly to influence government decision-making, the transformative component of the definition of political participation provided in the introduction of this dissertation is crucially present in her story. Even though Tabitha's good deeds toward the women of Joppa do not aim to directly influencing government's decision-making, I argue their transformative component is crucial, laying a foundation that leads to such an influence. I examine this influence using narrative criticism, contextualizing the story, sketching out the quinary diagram, and performing the evaluation of the story in regard to participation of women in making a better Joppa.

1. Contextualizing the Story of Tabitha: Socio-historic and economic settings in Tabitha's account

The Text (Acts 9: 36-42):

Peter Restores Tabitha to Life. Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated means Dorcas). She was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving. Now during those days, she fell sick and died, so after washing her, they laid [her] out in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, “Please come to us without delay.” So, Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs where all the widows came to him weeping and showing him the tunics and cloaks that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, “Tabitha, rise up.” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her up, and when he had called the holy ones and the widows, he presented her alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord.

²⁰⁶Kaulemu and African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings, *Political Participation in Zimbabwe*, vii.

The story of Tabitha does not necessarily begin with the first verse introducing Tabitha (Acts 36: 9), which says: “Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.” Marguerat and Bourquin suggest to the reader to ask what the particle “now” refers to. They suggest reading the story beyond the limitations of the segment Acts 9: 36-41.²⁰⁷ In this case it would be helpful to consider that the narrator brings up Tabitha in the story of Peter's ministry at Lydda when he just healed a man called Aeneas. The particle “now” in the text may mean “then” to mark the fact that the selected story is located within a broader story of Peter's ministry. So, it is reasonable to conclude that “the story of Tabitha is included in an extended narrative about Peter.”²⁰⁸ Tabitha's story appearing as part of Peter's larger ministry suggests that its importance in regard to my view of political participation must be assessed within the same larger ministry of Peter.

The story of Tabitha implies that Tabitha was well known and that her good work toward other women, such as the widows, might have had some influence in Joppa. Teresa Jeanne Calpino suggests that, in order to perform deeds that are recognized publicly in a context where women are either not identified or identified only through men, Tabitha's socio-economic background must have been that of an independent woman, a head of a household, and business owner.²⁰⁹ This is in coherence with the fact that Joppa was a seaport town known for its textile industry, wool production, purple dye, and plant-based colorings.

²⁰⁷Marguerat and Bourquin, *Pour Lire les récits bibliques: Initiation à l'analyse narrative*, 41.

²⁰⁸ Carol L. Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross Shepard Kraemer, eds., *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 159.

²⁰⁹Teresa Jeanne Calpino, “The Lord Opened Her Heart: Women, Work, and Leadership in Acts of the Apostles” (Loyola University Chicago, 2012), 183, http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/335.

Calpino references a work of Kaplan which analyzed grave markers on a large number of cemeteries in Joppa and relates that, according to the inscriptions on the graves, a large number of residents of Joppa were immigrants, hailing from Palestine, Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Cappadocia, and beyond. Many gentiles from these places may have been involved in the cloth production industry referred to in Acts 39:9. This suggests that Tabitha's good deeds might have been performed toward not only the Aramaic women native to Joppa, but also toward the gentile women of the neighboring regions.²¹⁰ Her garments, in reaching so many natives and gentiles, therefore had a wide, transformative social impact.

2. Quinary Diagram—Narrative criticism of the account of Tabitha.

In the story of Tabitha, the knot of the situation is as follows: Tabitha—who has been doing so much good to the marginalized and who bridges the compartmentalized worlds of gentiles and believers found in Joppa—is sick. Her death marks the second stage, the intrigue. What else can be done if she is already dead? The people around her call on Peter to unknot the bind. The transformative act is performed by Peter, restoring Tabitha to life. As the texts puts it, “‘Tabitha, get up.’... He gave her his hand and helped her and showed her to be alive.” Regarding the effects of this transformative action, the story suggests the following: “This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.” Following this line of reasoning, one can also imagine that, since Joppa was full of gentiles who must have been around Tabitha, many of these were transformed as well by believing in the Lord Jesus. The final situation, clearly, is that Tabitha is alive and many people are transformed, believing in God. Peter also continued to preach while he stayed in Joppa.

²¹⁰Ibid., 188–94.

3. Relevance of the Narrative of Tabitha to the Political Participation of Congolese Women

Tabitha reverses mechanisms that could prevent her from affirming the dignity and sacredness of her own life as well as that of other women. As Calpino specifies, Tabitha is an independent woman praised on account of her good actions toward her communities rather than on behalf of her children, husband, or father, or other cultural expectations of patriarchal society. It appears that she made clothes for those in need by her own hands.²¹¹ I argue that a woman making clothes and distributing them to the marginalized in a society where women did not have a public role is a political act. It demonstrates the agency of Tabitha. Doing so is in line with the understanding of political participation of women which is suitable to the realities of some developing countries, including the urban and rural women of some countries of the Global South. It is also in line with Otto Saki's conception of political participation as a way for everyone to fulfill his/her right to collaborate "with God in making a better world, more just, and more peaceful place."²¹²

I see in Tabitha the women of the DR Congo, living in but transcending a context marked by the proverbs of "Mwasi aza kaka mwasi," suggesting that a woman cannot go far without a husband. Yet, Tabitha did go far in doing good deeds with clothes whose production did not depend on a man's input. Her deeds had to be publicly known for her to be remembered as a community leader. In addition, she involved men. Those who went to look for Peter for help happened to be men. They must have been in the circle of Tabitha if they were motivated to run for help to keep her alive. This involvement of men suggests an example of relationships

²¹¹Ibid., 219.

²¹²Kaulemu and African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings, *Political Participation in Zimbabwe*, vii.

between men and an independent woman as equals despite the burden of a patriarchal society in which they lived in.

Tabitha's good deeds towards other women is also an expression of granting visibility, identity, and voice to all the forgotten, unnamed, and silenced others. Such inclusion and good deeds suggest the wisdom that Fiorenza's sophiological hermeneutic considers "free of domination" and which "does not exclude anyone."²¹³

The practical wisdom that emerges from a rereading of the account of Tabitha in Scriptures affirms the urgency for the women to "get up" and firmly resist the many factors of anthropological poverty that keep them in a metaphorical situation of death. This wisdom arises from women's orthopraxis and orthopathy, strengthened by the Sophia-spirit mover. Women in this story recover visibility or recognition, identity, and voice and, in solidarity, affirm the dignity of every individual woman. Chapter Five will bring in more contemporary women's stories that illustrate this wisdom in the world today.

²¹³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 115.

CHAPTER FIVE: ETHICS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FROM THE VIEWS OF FEMALE VICTIMS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Introduction

V.0.1. Main Arguments

After recalling how the traditional resources of myths and histories introduced in Chapter Three provide grounds for both individual dignity and collective values, this chapter will assess how the stories and voices of contemporary women reveal a pearl of lived-out practical wisdom related to these two dimensions. This chapter, therefore, examines what knowledge this wisdom suggests and how such knowledge can inform an ethic of women's political participation in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in contexts of the severe abuse of women's bodies, womanhood, and dignity.

This chapter brings in a practical component that consists of the experiences of women's skills as entitling them to social support and participation. The customs and narratives that form women's identity may prevent them from realizing the capabilities they would otherwise have available. A faith journey toward a sustainable and fully encultured African and Christian way of life needs to be continually embraced at every level of existence of individual women and women's organizations in the DR Congo.

This chapter will show how, through the stories and practices of women themselves, the sacredness of life is coupled with the shared vision of Ubuntu developed in Chapter Two, building upon Thaddeus Metz's point that any abusive way of life should be changed in practices of solidarity. This chapter draws upon women's stories to show how the abuses

leveled against women distort the ideal that lies behind Ubuntu or the humaneness of women themselves and how solidarity can help to address this distortion.

The chapter's central thesis is that there is a need for a preferential option for the poor that includes solidaristic and resistant anger and addresses the dehumanizing factors that impoverish women anthropologically. There is a need for an account of anger that goes beyond current Catholic social teaching and its understanding of solidarity and preferential options for the poor.

Among the factors impoverishing women is a selective reading of Scriptures, guided by patriarchal cultural biases, as developed in Chapter Four. This reading reinforces the idea of the inferiority and subordination of women to men. This patriarchal reading enhances what Nontando Hadebe calls “the construction of masculinities”¹ that obstruct women’s political participation in society. This chapter claims there is also a need for the Church’s discourse of the preferential option for the poor to take this patriarchal reading of Scriptures into account as a factor of poverty, especially among Sub-Saharan African women. My constructive interpretation of the stories of women will, thus, be informed by two practical dimensions of anthropological poverty: rape used as a weapon of war and the patriarchal reading of Scriptures.

V.0.2. Approach to Women’s Stories

The stories of women as they stand up against the evil that enslaves them display how the sacredness of life of every individual woman can be affirmed along with a collective consciousness of the need to carry out the hope of resurrection amid suffering. These stories

¹ Hadebe, " " Advocate For Life! " A Kairos Moment for the Catholic Church in Africa to Be a Guardian, Sustainer, and Protector of Life," 224.

are drawn from the women's movements of liberation in the DR Congo. Still, they also include the narratives of women whom I encountered while working with Trócaire (an Irish Catholic aide and development organization). Trócaire is dedicated to empowering women in India, the Dominican Republic, and the DR Congo. Although Trócaire's reports on these three countries illustrate that the "anthropological poverty" of women is not limited to the DR Congo and the African continent, the focus of this chapter will remain on the DR Congo.

Thus, although I will refer to the web site's sources, my comments will also be informed by my own experiences working with women victims of sexual violence in the DR Congo for many years. Many times, women have shared their personal stories of abuse with me during our work together. Thus, the stories I will bring in the Chapter are part of my life experience. They will be used intermittently to reinforce theological points regarding Jon Sobrino's liberation theology of the "crucified people" and "Living as Resurrected beings" and Emmanuel Katongole's political theology for Africa. They would provide practical grounds to help answer the central question introduced in this work: "what would Catholic social ethics of political participation look like if it took the anthropologically impoverished women of Africa seriously as dialogue partner?"

V. 0.3. Three Theological Focus Points

The first section will introduce the concept of "crucified people" within the framework of liberation theology, especially as developed by Sobrino. Drawing from the reality of the evil of rape, which suggests a denial of women's personhood, this section shows the relevance of considering the poor as *locus theologicus* as introduced in this dissertation. It expands the concept of "cheap death," which I use to express the extent to which women's lives are disvalued in the DR Congo.

Chapter Five: Ethics of Political Participation from the Views of Female Victims

This section will also show that women, informed by faith, can move from captivity to freedom. Women can push back upon the causes and consequences of rape to embrace a “risen being” style of living. This section draws on Aquinas’ insights on anger to elaborate on the sensorial powers of women’s suffering, especially as a result of rape. This suffering indicates the need for a fit of solidaristic and resistant anger to move towards a collective consciousness that affirms the sacredness of every individual woman.

Section Two draws on the work of Jon Sobrino, elaborating on his theology of what it means to live as resurrected beings. It considers Sobrino's methodological presuppositions, which include the preferential option for the poor, his Christology and theology of resurrection, and his political theology. I then put Sobrino in conversation with Latin American feminist theologians Maria Pilar Aquino and Elsa Támez and their writings on the place of women in the second wave of liberation theology, which overlooked the particularity of women's poverty in Latin America. This section considers particular contexts of Sub-Saharan African women to discuss the extent to which their anthropological poverty fits into Sobrino's insights. I will conclude by suggesting that the courage displayed by women in Sub-Saharan Africa when facing cheap death is beyond the thinkable and the reasonable; it suggests the absurd that can only be explained in light of faith.

Lastly, the third section suggests how the theology of the option for the poor could be adapted to take women’s anthropological poverty into account as well as women's liberating practices. This section brings in African women theologians who offer some critiques of the preferential option for the poor.

SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION OF VICTIMS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (DR CONGO)

V.1.1. Women Resisting the “Cheap Death”

An ethic of political participation for anthropologically impoverished women must, first of all, affirm the sacredness of every human being. The “cheap death” of the women in these dehumanizing contexts cannot continue any longer. As already mentioned in the introduction, my use of the concept “crucified women” is drawn from the liberation theology framework. In contrast, my use of the idea “cheap death” is inspired by the discourse of Dr. Denis Mukwege, a Nobel Prize-winning surgeon repairing the effects of sexual violence against women in the DR Congo. I will briefly elaborate on what cheap death entails in the section below.

1.1.1. Sobrino on “Crucified People” and “the Option for the Suffering World as the Place of Theology.”

Sobrino draws upon the Latin American bishops’ analysis of the situation of millions of Latin American people living in inhuman poverty and misery that cries to God (Puebla, n. 29, 1979). Sobrino argues that the metaphor “crucified people,” first used by Ellacuría and Romero, fittingly defines the poor of Latin America. When we talk of crucifixion, we may picture a killing or death that occurs within an unjust social structure or system. In the case of Latin America, Sobrino points to natural catastrophes like the earthquake that devastated El Salvador in 2001 to demonstrate the extent to which structural injustice kills the poor. This earthquake shows the multidimensional vulnerability of the poor—the physical, economic, socio-cultural, and psychological. Further socio-cultural and psychological poverty can be inflicted from

alienating religious messages, which frequently interpret earthquakes as part of a divine plan.² The alienating interpretation obstructs a solidaristic, and resistant anger that I am arguing is needed to foster the political participation of the poor.

Kenneth Himes interprets Sobrino as arguing that “theology is not done from a neutral position, it is always contextual.”³ In other words, it is performed with particular interests and from a specific location or perspective within its context. All contexts circumscribe distinct viewpoints and ways of knowing formed within them. Since every human being’s views are culturally shaped by family, class, social group, and nation, every human being has unconscious assumptions and thus needs “cognitive liberation.”⁴ The latter requires personal transformation or conversion. As Maria Pilar Aquino puts it: “the elaboration of systematic theology is increasingly a communitarian work that engages in critical dialogue and collective reflection.”⁵ It is to this collective reflection that my proposal of a collective consciousness of the need for a solidaristic and resistant anger inclines.

Sobrino begins from the premise that entering the world of the poor or making the option for the crucified people is a necessary step for doing theology. The poor as *locus theologicus* suggests that the world of the poor constitutes a setting from which the traditional sources of theology (Scripture, church tradition, human experience, and reason) can and should be

² Jon Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados* (San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1992), 106–7.

³ Kenneth R. Himes, “Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino’s Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope 1955–, Hope and Solidarity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 231.

⁴ Dean Brackley S.J., “Theology and Solidarity: Learning from Sobrino’s Method,” in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino’s Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope 1955–, Hope and Solidarity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 6.

⁵ María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward and Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 7.

reinvigorated. The hermeneutic of the poor is not in contradiction with traditional sources; entering the world of the poor allows the theologian to see the necessary connections between theory and practice. As Lisa Cahill observes, it is a preliminary stage that will enable theologians of liberation to grasp "meaning and sift values"⁶ that, in turn, guide them into an honest reading of the reality of the poor. The process of entering the world of the poor has been called by Sobrino "com-penetration of knower and known."⁷ Engaging in the world of the poor expands the horizons of the interpretation any theologian makes of Christian faith within the world.⁸

Sobrino affirms that we cannot stand by in the face of the suffering of the world and that the response of the Western capitalist system to poverty is inappropriate and cannot be universalized. The capitalist system was born without heart and tends to ensure the wellbeing of a minority while impoverishing the majority.

Sobrino suggests several responses, including imitating Jesus himself. He draws from Scriptures to show how Jesus, both divine and *homo vero*, opted for the "encargarse con la realidad" in his historical context, questioning structures of denial of human dignity. He draws on the New Testament as it describes the reality of sin as "assassination and lies" of the existing world order in John's Gospel, "oppressing the truth" and "acting with arrogance before God" in Paul's letter. He also draws on the idea that sin results from "loving money and hating God" as well as "placing intolerable burdens."⁹ All of these structures make the crucified people, and

⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Christ and Kingdom: The Identity of Jesus and Christian Politics," in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, Hope and Solidarity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 6.

⁷ Brackley, "Theology and Solidarity: Learning from Sobrino's Method," 6.

⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁹ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 6.

Jesus did not stand by ignoring them, he denounced them and acted in opposition to them. Thus, the Gospel provides grounds to resisting the sins that make the poor the crucified people.

For Sobrino, the relationship between poverty and sin is overwhelming throughout the Gospels. It mirrors many factors leading, in contemporary times, to what Gustavo Gutiérrez has called the “irruption of the poor.”¹⁰ Sobrino reinforces the latter concept, arguing that poverty is not only a fact and an appropriate setting for doing theology in a Latin American context¹¹ but that it is also a sign of the times for the World Church. As he posits,

Latin American Christology... identifies its setting, in the sense of a real situation as the poor of this world, and this situation is what must be present in and permeate any particular setting in which Christology is done.¹²

Therefore, the poor teach us what it means to do theology in a suffering world. The poor "question Christological faith and give it its fundamental direction."¹³ They help the theologian understand how sin and idolatry of money or power for the sake of the dominant cause of the death of the poor. As Dean Brackley observes, the poor allow us to understand what Jesus' death for us means.¹⁴ Consequently, "the victims remain the proper place for theology. Whether or not we label it liberation theology, it should arise from solidarity with them."¹⁵ These include the victims of capitalism and many other structural injustices.

In addition to Brackley, several Catholic theologians admit that liberation theology has also helped us understand that the required response to the cry of the poor must be a compassionate

¹⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), xx.

¹¹ Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 49.

¹² Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 28.

¹³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴ Brackley, "Theology and Solidarity: Learning from Sobrino's Method," 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

love. Similarly, for Sobrino, theology as *intellectus amoris* stresses not only an understanding but a praxis of merciful love. The latter is an anthropological task in which theology participates. It suggests that the fact of opening our eyes to the suffering world leads us to compassion because it is not possible to remain a bystander.

For Sobrino, we learn more from socializing with the poor and being honest with the realities that turn them into "crucified people." Honesty with reality is, then, acknowledging that poverty results from sin and oppression of the powerless by the powerful. Sobrino insists that it is necessary to recognize the sinfulness of any social reality which produces injustice and creates millions of marginalized people. Taking up the cry of the marginalized means taking up the call of hope, as affirmed by Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1978. It is taking on the weight of sin, embracing the incarnation, the crucifixion, and living by the promise of resurrection,¹⁶ which Christians believe produces its fruits on earth by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).¹⁷ Thus, honesty with reality helps to discern not only sins but also the gifts of the Holy Spirit and grace.

Sobrino's views of the poor cohere with the realities of the poor of the African Great Lakes region. They are those whose death is anticipated, violent, and quick, a consequence of the institutional violence to which they are subjected. This violence includes political and economic repressions, multiple wars, and cultural poverty (meaning that people are deprived of their identity). The anticipation of the death of the poor led me to coin the term "cheap death," especially that of women in the war zones of the DR Congo.

¹⁶ Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 60.

¹⁷ Jose Comblin and Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., "The Holy Spirit," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 153.

For both Jon Sobrino and proponents of liberation theology, the fullness of liberation is realized in Jesus Christ and is, above all, a gift. Liberation will conquer the roots of oppression only with the coming of the Kingdom.¹⁸ Those with power should act in favor of the poor. Yet, Sobrino's call of "taking victims down from the cross," which also applies to historical injustice, tends to overlook the agency of the victims who are called to participate in changing the structures of injustice. The section below, therefore, complements Sobrino's liberation theology with Katongole's focus on the agency of victims and their added value as *loci theologici* (places of theologies) for political theology.

1.1.2. Emmanuel Katongole's Approach to the Theology of Victims.

In this section, I will consider two of Katongole's main points: first, that Christianity has a lot to offer in addressing the challenges faced by Africa; and second, the future of Christianity depends on the Church's aptitude to provide an adequate response to the reality of Africa. To suggest what this proper response should be, Katongole moves back and forth between biblical grounds and human experiences, drawing on narratives of Christian activists involved in nonviolent initiatives and peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Katongole affirms that the "notion of lament [holds] the key to a full explication of the nature and reality of hope in Africa's turbulent history." To locate this key, Katongole enters the world of the victims and presents their stories to the reader from their ecclesiological, theological, and practical dimensions. As he puts it:

[The] African theologian requires more than skills of analytical judgment and moral casuistry, but narratives skills, to provide "thick" and apt descriptions of the reality of African society with all its complexity, dynamism, and challenges.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 104.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Katongole, "The Church of the Future: Pressing Moral Issues from Ecclesia in Africa," in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. A. E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 164.

Building upon their narratives, he suggests a nonviolent community of Servant Leadership, which requires moving from the self-serving form of leadership of the "big man" to a resurrected life that is self-giving.²⁰ His account of the intersection of lament and hope coheres with the matrix of death-and-resurrection. It is very much related to what Sobrino means by "living as resurrected beings." The disciples "living as resurrected beings" suggests a state in which they

bear witness that they too already live in some form of fullness. It is not only that their expectation of the imminence of the Parousia makes them live like new beings, but also that the content of triumph in the resurrection is not limited to Jesus alone but has overflowed from him and changed the quality of their lives.²¹

It is out of this overflow of the mystery of resurrection that the activists of Katongole draw their "rich theological matrix of convictions, practices, and reasons"²² and operate. Katongole suggests that the profound reason at the heart of their nonviolent civic engagement is "a deep sense of grief, anguish, and suffering."²³ This lament-hope matrix, I argue, can be very much related to what Sobrino calls la "razón de la Inteligencia." It also echoes "el amor primario ante el mundo sufriente"²⁴ which refers to compassionate love. It is toward this matrix that the stories of the Congolese women will point

Katongole claims that the theology of hope has been missing in Africa. In its absence, however, lament provides resources by which to construct such a theology in the dislocation of the reality of the women that I will bring up in this work. Lament is a valuable resource to build a theology about hope in this context of suffering from structural injustice; it is a form of

²⁰ Ibid., 171.

²¹ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 75.

²² Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, xv.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 66.

a political agency with significant political implications. The setting of Sobrino, Katongole, and Congolese women have one thing in common: the suffering of the crucified people as resulting from structural injustice. In a context like this, says Katongole,

hope takes the form of arguing and wrestling with God...[it] is not merely a sentiment, not merely a cry of pain; it is a way of mourning, of protesting, appealing to, and engaging God—and a way of acting in the midst of ruins. Lament is what sustains and carries forth Christian agency in the midst of suffering.²⁵

I argue that a lament that sustains Christian agency is that which embraces communion with God, despite unspeakable suffering.

Katongole's stories show how the Scriptures inform the faith of activists using the DR Congo as a mirror. He argues that lament is an epistemology. Through the activists' stories, Katongole traces "the logic of Christ's suffering-death-resurrection."²⁶ Through these stories, he shows that the resurrected living people require and create a community. They die as martyrs because they do not spend their lives trying to avoid dying. As Ernesto Valiente suggests, "the connection between a martyr's death and the way he or she chose to live"²⁷ is vital. Martyrs affirm that there are values worth living for and strive to live these values "au maximum," with "excess of life" or "excess of love,"²⁸ in such a way that nothing can obstruct them, not even one's own life or death. Each martyr affirms that "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." (John 10:18) Such an affirmation arises from communion with God.

The activists' stories "define the church as a resurrected community,"²⁹ living beyond the boundaries of racial, ethnic, and geographical boundaries. They call on anger as Katongole

²⁵ Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, xvi.

²⁶ Ibid., xix.

²⁷ O. Ernesto Valiente, "Renewing the Theology of Martyrdom," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (May 2014): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140013517531>.

²⁸ Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, 255.

²⁹ Ibid., 256.

suggests, "How else does one respond to an event like the 1994 Rwanda genocide other than by genuine and real anger, whose vividness we need not hide or muffle through such qualifications as "'holy anger, Sheer anger.'"³⁰ Besides the Rwandan genocide, many issues are a matter of anger in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the abuses and marginalization of women presented in Chapter Two. Thus, the female victims of this structural violence need anger to participate in the Church as a resurrected community. Accounts of solidaristic and resistant anger of women, then, contribute to this theology of hope in Africa, especially in the context of the "cheap death."

1.1.3. The cheap death of women in Sub-Saharan Africa and the hermeneutics of anger

I have introduced "cheap death," as those deaths that could be avoided in a more just political system, one more responsive to human dignity. These "cheap" deaths are not merely physical; they include the psychological and anthropological dimensions of death and many other losses that arise from the structural injustice of the kind described by Sobrino and Katongole. These losses are costly to the families, communities, and societies in which they occur, but they are "cheap" from the perspective of the irresponsible political system. They are coherent with the idea of "deaths that carry with them an added element of scandal that cannot be grasped by reason or by faith."³¹ For this reason, "cheap death" evokes anger that needs to be solidaristic and resistant because its causes can be avoided.

The cheap death of women is well illustrated through the scourge of rape with extreme violence (REV) used as a weapon of war, as depicted in Chapter Two. Dr. Mukwege explains

³⁰ Emmanuel Katongole, "Prospects of Ecclesia in Africa in the Twenty-First Century," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2001): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2001.0007>.

³¹ Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 69.

that rape and REV is an efficient weapon because they are used publicly and collectively to destroy women, their children, families, and communities:

Rape devastates the body but also the soul. It steals a woman's self-worth and her physical and psychological health. When deployed as a strategy of control over land, over resources, or an entire population, it is a cheap, effective way to destabilize entire communities.³²

As Hilmi M. Zawati adds, rape has many functions. It is used as "a weapon of war, as a tool of ethnic cleansing, as an act of genocide, and as a means of destroying the culture and infrastructure of an opponent's society."³³ It is genocidal and resorts to sexual slavery as occurs in the DRC. Rape, then, is contrary to the commandments of the divine and natural law.

My account of cheap death also includes the post-traumatic disorders³⁴ of rape and the many ways, it harms women's dignity.³⁵ In line with Sobrino's and Katongole's approaches to the victims, I suggest exploring two main theological insights that reflect women's experiences. One regards the relationship of anger to political participation. The other is concerned with the interplay between the sacredness of life of the individual and the collective consciousness. This interplay arises from the experiences of abused women who strive for positive social change.

Women who suffer extreme abuses of dignity need a good dose of anger to resist the wrongness they suffer. As Aquinas argues, an "evil already present gives rise to the passion of

³² "Read Dr. Denis Mukwege's Speech Accepting the 2015 Champion of Peace Award," November 2015, <https://www.womenforwomen.org/blog/read-dr-denis-mukweges-speech-accepting-2015-champion-peace-award>.

³³ Hilmī Zawāfī, *Fair Labelling and the Dilemma of Prosecuting Gender-Based Crimes at the International Criminal Tribunals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 156.

³⁴ Claudia Card, "Rape as a Weapon of War," *Hypatia* 11, no. 4 (November 1996): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1996.tb01031.x>.

³⁵ Kevin White, "The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, Qq. 22-48)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 110.

anger.”³⁶ In aiming to correct the wrong done to oneself, anger aims at the good. As Kevin White explains, “the movement cause of anger is something done against one angered.”³⁷

According to Kevin White, anger

presupposes a complex configuration of other passions; it simultaneously looks to both good and evil, and both past and present; and it implies the workings of reason and justice (Ia-IIae, q. 46, aa. 1, 2, 4, 7)... The reasoning consists in comparing and inferring: ‘Since you have done this unjust harm to me, I will repay you with another, similar harm that will restore justice between us’ (Ia-IIae, q. 46, a. 4).³⁸

Similarly, Michael Jaycox uses the concept of “cognitive interruption” to describe and construct a new discourse of social anger. He argues that anger is

"cognitive" in the sense that it enables agents to be intelligently perceptive of injustice in particular circumstances. It is "interruption" in the sense that it allows agents to deconstruct ideological ways of thinking and motivates their political participation.³⁹

In contrast, the philosopher Philippa Foot suggests that "For moral evaluation, something 'conative' had to be present as well as belief in matters of fact"⁴⁰ and that it is a mistake to ground all moral evaluations on cognitive theories alone.⁴¹ While not disregarding the cognitive theories of anger altogether, I consider that women’s apprehensive power can be hindered by the traumatic effects of the violence of rape they have undergone. For this reason, I depart from Jaycox’s use of “cognitive interruption,” to suggest a “conative interruption,” which does not focus on the apprehensive appetite power of the victims but rather on their will and desire, as shaped by their suffering. Sufferers of extreme violence cannot rely on their cognitive reason alone. Traumatic cognitive disorder can severely disable the latter.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jaycox, “The Civic Virtues of Social Anger,” 5.

⁴¹ Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford : New York: Clarendon ; Oxford University Press, 2001), 8.

To determine the epistemological knowledge to be drawn from the experience of anger lived by female victims, it is necessary to ask a few questions. What should be the criteria to determine the goodness of this solidaristic and resistant anger be? In other words, how should we judge whether instances of anger are constructive or destructive in correcting the wrong done to the individual woman, in solidarity with the community? In answer, the criterion for goodness is the ability of one's anger to inspire a "risen life," fortitude, justice for women, and especially their political participation as marked by interconnectedness and a vibrant form of affectionate attention and support to one another.⁴² The power of resurrection is God's given gift, a grace that transcends suffering.

V.1.2. From the Anthropological Impoverishment of Rape Towards Living as Resurrected Beings

1. Women's Synergy against Sexual Violence Toward Women (SFVVS) in the DR Congo

The narrative of Justine Masika represents one of the many responses women make to the conditions of rape that crucify them in the mining-wars in the DR Congo. Though I have worked personally with the protagonist in this story, the narratives are excerpted from the report of the national NGO, "Synergie des femmes pour les victims des violences sexuelles" (in French, SFVVS)⁴³ coordinated by Masika. The SFVVS works in supporting and advocating for women's rights in the areas of sexual violence in the eastern D.R. Congo (Goma) for more than twenty years. This story includes Masika's and the victimized women's responses to the abuses they suffer. It records Masika's voice, drawn from an interview she granted about how she

⁴² Ibid., 6.

⁴³ The Synergy of women victims of sexual violence is a non-governmental organization of women in Congo. The context for this story is detailed in the SFVVS's Annual Report 2012, Beverly Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 220., (Access: 6:19 pm, April 10th, 2019)

entered this terrible, unimaginably suffering world of the crucified women of the eastern DR Congo:

Since the 1990s, ... what pushed me to fight against the sexual violence of women was an older woman I met, aged 80. She was raped in a town at 350km South of Goma. The woman was brought to Goma as people knew that I worked with women. They came to see me and asked me to see her. I met her at the general hospital in Goma. She was severely wounded, but the hospital did not treat her because she did not have any money. Then, the woman died. I felt despondent, and I said to myself that I could not just stand idly by. I sent an SOS to good-willed people to help these victims of sexual violence...

The SFVVS mobilizes resources to cover the costs of the treatment and takes care of the psycho-social problems women victims have for their rehabilitation. The sick women are welcomed at a place of safety for their recovery, where they are receiving counseling services for as long as it is necessary. This atrocity is a war against women because when two sides fight, they are punishing their adversaries by raping women. Like her, [Justine identifies a woman victim], her whole family was burned. She is the only one who escaped; she has no brothers or sisters. She tells us that SFVVS is her only family because she met people who take care of her and give her the courage to live.

SFVVS has too many victims coming to it, but it does not have enough counselors. So, when we realized that our counselors couldn't treat the victims individually, we decided to put them into groups. ...they chose for themselves, and they asked to have a communal field. So, we rented an area and bought seeds and tools so that the women can meet once a week to work together and discuss their problems. Talking to each other became therapeutic; they can share their challenges and understood that they were not alone; the issues of the other were even more significant sometimes and were able to support each other. This understanding helps them to keep going... and rebecoming stronger, resilient, and turning weakness into power through embracing the togetherness.⁴⁴

The SFVVS has actualized several advocacies at the national and international level, asking to end the causes of the abuses against women. Possible steps include the detention of Bosco Ntaganda (a warlord of the eastern DR Congo), denouncing the involvement of Rwanda in the war (led by the army group known as M23), and demanding that the national and international

⁴⁴ Justine Masika, "Justice for Congolese Survivors of Sexual Violence," Sisterhood Is Global Institute, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://donordirectaction.org/2019/11/justice-for-congolese-survivors-of-sexual-violence/>.

community protect the defenders of human rights in general and women defenders in particular.

Masika receives anonymous threats of death because of her work with women and her speaking up against the abuses they report. Masika held meetings with some colonels of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) regarding the warlords who terrorize and rape.⁴⁵ She presented the atrocities of Bosco Ntaganda over national and international media. She gave an interview to the BBC in which she welcomed the verdict that the International Criminal Court (ICC) had passed that same day against another warlord named Thomas Lubanga Dyilo. The ICC convicted Lubanga Dyilo of war crimes recruitment: the enlistment and use of child soldiers in Ituri. During this interview, Masika called on the ICC and the Congolese government to implement the arrest warrants that were pending against the other perpetrators suspected of serious crimes committed in eastern DR Congo, in particular General Bosco Ntaganda. Several times, she spoke out to remind the Congolese authorities that under international standards, it is their responsibility to guarantee, in all circumstances, the physical and psychological integrity of human rights activists. She joined other organizations, most notably the Association of Media Women of South Kivu (AFEM/SK), in openly challenging the government to comply with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to respect the instruments concerning human rights it ratified.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ United Nations, "Letter Dated 12 November 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1533 (2004) Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo...", 4.

⁴⁶ AFEM-SK, "North Kivu: Threats against Ms. Justine Masika Bihamba," March 31, 2012, <https://englishafemsk.blogspot.com/2012/04/north-kivu-threats-against-ms-justine.html#more>.

2. Association of Media Women of South Kivu (AFEM/SK)

The Association of Media Women of South Kivu (AFEM/SK) brings awareness of the war-rape conflicts in the DR Congo to the public sphere at a local, national, and international level. These conflicts have created over five million dead and led the United Nations to declare Congo the rape capital of the world.) AFEM carries out its activities in partnership with local radio stations, both urban and rural. They obtained a professional recording studio and a complete kit for this studio from one of their partners. AFEM contracted permanent partnerships during the 2010 year with eight radio stations, four of which are urban and four rural. AFEM paid for broadcasting space in all the radio stations for two magazines per week. A total of 668 magazines were distributed during 2010, including 96 on the National Radio and Television of the DR Congo (RTNC).

The rural areas of the eastern and northern DR Congo, to the borders of Rwanda and Uganda, are known to be the hiding place of Rwandan army groups (known as *genocidaires*), who fled to the DR Congo after the Rwandan Genocide and remain there to date.⁴⁷ In response, AFEM's main activity is bringing rural communities together in listening clubs to discuss the issue of sexual violence. The clubs bring rural women and their communities together around their radios, enabling rural female victims, non-victims of violence, and local leaders to acquire new knowledge on human rights, democracy, good governance.

AFEM raises awareness of the suffering of other women, publishes magazines, and obtains space in regional radio shows to pass their messages on at a broader level for a full impact.

⁴⁷ United Nations, Resolution 1533 (2004); Ida Sawyer, Anneke Van Woudenberg, and Human Rights Watch (Organization), *"You Shall Be Punished": Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2009).

The radio broadcasts allow information to reach women in villages and regions that have not been directly reached. Thus, women who are victims and do not have a chance to denounce their attackers or speak up are reached on radios through which they tell their stories. For AFEM, the more the abuses are known, the more chance women have to be protected. They create space for dialogue between rural women and local authorities.

Just like Masika, the coordinator of AFEM, Chouchou Namegabe Nabintu, receives threats for speaking up against the war waged on women's bodies in the province. Several journalists have already been killed in the country and in that province specifically. When these killings happen, AFEM takes the lead in circulating the harrowing stories, exposing the evil of abuses of power in the DR Congo and the presence of army groups in the regions who are also involved in the atrocities. AFEM actively participates when journalists disappear and continue to undertake their work even when the journalists are found dead.⁴⁸ Despite these threats, Namegabe has not stopped supplying the female victims with microphones and radio kits "to report more stories, including investigations of corruption and government mismanagement."⁴⁹ In a culture in which women are too-often shamed into silence, AFEM helps them find their voices. For this, Namegabe was awarded the 2009 Knight International Journalism Award.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ AFEM-SK, "The Journalist Guylain Chanjabo of Radio Canal Revelation of Bunia Was Found Dead This Friday, May 17," May 18, 2013, <https://englishafemsk.blogspot.com/2013/05/the-journalist-guylain-chanjabo-of.html#more>.

⁴⁹ AFEM-SK, "North Kivu: Threats against Ms. Justine Masika Bihamba," March 31, 2012, <https://englishafemsk.blogspot.com/2012/04/north-kivu-threats-against-ms-justine.html#more>.

⁵⁰ AFEM-SK, "Rapport Annuel AFEM 2010."

Chouchou Namegabe gave an interview to the Buddhist movement Sokka Gakkai International (SGI)⁵¹ in 2012 that shows how AFEM is committed to solidarity with women,⁵² even risking their lives:

SGI: *Do you feel afraid of doing your work?*

Namegabe.: *We've been threatened many times. They told me, "We'll take you, and you won't even have a second to call for help." And other members of our organization have been threatened that they will be killed. The threats are anonymous.*

SGI: *Have you ever considered stopping?*

Namegabe.: *Sometimes I think about that but, no, I have to do my job.*

But sometimes, when I have to talk about the stories and the atrocities that are happening, I do feel I want to stop, because I don't see change. But I get courage from the women with whom I work and the survivors. When you see them smile--you can't believe that they would be able to smile after what has happened to some of them. So, I have to continue.

SGI: *It must take courage even to listen to their stories.*

Namegabe.: *It is difficult. I am pregnant now. Recently in one attack where the militias killed people and raped women, they found a woman who was seven months pregnant, and they cut the baby out of her belly. When I heard that, I was traumatized. And when you hear about the many atrocities that the women face. . . unimaginable things... It's a strategy to destroy.*

SGI: *Do you manage to feel hopeful amidst all of this?*

Namegabe: *Sometimes, I feel like I've lost hope. But I can't lose hope.... I am not alone; many people are involved in the fight. One day things will change.... The first thing is peace and security. And the other problem is the illegal exploitation of mineral resources. It's a cycle. The international community ...has some responsibility for the presence of the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, a rebel group) in the eastern part of Congo. They are committing the atrocities on women. Powerful countries should pressure Rwanda to accept its return. Then I think the eastern part of Congo could live in peace.... we believe that*

⁵¹ Mónica Cornejo, "Religión y Espiritualidad, ¿dos Modelos Enfrentados?. Trayectorias Poscatólicas Entre Budistas Soka Gakkai," *Revista Internacional de Sociología* 70, no. 2 (August 30, 2012): 332, <https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2010.09.08>. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture, and education centered on a Buddhist lay movement. Human dignity is also central to SGI; its members uphold the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism.

⁵² AFEM-SK, "Rapport Annuel AFEM 2010," October 20, 2011, <http://afemsk.blogspot.com/2011/10/histoires-et-succes-lan-2010.html#more>.

*solutions will come from women when they have power. That's my hope... When you make the problem known, it will bring answers, somehow.*⁵³

According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW), “The FDLR is a Hutu militia group based in eastern Congo, some of whose leaders participated in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It seeks to overthrow the government of Rwanda and promote greater political representation of Hutu.”⁵⁴ The FDLR is still one of the main factors undermining peace in the DR Congo.

Namegabe explains that when she started to speak on the radio about the problem of rape in the DR Congo, people were shocked. They expressed that talking openly about rape is like a taboo since rape was considered to do shame to the victims and the community in which they live. AFEM took on the challenge of sensitizing the people to the fact that women’s bodies have become the battlefield, that rape is not an interpersonal, sexual problem but war—a community problem. The media made it clear that these atrocities are strategic and planned as a means of terrorizing the community.

Namegabe stood against the abuses of a 13-year-old girl and her mother, who were taken for several months. The young girl ended up pregnant, but both the mother and her pregnant daughter managed to escape. AFEM managed to disseminate all this over the radio. Many women who had suffered this evil had been hiding what happened to them. Eventually, however, they started coming to the radio to talk about their stories. This practice helped put them in contact with medical treatment and counseling. Namegabe says that the most challenging thing to heal is the internal wounds.

⁵³ AFEM-SK, “Chouchou Namegabe Dubuisson Gives an Interview to Sokka Gakkai International SGI,” November 9, 2012, <https://englishafemsk.blogspot.com/2012/11/chouchou-namegabe-dubuisson-gives.html#more>.

⁵⁴ Sawyer, Van Woudenberg, and Human Rights Watch (Organization), “*You Shall Be Punished*”: Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo, 25.

AFEM confirms that the 13-year-old girl, who has reached adulthood since then, shared her experience on the radio. She had to move several times from where she was living because she could not bear living with other people who knew what had happened to her. She wanted to disappear out of humiliation or the feeling of being “abject.” Diken and Laustsen define “abject” to mean that women are forced to feel as “‘dirty,’ morally inferior person[s],”⁵⁵ as discussed in Chapter One. In Chapter One, postcolonial theorists Hochschild, Cooper, and Stoler, and Coquery-Vidrovitch also suggest that colonizers also performed the evil practice of rape as a means to annihilate the colonized. Solidaristic and resistant anger needs to be carried on as a political tool by the victims and the entire community affected. This anger is necessary to stimulate political participation, whether the evil to be resisted is rooted in the history of colonization or whether it results from contemporary unjust structures.

3. Women’s Solidaristic Anger in Protecting Dr. Denis Mukwege

Through solidaristic anger, women can stand against evil even despite threats of death. This is possible only in solidarity with others—the many women and others who embrace the praxis of compassionate love and partake in the movements of suffering as experienced by others. The solidaristic agents may also include credible institutions that are committed to fighting against structural injustice. Not anger as such, but solidaristic anger, can bolster unimaginable agency despite the threat of death. An example is the hundreds and thousands of women who mobilized to protect Dr. Mukwege from threats on his life.

Mukwege, director of Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, won the 2018 Nobel Prize for treating female victims of rape used as a weapon of war. He was attacked by gunmen at his home

⁵⁵ Diken and Laustsen, “Becoming Abject,” 113.

in Bukavu in South Kivu Province on Thursday, October 25, 2012. After this, he left the country to ensure his security and that of his family. Although I have been privileged to speak with Dr. Mukwege personally, this account was posted by various media,⁵⁶ including AFEM.⁵⁷

After the attack, Dr. Mukwege and his family were forced to leave the country, leaving the women of the DRC. Their vulnerability did not prevent them from acting. Dr. Mukwege relayed the women's courage, strength and persistence in finding creative ways of getting their doctor back. They first wrote to the political authorities but received no response. People urged them to give up hope that he would ever return. Dr. Mukwege shared women's words:

*We took a decision, we [are] going each Friday to sell fruit and vegetables and bring the money here at the hospital until we get the total amount to buy the ticket for him to come back... If no one wants to give him security, we are thousand[s] of women...each night, 24 hours, we will get 25 women around the house, and we will be around him, so if someone wants [s] really to kill him [he will] have to kill 25 women before killing him.*⁵⁸

Dr. Mukwege was so moved by their efforts and bravery that he returned to the DR Congo despite the threats against him. The admiration he had for these women overshadowed all his doubts: *"This was very strong...when I was treating them, I could say that they were weak, but there, I was weak, and women were strong, and they brought me back in Congo."*⁵⁹ The women paid the flight or part of the cost for Dr. Mukwege's return by selling pineapple, cabbage, beans, and other kinds of vegetables from different territories and villages of the South Kivu region. They joined in solidarity from wherever they were located, calling Dr. Mukwege to

⁵⁶ Source: <https://www.girlsglobe.org/tag/weapon-of-war/>, accessed January 17, 2020. *weapon of war. Denis Mukwege & Sexual Violence in Conflict. Published on February 20, 2019, by Swedish Organization for Global Health.*

⁵⁷ Source: AFEM, <https://englishafemsk.blogspot.com/2012/11/pay-ticket-by-selling-pineapple-and.html#more>. Accessed, January 16th, 2020

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

return home. They affirmed that evil would not have the last word; the war would not take everything of moral value upon which their society stands, nor would it take all their loved ones from them. They sent a clear message that love will have the last word, not hatred or war.

The narratives of these women illustrate the decisive role of anger in inspiring solidarity, fortitude, participation, and justice. They resonate with what Aquinas calls “a kindling of the blood about the heart.”⁶⁰ This movement refers to a sensual experience of hurtful, cruel, or wounding circumstance; those engaging in solidarity with victimized women experience those emotions viscerally, from the bottom of the heart, with the sufferers. This visceral movement constitutes in itself an epistemological knowledge, for it is like a voice speaking to one’s heart and which moves one to action.

Correcting the wrong of grave abuses in a context lacking the rule of law to stop them requires solidaristic anger of the many, willing to take risks to the extent even of martyrdom. As one woman told me, speaking of the guardianship she experienced at Mukwege's home: "We were so many that each one would not need to take the turn more than once a month. But, even that one single turn could be deadly.”⁶¹ Yet, for solidaristic anger to be resistant and lasting, there is a need for a deep faith journey. This faith is more or less illustrated in the case of the unarmed women who decided to secure Dr. Mukwege. How could a group of twenty-five defenseless women stop a group of armed brutal and drugged armed assailants, who act like animals, and who would kill them without even having the ability to think about whether it is wrong to attack civilian women? The willingness by women to give away the income to bring their doctor back and to face death to protect this doctor are a matter of faith. This daring

⁶⁰ ST, Ia-IIae, q.22, a.2, ad 3.

⁶¹ From my conversation with women who participated in organizing the guardianship.

is not merely a matter of activism for human rights. For, in this context, death will not count at all; they are cheap deaths. Women who face these challenges to affirm their humanity have taken the path of faith and courage in a context where there is no rule of law, where those who are killed are not offered justice. The structures of injustice that kill them make sure to erase their names from the society where the “big man,” as Katongole suggests, is still in control.

The women who mobilized to protect Dr. Mukwege planned to pray the rosary and other Psalms all night long to peacefully protest against the wrong done to them and those in solidarity with them. Psalm 27 is one of the prayers they started praying, even before the guardianship, to be strengthened in God:

1The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of
whom shall I be afraid?

2When evildoers assail me to devour my
flesh—my adversaries and foes—they
shall stumble and fall.

3Though an army encamp against me, my
heart shall not fear; though war rises
against me, yet I will be confident.

4One thing I asked the LORD, that will I
seek after: to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life. To behold the
beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his
temple.

5For he will hide me in his shelter in
the day of trouble; he will conceal me
under the cover of his tent; he will set
me high on a rock.

6Now my head is lifted up above my
enemies all around me, and I will offer
in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the
LORD.

7Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be
gracious to me and answer me!

8“Come,” my heart says, “Seek his
face!” Your face, LORD, do I seek. Do
not hide your face from me.

In times of uncertainty, as when facing death, this Psalm becomes a reality, conveying the only strength on which the person of faith can count.

The strength of victims and non-victims who risk their lives requires looking beyond a vulnerability that might suggest they stop resisting evil because the path is difficult. I remember my own experience connecting with female victims of rape, the feeling of partaking in their sorrow, accompanied by the joy of seeing them smile at the idea of being sustained by others, of not being alone. They are strengthened by the idea that good will triumph in continually moving us forwards despite the threat of death. Likewise, those who speak out on the radio know the dangers facing professional and renowned journalists in Congo—as Namegabe puts it, “We’ve been threatened many times.... The threats are anonymous”⁶²—yet they continue to speak out.

In summary, the agency of women who are suffering from inhuman treatment, including those of the DR Congo in the wars, is not first moved by intellectual understanding. Instead, it is driven by the love and solidarity of the community. The righteous anger of the victims is sustained by caring communities and institutions that affirm the sacredness of their lives granted by God alone. Compassion for the victims in these contexts is deeply grounded in their experiential process, from which they draw wisdom, equivalent to Wisdom-Sophia, as suggested in Chapter Three. Solidarity puts these women, who have been paralyzed by shame and a feeling of being dead, on the path towards a resurrected life.

The perpetrators must be approached from a broader perspective. Perpetrators are themselves shaped by the endless experiences of repetitive annihilation, which leads them to reproduce the same annihilation and death mechanisms. Perpetrators are shaped by the particular evils of their context, permeated into their deepest self, from which their natural goodness should arise. As I argue in Chapter One, Mveng sees anthropological poverty as

⁶² AFEM-SK, “Chouchou Namegabe Dubuisson Gives an Interview to Sokka Gakkai International SGI.”

annihilation. The one who is shaped by this poverty will more likely act as an annihilated person annihilating others.

In the same way, the practices of attention and care toward the victims should become a powerful potent trigger of goodness for the perpetrators. They too are elected to a resurrected life. The account of the resurrected beings, as provided by Jon Sobrino, is thus crucial for political participation in the context described in this work.

SECTION TWO: TOWARDS AN ETHIC OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR IMPOVERISHED WOMEN OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

V.2.1. Sobrino's Political Theology—Living as Resurrected Beings

Sobrino's theology on "living as resurrected beings" —suggests that "Jesus' resurrection generates reality and some type of historical fullness in the disciples. What there is of triumph in his resurrection overflows, as if it were, into their lives."⁶³ This theology draws on the experience of the resurrection of Jesus in the lives of the disciples as they experienced hope, peace, forgiveness, light, and joy from which they found strength over "uncertainty, darkness, fear"⁶⁴ while sent to the mission.

Sobrino's theology on "living as resurrected beings" is located in the more significant trajectory embraced in this work. The reality of poor women calls for them to come down from the cross to affirm the sacredness of life of each woman while affirming the collective

⁶³ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 74.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

consciousness. This section aims to discuss how Sobrino's insights are useful for an ethic of political participation that takes the involvement of the female victims of Sub-Saharan Africa seriously. The section will also discuss how the reality of the women in the cases presented in the previous section pose a challenge to Sobrino's insights.

This section will evolve through three main steps drawing, mostly on Sobrino's three main theses in his book on Mercy: (1) "The option for the suffering world as the place of theology," (2) "Theology as *intellectus amoris (intellectus justitiae)*," and (3) "The *intellectus amoris* as *mystagogy* for the *intellectus fidei*."⁶⁵ Sobrino's theses will be further supported by Maria Pilar Aquino's insights on "Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology."⁶⁶

1. Theology as *Intellectus Amoris (Intellectus Justitiae)*

Sobrino advocates for a theology as *intellectus amoris*, which he defines as "*la Intelligencia del Amor*."⁶⁷ It is about responding to the suffering of the poor with mercy (*misericordia*). The principle *intellectus amoris* stresses not only an understanding but also a praxis. As Sobrino articulates in his second thesis about the principle of mercy:

In the presence of a suffering world, one's primary reaction is that of a compassion intent on eliminating such suffering. Like any other human and Christian activity, theology participates in this primary reaction, though in its specific way. Thus, theology will become an *intellectus amoris*, which includes the historical specifications that love assumes when confronted with suffering people (love as justice).⁶⁸

We are, therefore, called to respond to the suffering of the poor with mercy/*misericordia* which involves both understanding and practices of acting to eliminate the unjust structures that

⁶⁵ Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 30–46.

⁶⁶ Aquino, "Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology."

⁶⁷ Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 65.

⁶⁸ Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 36.

produce the plight of the majority. *Misericordia* (mercy) is a critical descriptor to capture God's love and doings, as attested in the Psalms and the Book of the prophet Jeremiah:

Your compassion is great, O LORD;
in accord with your judgments, give me life (Ps. 119:156).

Is Ephraim not my favored son,
the child in whom I delight?
Even though I threaten him,
I must still remember him!
My heart stirs for him,
I must show him compassion!—oracle of the LORD (Jer. 31:20)

Misericordia is also a feature of the Christian quality attested by Jesus' feeding of the thousands and as testified in many more of Jesus' compassionate actions throughout the Gospels. By mercy or "*misericordia*" Sobrino means "*el amor primario ante el mundo sufriente*"⁶⁹—actions of compassionate love for the suffering world. He makes it clear that theology should not only consist in the *intellectus fidei*, which has to do with the understanding of faith but must also embrace the *intellectus amoris*. The latter precedes the former. However, the latter does not replace the former; they are complementary. As Paul attests in his Letter to the Corinthians, "So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13: 13).

Aquino provides more clarity on the place of theology as *intellectus fidei*, arguing that

more than a science of the intellect, theology is the vocabulary of *affectus*—of love aimed at the full manifestation of God's activity in human history. Theological reflection starts with the experience of faith, while it is also a fruit of the latter.⁷⁰

Aquino further explains theology as:

intelligence of the faith, understanding this intelligence as critical reflection on the praxis of the faith. As such, therefore, it refuses to view theology as merely theoretical, speculative activity, affirming instead that the intelligence of the faith is an activity centered primarily on the apprehension of lived reality in order to confront and deal with it.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 66.

⁷⁰ Aquino, "*Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology*," 26.

⁷¹ Ibid., 26.

In addition, the concept of crucified people suggests the need for a theology as *intellectus misericordiae, iusticiae, and liberationis* meaning a theology that is practiced primarily as mercy seeking understanding, love, justice, and liberation for the crucified people, rather than merely as faith seeking understanding.⁷² It affirms that faith, hope, and charity are interdependent and all tied to liberation,⁷³ aiming at eradicating the suffering of the crucified people.

The praxis of *intellectus amoris*, therefore, involves a compassionate love that can lead to martyrdom as a result of an active “love for a world of the victims.”⁷⁴ This praxis also includes forgiveness of both the sinners and the social reality of sin. Forgiveness is a path toward loving to the extreme and becoming “good, as [our] heavenly Father is good.”⁷⁵ Thus, theology as *intellectus amoris* is needed to grasp how the Gospel constitutes the Good News for the suffering people.

Sobrino insists that it is necessary to acknowledge the sinfulness of the social reality which produces injustice and creates millions of marginalized groups. Taking up the cry of these marginalized is to assume the call of hope, as affirmed by Medellín and Puebla. It is to take on the weight of sin, embracing the incarnation, the crucifixion, and living by the promise of resurrection,⁷⁶ which Christians believe produces its fruits on earth by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).⁷⁷ Theology as *intellectus amoris* is, therefore, the horizon where theory and

⁷² Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 34–75.

⁷³ Stephen J. Pope 1955-, “On Not ‘Abandoning the Historical World to Its Wretchedness’: A Prophetic Voice Serving an Incarnational Vision,” in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino’s Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope 1955-, Hope and Solidarity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 57.

⁷⁴ Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., “Spirituality and the Following of Jesus,” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 250.

⁷⁵ Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 58.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 60–68.

⁷⁷ Comblin and Ellacuría, “The Holy Spirit,” 153.

praxis meet; it is the practical orientation of liberation theology as it should be for all theologies.

Additionally, Sobrino affirms that priority is given to theology as *intellectus amoris* as the foundation from which one can then further theorize about theology as *intellectus fidei* (the understanding of faith).⁷⁸ For Sobrino, such theorization has always relied on *logos* to articulate what faith seeking understanding is throughout multiple forms of theology. Thus, one of the main questions of liberation theology suggested by Sobrino is: “*Como debe ser su logos para que se eradique ese sufrimiento?*”⁷⁹—or, how should one’s articulation, argument, or apology be formulated in order “to give an account of hope”? (1 Pet. 3:15). Thus, Sobrino suggests that this *logos* must take the reality of the poor seriously. It must consider eradicating the causes of poverty and alleviating the suffering that arises from them. The three sets of stories presented in the previous sections do relate to the way that *intellectus amoris* can function as the “mystagogy” leading Christians into the mystery of faith—the *intellectus fidei*, discussed in the following subsection.⁸⁰

2. The Intellectus Amoris as Mystagogy for the Intellectus Fidei.

Mystagogy is “a term from the early church for a time of instruction on the Christian life after one’s baptism and entrance into the church.”⁸¹ It suggests a teaching of doctrine, initiating one into the mystery of faith. For Sobrino, mystagogy should lead us into “the reality of affinity with God”⁸²—to humanity divinized, which consists of human beings striving to live up to the

⁷⁸ Sobrino, *El principio misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*, 76.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁸¹ Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Second edition, revised and expanded (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 206.

⁸² Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 43.

mystery and will of God. This affinity is actualized through compassionate love and the work of justice in history. Sobrino's third thesis about the principle of mercy argues:

The practice of love and justice is not only something that theology must foster; it is that which can become a mystagogical reality that gives access to the mystery of God. The *intellectus amoris (justitiae)* can function as a mystagogy for the *intellectus fidei*.⁸³

Sobrino begins from the premise that “faith, hope, and charity are interrelated [and constitute] a response to the mystery of God.”⁸⁴ He adds that the mystagogical component of Christian life is that which is a categorical imperative, the practice of justice as the fruit of compassionate love. For Sobrino, there is no doubt that the hope of the resurrection is not only eschatological; it is also actualized by the act of living as resurrected beings, which plays a mystagogical role for the *intellectus fidei*.⁸⁵

Living as “resurrected beings” means embracing “a life of freedom that overcomes self-centeredness,” “a life of joy that overcomes sadness,” and “the justice and love needed to take the crucified down from the cross.”⁸⁶ This resurrected life is demonstrated by Masika, Namegabe, and the women prompted to guardianship facing evil despite the scarring weight of violence perpetrated against and the threat of cheap death for other women, journalists, and activists of human rights. Taking the freedom to speak up in this abusive context is, indeed, a means of carrying out the work of the risen Christ.

Living as “resurrected beings” also calls the non-oppressed to live in solidarity with the oppressed and the oppressed themselves to live in solidarity with each other. This solidarity is described by Sobrino as “*llevarse mutuamente*”⁸⁷— meaning mutual burden-bearing. In other

⁸³ Ibid., 42–43.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁶ Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, 73.

⁸⁷ Sobrino, *Terremoto, Terrorismo, Barbarie y Utopía*, 152.

words, you “bear another’s burdens and in this way, you fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). As discussed through the stories of women claiming the effects of solidaristic anger in facing structural injustice, living as resurrected beings includes the praxis of hope through compassionate love that goes beyond technical capabilities and human knowledge. This praxis includes not only giving but also of self-giving, just as the women of Congo receive aid but also become agents for change, giving and giving themselves. As Sobrino puts it,

*“darse”, no solo dar; “quedarse” (de alguna forma: físicamente o en espíritu) en el lugar de catástrofe, no solo ir al lugar; y hacerlo “para siempre” (de nuevo físicamente o en espíritu), no solo durante una temporada.*⁸⁸

For Sobrino, it is through these attitudes of self-giving that the aid provided for development in Sub-Saharan Africa could become solidaristic. For him, the crucified people are the ones who call upon our compassion.⁸⁹ Ultimately, however, it is Jesus himself who calls us to solidarity most strongly and leads us toward a new formation of the human family. In responding to this call, one realizes the fundamental: what it means to be a human being, for the connectedness and the joy that solidarity creates constitute the highest good.⁹⁰ Through solidarity, one not only gives but also does receive. Thus, solidarity cannot be reduced to a mundane dimension, even though it might include it. As already discussed, Sobrino uses the case of the earthquake that devastated El Salvador in 2001 to articulate how solidarity with the crucified people stimulates “*la razón de la inteligencia*,”⁹¹ driving us to compassionate love.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 152. “Self-giving”, not just giving; “to stay” (in some way: physically or in spirit) where catastrophes take place, not just to go to the place for a while; and to do it “forever” (again physically or in spirit), not just for a season. It is about remaining with the poor, experiencing the hardship of the catastrophes with them.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 153.

⁹¹ Ibid., 155.

In conclusion, for Sobrino, Jesus' resurrection as hope for the victims suggests that resurrection is not a question of the Spirit's self-manifestation in resurrecting Jesus at a precise time in history but is instead about the Spirit continuing to build "the structure of incarnation, mission, and taking the burden of history 'in a risen manner'" in us.⁹² This manner is not only metaphysical or immaterial but is also actualized through solidaristic support of victims—the "*llevarse mutuamente*." As Lisa Cahill contends,

The resurrection event is not exhausted by the accounts of the appearances of Jesus and the empty tomb; it is fully realized in the apostolate of the witnesses who are commissioned by the gift of the Spirit to carry out the work of the risen Christ.⁹³

Sobrino considers a double approach to explain what it means "to carry out the work of the risen Christ." First, he argues that carrying out this work suggests the crucified people can live as risen people even in the weakness of history. He draws upon Ellacuría who suggests that a praxis of resurrection involves the recognition that the situation of the victims already challenges us by its painful dimensions but, at the same time, it affirms that "we have to take the situation on ourselves,"⁹⁴ shouldering the weight of reality. The victims are enabled to follow Jesus such that they testify to the hope that God will triumph over injustice,⁹⁵ a hope that is expectant, active, empowering. For Sobrino, as Cahill suggests,

Christian vocation is that which includes a praxis of hope in favor of the victims of history. This is the praxis of the Kingdom of God, a politics that embodies resurrection life and attest to the truth of the incarnation.⁹⁶

Thus, living as resurrected beings is not incumbent only on the crucified people but on all those who participate in holding the weight of the crucified people's reality and in taking them down

⁹² Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 13.

⁹³ Cahill, "Christ and Kingdom: The Identity of Jesus and Christian Politics," 127.

⁹⁴ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 45.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁶ Cahill, "Christ and Kingdom: The Identity of Jesus and Christian Politics," 251.

from the cross. It also incumbent on those embracing solidarity to make themselves one with the crucified people.⁹⁷ In this way, both the power and the victimized but resurrected beings inaugurate a new creation.

3. Sobrino on the Hope of Resurrection regarding the Crucified Women of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sobrino emphasizes that the kingdom of God and God's preferential option for the poor are constitutive and defining of Jesus's mission. He laments the fact that this preferential option for the poor is all too frequently impoverished by practices of spiritualizing the poor, thereby "nullified by equating poverty with metaphysical limitation," thus rendering all people poor in some sense.⁹⁸ His aim is to reverse the hyper-spiritualization of the gospel by concretizing the person and mission of Jesus. Therefore, Sobrino contends that it is essential that Jesus preaches that the kingdom of God belongs to

those for whom the basic things of life are so hard to achieve, those who live despised and outcast, who live under oppression, who, in short, have nothing to look forward to; those who, furthermore, feel themselves cut off from God.⁹⁹

For these, the life and mission of Jesus are liberating and the reign of God "demands hope in order for its meaning to be grasped."¹⁰⁰ Sobrino distinguishes the object of hope and the act of hoping both of which are put on the service of the poor in liberation theology. This hope is transcendental but also actualized because, for the poor, the life of resurrection is grasped through the affirmation of their humanity, which had been denied. However, according to the second generation of liberation theology, which includes feminist theologians, the first

⁹⁷ Sobrino, *Terremoto, Terrorismo, Barbarie y Utopía*, 158.

⁹⁸ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 80.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰⁰ Jon Sobrino, "Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 63.

generation of male theologians (including Sobrino) overlooked the particular lived experience of impoverished women, categorizing the poor too generally.

Elsa Tamez argues that the particular marginality of women cannot be drowned in the general idea of the oppressed, as the stories of women developed in Section One illustrate.¹⁰¹ Building on this, Aquino argues that patriarchal institutions and “hierarchical gender relations”¹⁰² as oppressive structures of power are ignored not only by Sobrino but by Latin American liberation theology in general as it ignores violence against women.¹⁰³ Aquino explains that a liberation theology that leaves behind gender-based oppression and what female victims are doing to overcome it does not do justice to women. As she puts it,

to determine the characteristics of evil, how to eliminate it, and how to retrieve hope, it is necessary to have as the point of reference the actual physical, social, sexual, racial, and cultural characteristics of the victims.¹⁰⁴

In addition to this concern, I add that Sobrino’s liberating approach tends to override the agency of the victims. He emphasizes action but not on the part of the victims themselves. Rather, his emphasis is on the conversion of more powerful Christians. Aquino too observes Sobrino’s focus on the transformation of the powerful “to correspond to the reality of God within history,”¹⁰⁵ reinforcing this argument.

In Chapter One, I presented Mveng’s views on the need to face the many historical causes of poverty, rooted in slavery and colonization. Even today, the legacy of these historical events constitutes ongoing factors in the structural injustice that goes beyond material poverty into

¹⁰¹ Elsa Tamez, “The Power of the Naked,” in *Through Her Eyes: Women’s Theology from Latin America*, ed. Elsa Tamez (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 1–14.

¹⁰² María Pilar Aquino, “Evil and Hope: A Reflection from the Victims. Response to Jon Sobrino,” in *Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Convention: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, ed. Paul Crowley, 50th ed. (New York City: Catholic Theological Society of America., 1995), 90.

¹⁰³ Aquino, “*Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology*,” 16.

¹⁰⁴ Aquino, “Evil and Hope: A Reflection from the Victims. Response to Jon Sobrino,” 91.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 85–92, 86.

the total annihilation implied by anthropological poverty, from which even the materially non-poor in Africa continue to suffer. Mveng suggested facing contemporary neocolonization, oppression, domination, racism, apartheid, wars, as well as cultural domination from a place of recognition of their roots in slavery and colonization. For Mveng, addressing anthropological poverty should be the task of every theology of liberation.

However, Mveng's concept of anthropological poverty and Sobrino's views of poverty have two main shortcomings in common. They miss the "*intelligencia del amor*" of the women's experience as well as the sophiological epistemology that arises from it, as suggested in the previous section. They also miss the cheap death of women and the epistemological knowledge that results from their living as resurrected beings.

V.2.2. The Experience of Women of Sub-Saharan Africa as a Locus of Theology— Towards Living As Resurrected Beings

1. The SFVVS's Practice of the Hope of the Resurrection

It is important to note that Masika calls for solidarity at the national and international levels. Her anger does not hesitate to name the wrong done by the warlords and the DR Congo's government. She displays anger that seeks a form of justice that restores the dignity and hope of women. She exhibits how real solidarity with the female victims requires a degree of self-giving that can lead to martyrdom. As Sobrino observes, this self-giving is a result of active "love for a world of the victims,"¹⁰⁶ *intellectus amoris*.

2. The AFEM's Practice of the Hope of the Resurrection.

AFEM, contribute enormously to making victims' voices heard through their radio broadcasts. This helps to stimulate anger around the issue of rape as a weapon of war and leads several

¹⁰⁶ Sobrino and Ellacuría, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 250.

institutions to step in in solidarity with the victims, providing health care and counseling to victims and their families. However, there is still a need for more solidaristic and resistant anger that will not just bring in kits for more radios but will commit to actually changing the structural causes of the evil of rape. As discussed in Chapter Two, the United Nations has certified that rape in the DR Congo is linked to the mining and arms trade conflict, which has come to be called war of Coltan.

A solidaristic and resistant anger, appropriate to this context would continually call upon the many countries of the Western and non-Western world, who benefit from the DR Congo's coltan resources for their technological development and arms business, to stop their trade relations with the DR Congo regarding these minerals. They must hold mining corporations accountable. They need not just to be angry but to be aware that "anyone can get angry—that is easy—or give and spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, *that* is not for everyone, nor is it easy."¹⁰⁷ Allies, therefore, need to go beyond the *intellectus misericordiae*, to fully embrace the *iusticiae and liberationis*, as Sobrino suggests.

3. Women's Daring Guardianship as Practice of the Hope of Resurrection

This solidaristic anger, displayed by sticking together as a community to affirm each woman's value and dignity, is not unique to women of Congo, either. In Nicaragua, for example, women enact it in similar ways, sharing their experiences of violence in their households and society.

As one Nicaraguan woman reports:

¹⁰⁷ William David Ross and Lesley Brown, trans., *Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2014), secs. 1109a. 27-29, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2220635&site=ehost-live>.

Because we didn't leave our village, we had decided that our problems only applied to us here, but this is not the case. Now I know women from other communities, I know their stories, and they mine. This has been a success because, through APADEIM, we have all got to know each other, and when a woman we knew was raped in Jiquilillo, we got in the truck and went there. This meant a lot to me because that day, she was not alone as we were all there with her.¹⁰⁸

Coming together to support each other is a powerful means of addressing violence. Solidaristic anger stresses that community is vital to move towards the agency, far more essential than one's cognition or willpower. Within the community, suffering is apprehended and approached differently. This solidaristic anger is, therefore, a necessary preamble to a life of a resurrected being in the context of the grave abuses of women's rights.

I stand with psychologists Gerald Clore and his *co-authors, who have investigated and rejected* “a cognitive approach to the passion of anger because of an implicit belief that cognition is necessarily conscious, rational, intentional, deliberative, or all of these things.”¹⁰⁹ The abuses of rape and their traumatic side-effects require a model of anger whose processes of knowing are “not limited to conscious, rational, intentional, or deliberative mechanisms.”¹¹⁰ Thus, without disregarding the role of cognition in the lives of women who suffer the abuses described above, I affirm an understanding of anger as arising from emotions, the heart, and the body. I suggest drawing on women’s lived emotional and bodily experiences of suffering. I adopt Aquinas’s premises that, first, cognitive power can be hindered when the body is disrupted by the consequences of any serious injury. Second, the appetitive power, not only the apprehensive movement, of the body is a stimulus for human action. As he puts it,

Although the mind or reason makes no use of a bodily organ in its proper act, yet, since it needs certain sensitive powers for the execution of its act, the acts of which

¹⁰⁸ Emma Newbury, “Pushing the Boundaries: Understanding Women’s Participation and Empowerment. Democratic Republic of Congo Report,” Trócaire, November 2015, 31.

¹⁰⁹ Gerald Clore I. et al., “Where Does Anger Dwell?,” in *Perspectives on Anger and Emotion*, ed. Robert S. Wyer, Advances in Social Cognition 6 (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1993), 59.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

powers are hindered when the body is disturbed, it follows of necessity that any disturbance in the body hinders even the judgment or reason; as is clear in the case of drunkenness or sleep.¹¹¹

My claim is women who are crucified by rape are traumatized in such a way that without precluding the cognitive dimension of anger, we cannot rely only on its power or their free will. The later power alone cannot stimulate their good anger to make them stand up against the wrong done to them. As Andrea Ben-David has observed:

Traumatic gynecologic fistula is a condition that frequently results from violent rape. Subsequently, many women and their communities are affected by this problem.... In recent years, the prevalence of traumatic fistula has risen dramatically in areas most affected by the conflict, despite humanitarian intervention. Consequences of traumatic fistula range from individual, physical effects to those psychosocial, familial, and communal.¹¹²

Françoise Duroch (of Doctors Without Borders), Melissa McRae (specialized in Integrative Medicine and Non-Surgical Aesthetic Medicine) and Rebecca F. Grais (of the Department of Research, Epicentre, Paris) also reinforce Ben-David's stance that

For the majority of survivors, the medical and psychological consequences of sexual violence remain untreated, thereby exposing victims to further suffering, potentially through sexually transmitted diseases, obstetric and gynecological complications, and untreated trauma injuries. Victims are additionally subjected to the psychological trauma resulting from being detained for varying lengths of time, subject to gang rape or sexual slavery, and forced to witness sexual aggression towards their own family and community members... The trauma of sexual violence is rarely treated as a "war wound" and female victims suffer considerably in all aspects of life from the related shame and stigma of the attack.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, sec. Ia-IIae, q. 48, a. 3.

¹¹² Andrea Ben-David et al., "Losing Control: The Experience of Traumatic Fistula in War-Torn," November 2009, 1, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266776219_Losing_control_The_experience_of_traumatic_fistula_in_war-torn_Congo.

¹¹³ Françoise Duroch, Melissa McRae, and Rebecca F. Grais, "Description and Consequences of Sexual Violence in Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of Congo," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 11, no. 1 (December 2011): 2 of 8, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-11-5>.

Thus, suffering can harm and obstruct the sufferer's wellbeing. In doing so, the sufferer's speculative, the problem-solving intellect may be disoriented, hindering them from knowing what to do. The sufferer may be unable to produce knowledge by the use of theoretical reason but can learn what can be done through the felt sense of suffering. This felt sense is a source of wisdom even if the relationship between this wisdom and our cogitative intellectual abilities remains inactive or latent as a negative side effect of trauma.

Martha Nussbaum explains that “[a]nger rests on reasoning that can be publicly articulated and publicly shaped.”¹¹⁴ She adds that “anger is the reasonable type of emotion to have, in a world where it is reasonable to care deeply about things that can be damaged by others.”¹¹⁵ In the context where people's lives can be damaged without the government caring about them, it is difficult to articulate any anger, whether it arises from the cognitive or conative dimension of the sufferers or the activists committed to defending them. However, the stories of SFVVS, AFEM, and the women daring to face death as a result of their commitment to guardianship suggest multiple epistemological knowledge concerning living as resurrected beings.

Another particular poverty Sobrino and Mveng overlook is the religious illiteracy of women, as introduced in Chapter Four, a factor accentuating women's anthropological poverty in the DR Congo. Religious illiteracy intermingles with cultural traditional gender norms, allowing them to persist. The following case illustrates how women that question and stand against the impoverishing dimensions of their religious illiteracy are carrying out the work of the risen Christ.

¹¹⁴ Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 99.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 13–14.

4. Victims Living as Resurrected Beings—The Challenges of the Biblical Patriarchal Biases.

I call “religious illiteracy” a patriarchal reading and naive interpretation of biblical texts that become harmful to women in the DR Congo and obstructs their political participation. I also consider religious illiteracy to be reflected in what José Ngalula—a Congolese woman, a religious sister of the congregation of St. Andrew, and professor of theology in the Congo—defines as “projecting cultural biases into biblical and magisterial texts.”¹¹⁶ Ngalula argues that in her theological teaching milieu, a good number of men and women are ignorant of biblical texts that affirm women’s dignity.

In Chapter Four, I demonstrated that the household code, as Fiorenza argues, “requires submission and obedience as an expression of Christian love from all women.”¹¹⁷ I then provided stories from women showing the extent to which the internalization of these ideals of obedience and submission reinforces the anthropological poverty of women, which, I argue, Sobrino is missing the effects of this internalized inferiority in his account of living as resurrected beings when it comes to women.

The voices below show how carrying on in the risen Christ moves women beyond the submission and obedience model towards what Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics see as the human faculty of conscience, which makes possible the use of right reason—the intellect power. These voices are gathered from my experiences working with women. They include female leaders of non-governmental organizations and those of religious groups who assume responsibility in their social locations. The voices they put forth suggest that carrying out actions

¹¹⁶ Ngalula, “Milestones in Achieving a More Incisive Feminine Presence in the Church of Pope Francis,” 31.

¹¹⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 149.

aimed at correcting the anthropological poverty of women—whether this poverty is marked by enslavement, ill-use of women’s bodies as battlefields, or subjugation to an inferior status in relation to men—requires a non-patriarchal reading of the bible.

The women’s voices I bring forward in this section also show how the intermingling of patriarchal cultural and religious traditions, outlined in Chapter Two, can be challenged by the women of Sub-Saharan Africa who have embraced the hope of resurrection.

Voices of Female Leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Below, I share a conversation with some of these women in Summer 2017. I have given each woman a pseudonym to distinguish their voices.

Tatu: I had to go back to school because my husband was impossible to live with, and he was arrested. I cannot be submissive to him because he is not serious; he is a drunkard; he loves women and disorder. How can a husband be the head of his wife, just as Christ is head of the church (Ephesians 5: 22–24) while he has many wives? How can a husband rule over a wife (Gen. 3, 16)? Where there are many wives, there is too much disorder.

Palu: Women are exploited and suppressed. A man can bring any visitor at home without even concerting with his wife, but a woman always has to submit to him, "ça c'est le comble."

Dadu: Wherever there is polygamy, there, women suffer. The Church itself does not show a good example. In the Catholic church, for instance, men and women are not equals. However, God did not want this inequality. Priests can have children somewhere, but they continue preaching, but if a nun finds herself pregnant, they put her out.

Palu: God does not make any exception between man and woman; this is the beginning of parity that even the Bible endorses (Kadu). The Bible is written by men and in favor of men.

Nalu: Polygamy that is in the Bible has some consequences on our lives, it makes some people think that it is right to practice it....

Toto: We could also refer to Paul saying that the old things have passed, now we live with new things...what threatens women is fear. They must liberate from such fear.

Palu: The Bible does not say that Deborah had asked her husband permission to start her mission; why should women do so? Was Deborah even married? Men and women, all they need is to dialogue and live in harmony to live up the blessings of the household.

Mawa: Deborah is an excellent example of a judge and agent of change since she had a word even in case of war.

Bibi: While many ridiculed Jesus when he carried the cross, a woman helped him and women were the first to experience the joy of his resurrection.

These voices show how much of biblical texts women know and can apply their right judgment to challenge their androcentric character. Several women named more biblical texts, but I was able only to write down these two verses: Ephesians 5: 22–24 and Gen. 3, 16.

Voices of Women Leaders of Religious Groups:

Palu: In African traditions, habits, and customs, in general, a woman is neglected until today. In Jewish traditions, the woman was not considered either. In many African countries, when a husband passes away, his salary is not even known by his wife, some wives cannot even access their bank account. So, how can obeying this kind of husband make sense at all?

Kadu: The bible does affirm the value of women. Usually, our husbands are the ones who repress us; I used to be the cleverest of my school in religion.

Tatu: As the woman who did not hesitate to touch Jesus' clothes to heal, we women, we must not be discouraged, we must participate in meetings with men.

It is also important to note that both educated female leaders of non-governmental organizations who can perform a non-patriarchal reading of the bible and non-educated housewives, believe in the force of prayers to transform their lives, live a life of joy, and lead them to individual freedom. As three women affirm:

Palu: What we need is to pray very hard and give to God our petitions as it is said in Jer. 33:3.

Toto: Augustine was a very capricious son, but thanks to his mother's prayers, he did change.

Sawa: Praying incessantly can help change the husband, according to the Bible, the woman must pray regularly.

The reader might find these voices very elementary compared to theologians used to constructing arguments using abstract judgments and in a more speculative way. These non-theologian women of Sub-Saharan Africa base their theological assessment only in their prudential judgment and in light of their experience. Nonetheless, my claim is that the teaching of Scripture shapes women's knowledge in Christian contexts and shapes the practical reasoning at work in such prudential judgments. As in the case of the women protecting Mukwege, these women counted on prayer as a source of power; they believed in prayer because they see goodness in it and are empowered by it. In the same way, many women will endure abuses by husbands because they think it is God's law to endure and obey a husband, even if he is abusive. Still, others go deeper to question the contradictions that lie in the way of reading the bible that clashes with a liberating resurrected life.

This non-liberating reading of the bible obstructs the movement of mutual burden-bearing implied by solidarity because, for many women who have no access to the "historical-critical method and related tools of biblical study"¹¹⁸ and are shaped solely, instead, by patriarchal gender norms, if a husband says, "No," they will tend to obey, as the voices of some women have illustrated in Chapter Four. This can also obstruct women's free will and the good anger that urges them to act to make things right when someone is injured. It can also hinder the internal movement within crucified women that is necessary to stimulate action when one is wounded.

As Mary Beth Rogers argues, the first move to participate starts from inside. It is internal; it has a power of its own and provides the energy necessary for action to help oneself and one's

¹¹⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth (Texas Christian Univ. Press, 1976), 14.

neighbors. Turning anger into a useful political tool, says Rogers, is “a deep personal experience, from the feelings arousal by absorbing injuries, injustices, or wrongs that burn like an unquenchable fire within.”¹¹⁹ This is what the women who were willing to face death to guard Dr. Mukwege’s house and those who speak out over radio broadcasts despite the threats of death likely experience. Biblical patriarchal assumptions, however, hinder this internal movement.

An ethic of political participation of women that considers these realities must allow women to say "I am angry" and to channel their anger into something constructive, as Roger Bergers suggests.¹²⁰ Many traditional gender norms, as discussed in Chapter Two, do not help liberate the good anger needed for women to say, "I am very angry with this country, which is unable to protect me." An ethic of political participation that takes women's reality seriously as a dialogue partner must consider, therefore, any patriarchal cultural and religious discourse that negatively shapes the education of women to the point of hindering their agency in society, and their living as resurrected beings.

¹¹⁹ Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger: A Story of Faith and Power Politics* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1990), 189.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

SECTION THREE: THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE POVERTY OF FEMALE VICTIMS

V.3.1. Definition and Relevance of the Option for the Poor for Sub-Saharan Africa

The option for the poor and the Church's commitment to work for the liberation of the marginalized of the world is a central feature of Catholic social teaching.¹²¹ As Allan Figueroa Deck observes since Jesus has a particular focus on the poor, so does the Church.¹²²

Pope Francis (2013–) conveys that the Church's option for the poor is primarily a theological category, not a cultural, sociological, philosophical, or political one. It is concerned with the divine preference for the poor. God, through Jesus, first, showed mercy to the poor (Phil. 2:5) by becoming poor. Jesus became poor to enrich us with his poverty. Pope Francis insists that in Jesus' poverty lies the theological preeminence of the option for the poor. This is why he urges "a Church which is poor and for the poor."¹²³ For him, this option is a "special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness."¹²⁴

Catholic social teaching strongly affirms the Option for the poor. This affirmation is clear from the claim of Pope Leo XIII who explains that poverty is a product of an economic system based on exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. It continues through Pope Francis's

¹²¹ David Hollenbach, "Commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, Second edition (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 297.

¹²² Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., "Commentary on *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, Second edition (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 308.

¹²³ Francis, "EG," para. 198.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

call to fully include the poor in the contemporary vision of development so that the poor can access dignified work. The preferential option for the poor arose from “the burgeoning consciousness of being a genuinely global Church in a world marked by deep inequality and poverty.”¹²⁵ The option for the poor is further accentuated in Pope Francis’ messages than in any previous teaching of the Church.

Pope Francis emphasizes that the poor are “the privileged recipients of the Gospel”¹²⁶ and that we should not separate Christian faith from the concern for the poor. Not sharing with the poor is “to steal from them and to take away their livelihood.”¹²⁷ The goods we hold are not ours, he argues, but theirs; all the goods of the world are destined to the universe. This option for the poor is, then, an imperative to ensure the common good.¹²⁸ I argue that the preferential option for the poor must take seriously the reality of anthropological poverty of Sub-Saharan Africa to go beyond what Gustavo Gutiérrez has called “generous relief action,”¹²⁹ to foster a genuinely different social reality.

Catholic ethicists agree that there has been a shift from classicism to historical consciousness, which implies an inductive method of reasoning that considers the diversity of situations in which Christians find themselves today. The shift toward historical consciousness was made in *Gaudium et spes* (1965) and *Octogesima adveniens* (1971).¹³⁰ However, these same ethicists also agree that the teaching often “too easily” makes universal claims that

¹²⁵ Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World),” 294.

¹²⁶ Pope Francis, “*EG*,” para. 48.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 57.

¹²⁸ Francis, “*LS*,” para. 158.

¹²⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, Robert R Barr, and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Mayknoll: NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 45.

¹³⁰ Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

overlook the particularity across groups of people.¹³¹ I argue that this is the case regarding the particularity of the poverty of women of Sub-Saharan Africa as shaped by multiple socio-religious, postcolonial, and global factors. This poverty and its contributing factors must, therefore, inform the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor.

The high rates of poverty the DR Congo, considering the high number of Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a paradox. This is the first new relevant element that should inform the Church's discourse on poverty. The latter must go beyond material and economic poverty to consider the anthropological poverty that has been extensively explored in this work. Luis Lugo and Alan Cooperman, respectively Director of the Religion and Public Life Project and Deputy Director of the Pew Research Center, explain that the number of Muslims living between the Sahara Desert and the Cape of Good Hope has increased more than 20-fold, rising from an estimated 11 million in 1900 to approximately 234 million in 2010. The number of Christians has grown even faster, soaring almost 70-fold from about 7 million to 470 million. Sub-Saharan Africa now is home to about one-in-five of all the Christians in the world (21%) and more than one-in-seven of the world's Muslims (15%)¹³²

I contend that the majority of this increasing number of Christians are women who are engaged in society. They take any small jobs available to them to provide for their families. The participation rate of women in the labor force indicated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) clearly illustrates this point. However, the alarming picture of women's poverty conflicts with the increased number of Christian women and men in Sub-Saharan Africa. Are we going to accept the assumption that the more Christians there are in Sub-Saharan Africa, the more people are impoverished?

¹³¹ Kenneth R. Himes, "Introduction," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes et al., Second edition (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 6.

¹³² Luis Lugo and Alan Cooperman, "Preface.," *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life / Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, April 15, 2010, <https://www.pewforum.org/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/>.

These conflicts must inform the Church's teaching on the option for the poor. They evoke anger, a sign that something is going wrong and must be changed. As Katongole suggests, this anger

can free the imagination from settling into conventional but unpromising patterns and necessities, and allows the dreaming of new ecclesial possibilities. In other words, it is this capacity for the anger that signals that we are still in possession of what it takes to dream new possibilities: faith, hope, and courage.¹³³

Katongole suggests that this anger requires the Church to move from conventional to new ecclesial possibilities and for African theologians to “seek a way forward”¹³⁴ for theological imagination. The participation of the latter is needed to provide a theology that helps to counter the causes of anthropological poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa and address the cheap death of women there. To this end, the Church’s discourse needs to move from its usual style of recommendations “the-Church-ought-to...”¹³⁵ to question its model of evangelization.

There is one crucial element that is overlooked by Katongole: the negative impact of the prosperity gospel on Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa. To illustrate, in the DRC, there is a trend towards the prosperity gospel, which turns to the miraculous power of God and is very appealing to many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Feumba Samen, a graduate of Université Marien N’Goubi in the Republic of Congo and a doctor of missiology via Grace Theological Seminary in Indiana, argues:

In five trips to Africa I have been impressed and even thrilled by the spread of Christianity in country after country south of the Sahara. At the same time, many more experienced travelers caution that Christianity in Africa is sometimes thousands of miles wide but only an inch deep.¹³⁶

¹³³ Katongole, “Prospects of Ecclesia in Africa in the Twenty-First Century,” 188.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 187.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 189.

¹³⁶ Feumba Samen, “The Prosperity Gospel in Africa. Religion|The Cultic Activity Promises Worldly Power in Place of the Power of the Cross,” Faith & Religion, World, November 15, 2014, https://world.wng.org/2014/11/the_prosperity_gospel_in_africa.

Prosperity gospel is more likely to play the function of widening the appeal of Christianity while weakening the depth of new Christians' relationship to God and the Scriptures in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is attracting suffering people who are told to expect God's will to be done by a gospel that ignores the ways their suffering is created by unjust structures discussed in this dissertation. Prosperity gospel constitutes a challenge for the option for the poor that cannot be overlooked and that, I argue, accentuates poverty of people, including women, rather than alleviate it.

V.3.2. Women's Poverty—A Locus for the Preferential Option for the Poor Rearticulated

The Church's teaching on the option for the poor has evolved throughout history around identifying the causes of poverty and suggesting ways to alleviate it. They put a focus on the economic factors that cause poverty, but tend to call upon the rich nations to practice charity towards the emerging nations when it comes to the means of alleviation.

Among the factors that inhibit the development of poor nations, Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) calls out the lack of infrastructure and industrialization, the poor distribution of goods, abuses of fundamental human rights, and the debt of developing nations toward industrialized nations. Pope Benedict XVI (2005–2013) acknowledged that Marxism and Capitalism had instituted poverty throughout history. He affirms that the capitalist system has contributed to a growing distance between rich and poor and the degradation of personal dignity through all kinds of deceptive illusions of happiness.¹³⁷ These are significant causes and deserve to be acknowledged.

¹³⁷ Benedict XVI, "Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI," May 2007, 8.

Benedict XVI also reminds us that there are new causes of poverty, however, including the shattering armed conflicts which are even more devastating in Africa in the way they dehumanize and oppress people.¹³⁸ He emphasizes that the responsibility to care for the poor is incumbent upon all of us because “we are always responsible for the suffering, the sick, the marginalized, the poor” who need our *Diakonia*.¹³⁹ Although several popes acknowledge how poverty and armed conflicts can dehumanize people, they still fail to deepen perspectives regarding the ways such a dehumanization looks like for men and women.

To end poverty, the popes have made multiple recommendations and calls, including reducing economic inequality, practicing mercy and solidarity toward the poor, and promoting integral development to allow the poor access to dignified work. To illustrate, Paul VI quoted Louis-Joseph Lebret, a French Dominican social scientist and philosopher, pioneer of development ethics, who advocated for an economy put at the service of human beings. Lebret affirmed a humanism and model of development that ensures the dignity of the people, allowing them to move from the “less than human conditions to truly human ones.”¹⁴⁰

Paul VI addressed the United Nations, pleading the case of the impoverished nations, calling all to organize and act in charity towards the poor countries. He made it clear that new structures of justice are required to meet a sustainable solution to poverty. He encouraged the furthering of international justice.¹⁴¹ On the one hand, he praised the colonizers for introducing

¹³⁸ Benedict XVI, “Apostolic Journey of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to Cameroon and Angola: Meeting with the Special Council of the Synod for Africa,” March 2009.

¹³⁹ Benedict XVI, “Meeting of His Holiness Benedict XVI with the Priests of the Diocese of Albano,” August 2006, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Paul VI, “*PP*,” para. 20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

structural machinery and providing education.¹⁴² On the other, he denounced the harm they caused in pursuit of their interests.

John Paul II, in turn, continued on the same path as Paul VI by observing that addressing poverty would require reducing inequalities between rich and poor (as aggravated by the debt system). He recommended creativity in creating a just distribution of goods that avoids the burden of debt afflicting the developing nations.¹⁴³ Pope Francis, similarly, insists that "the rich must help the poor" and urges all to practice generous solidarity.¹⁴⁴

Besides the economic and paternalistic approaches to end poverty that can be observed from the above teaching, Catholic teaching also actively promotes church advocacy for the poor and participation of the poor themselves in decision-making processes impacting their lives to become artisans of their future. The Church's teaching calls upon international agencies to find ways and strategies to address structural problems and empower the vulnerable to become agents rather than recipients of justice.¹⁴⁵ However, the scope of anthropological poverty as developed in this work is barely considered in the Church's analysis. For example, the popes praise the education that was provided by colonizers to colonized without any mention of the ways this education was used to annihilate students' identities and personhood or of how the legacy of colonial education continues to shape postcolonial peoples today (see Chapters One and Two).

¹⁴² Ibid., 7, 12.

¹⁴³ John Paul II, "Message of John Paul II to Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.," July 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Pope Francis, "*EG*," para. 58.

¹⁴⁵ Gudorf, "Commentary on Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum)," 334.

Catholic social teaching also falls short when it comes to the poverty of women, especially the anthropological poverty of women that arises from the atrocities of sexual violence and the biblical patriarchal biases developed above. These factors aggravate women's poverty in modern Sub-Saharan Africa; they cannot continue to go unnoticed. Although the examples brought forward in this work focus on the DR Congo and the Great Lakes region in Sub-Saharan Africa, rape against women is not only a Sub-Saharan African challenge or a warzone "fléau [scourge];" it is an evil that a good number of women suffer worldwide, as illustrated in Chapter Two. The DR Congo simply mirrors the worst cases of anthropological poverty caused by rape around the world (it has been declared "Rape Capital of the World").¹⁴⁶ It also mirrors the poverty of African women that arises from biblical illiteracy. There is a need, therefore, for these two particular forms of poverty of women to inform the Church's teaching on the option for the poor.

African feminist theologians seem to suggest that there is little hope that the Church will embrace an inductive approach to include the particularities of impoverished women. For Anne Arabome, change in the Church's approach to women is not likely to take place since there seems "to be little or no recognition of woman as playing the role of subordinate human beings."¹⁴⁷ Arabome denounces the fact that there is no recognition of the extent to which the Church contributes to the fact that women are doubly poor. While affirming that women are

¹⁴⁶ Galya Ruffer, "Research and Testimony in the 'Rape Capital of the World': Experts and Evidence in Congolese Asylum Claims," in *Adjudicating Refugee and Asylum Status: The Role of Witness, Expertise, and Testimony*, ed. Benjamin N. Lawrance and Galya Ruffer (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 84–101.

¹⁴⁷ Arabome, "When a Sleeping Woman Wakes: A Conversation with Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* about the Feminization of Poverty," 59.

victims of the world's inequality, she asks: "where is the teaching church in regard to issues of rape and domestic violence?"¹⁴⁸

Similarly, Nontando Hadebe, a senior lecturer at St. Augustine University in Johannesburg, South Africa, corroborates Arabome's stance, arguing that Catholic social teaching principles, including the option for the poor, must be applied to particular experiences like that of violence against women and sexual minorities. For Hadebe, regarding this violence, this application has failed.¹⁴⁹ She considers "the construction of masculinities" among the factors that fuel violence against women,¹⁵⁰ which I argue is significantly shaped by biblical illiteracy. Hadebe calls for a lament process and "a Kairos moment that requires confession, analysis of oppressive theologies that legitimate violence, and a stand of solidarity for the liberation and dignity of those violated."¹⁵¹ In line with this, I call for an approach that will address biblical illiteracy.

The millions of men and women who gather in churches cannot continue to miss the liberating power of the Good News of the gospel. This power needs to arise from deep communion in God, a communion that is incoherent with the business of the prosperity gospel. Communion with God leads to self-giving and compassionate love, as Sobrino suggests with the concept "*la inteligencia del amor*," which works for the transformation of the sin of society and the unjust structures it creates.

Pope Francis does recognize that women are doubly poor, enduring situations of exclusion, violence, and mistreatment that make them the most excluded and outcast of society. Yet, like

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 61.

¹⁴⁹ Hadebe, "'Advocate For Life!' A Kairos Moment for the Catholic Church in Africa to Be a Guardian, Sustainer, and Protector of Life," 222–23.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 224.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 227.

his predecessors, he overlooks the particularity of women's anthropological poverty, including the magnitude of sexual violence against women. In addition, the popes all completely miss the scope of the scarcity of both women and men that arises from biblical illiteracy.

Pope Francis, for example, mentions cases in which women resort to abortion and describes this as “a quick solution to resolve problems.”¹⁵² He acknowledges the difficulty of the situation of victims of rape who find themselves pregnant. Yet, the emphasis put on preserving the lives of the babies is much stronger. As he puts it, “It is not progressive to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life.”¹⁵³ Preserving the unborn and born babies from these evils seem to be more highlighted than dealing with the misery undergone by the mothers, whose life is also threatened in many ways by consequences of rape when the result is not death itself.

In Chapter Two, I described the contemporary forms of anthropological poverty, including rape as a weapon of war. Although this dissertation focuses on the women of Sub-Saharan Africa, especially those of the DR Congo, the denial of the humanity of women in warzones is a global problem. As Tatjana Takševa says of the Serbian war and Serbian victims of rape:

There is a small number of women who chose to keep the children born of these experiences, and most do not want to talk about what happened as a way of protecting themselves and their children from re-traumatization and as a way to redefine their social identities.¹⁵⁴

Yet, having to live with a baby that resulted from rape is, for many, unbearable, despite their goodwill. The many women impoverished by this “*fléau*” need fortitude, prudence, and the

¹⁵² Pope Francis, “EG,” para. 212.

¹⁵³ Ibid., para. 214.

¹⁵⁴ Tatjana Takševa, “Genocidal Rape, Enforced Impregnation, and the Discourse of Serbian National Identity,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 17, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 200, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2638>.

passion of anger to live through this dehumanizing evil; they are “crucified people.” They need an accompaniment that strengthens their fortitude in light of Jesus’ promise, “Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

The sacredness of life of women victims matters as much as that of the unborn and the babies born from rape. Some moderate or temporary support is not enough. As Françoise Duroch and her co-authors observe,

Victims are additionally subjected to the psychological trauma resulting from being detained for varying lengths of time, subject to gang rape or sexual slavery, and forced to witness sexual aggression towards their own family and community members.... The trauma of sexual violence is rarely treated as a 'war wound,' and female victims suffer considerably in all aspects of life from the related shame and stigma of the attack.¹⁵⁵

It is time for the preferential option for the poor to consider these traumas seriously. Just as Pilar Aquino and Elsa Támez argue concerning the poverty of women missing in the male-led discourse of Latin American liberation theology, Catholic social teaching’s ethic of the preferential option for the poor needs to consider forms of poverty that not only afflict women but destroy family cohesion.

Jocelyn Kelly and coworkers suggest that female victims of these atrocities tend to be abandoned by their families because of the trauma their families undergo.

When family members have witnessed the rape of their daughters.... This act is equated to a deadly attack.... The public nature of the attack meant that their "shame" was more widely known in the community. Often, rape in the presence of one's family was perceived as an attack on society as a whole, which resulted in a collective feeling of shame. (A man from Sange [northern DR Congo])¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Duroch, McRae, and Grais, “Description and Consequences of Sexual Violence in Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of Congo,” 2 of 8.

¹⁵⁶ Jocelyn Kelly et al., “Rejection, Acceptance and the Spectrum between: Understanding Male Attitudes and Experiences towards Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *BMC Women’s Health* 17, no. 1 (December 2017): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-017-0479-7>.

The narratives I suggest in this work support Kelly's claim. This shame and feeling of being dead lead to anthropological impoverishment and they are themselves deadly.

The African bishops affirm the preferential option for the poor as the impetus for the participation of men and women in Africa and suggest that political participation represents a contribution to the prophetic mission of the Church. However, African synods barely speak of this particular brutal force destroying women on the Continent. The bishops acknowledge the fact that wars are connected to the economy in many African regions.¹⁵⁷ They praise the many services which are being offered to the poor, including widows, by the institutes of consecrated and apostolic life.¹⁵⁸ They denounce some false beliefs and practices grounded in African cultures that victimize women, including widowhood, forced marriages, polygamy, etc.¹⁵⁹ They even name several social forces that trivialize women¹⁶⁰ and mention young people who are victims of sexual abuse and other crimes.¹⁶¹ However, rape as a weapon of war is barely mentioned, and, when it is, the approach often taken to address it is "no abortion" or a call for "alms-giving" to the victims. In their exhortation regarding governance, they acknowledge that the situation of women is a cause for worry, among many others. In addition, their pastoral statement on the 2015 World AIDS Day did not say a word on sexual violence against women used as a weapon of war, even if empirical evidence has shown that AIDS is also one of the major consequences of the evil of rape in armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

¹⁵⁷ SCEAM, "*Synode des Evêques: IIème Assemblée Spéciale pour l'Afrique*," para. 65.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., para. 113.

¹⁵⁹ Synod of Bishops. II Special Assembly for Africa, "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace. 'You Are the Salt of the Earth... You Are the Light of the World' (Mt 5:13, 14)," 2009, para. 33, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20090319_instrlabor-africa_en.html.

¹⁶⁰ SCEAM, "*Synode des Evêques: IIème Assemblée Spéciale pour l'Afrique*," para. 59.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., para. 97.

Pope Francis is moving in the direction of considering women's poverty. He rejects “every form of sexual submission”¹⁶² and goes far in denouncing marital rape.¹⁶³ However, in Pope Francis’ discourse, as in that of his predecessors, there is very little or almost nothing said about the widespread evil of rape as a weapon of war.

Among the many meaningful discourses of male African scholars, I consider Katongole in this chapter as his insights target the poor of Africa. He argues that “faith crisis in Africa is neither primarily nor predominantly cultural, but political.”¹⁶⁴ I agree with Katongole that the faith crisis in Africa is predominantly political. Still, when considering the biblical patriarchal biases which shape the agency of people in general and of women in particular, I argue the faith crisis cannot be considered only political but, rather, predominantly cultural and theopolitical. The Church is complicit in the intermingled factors related to religion and culture, which aggravate the poverty of women. Anne Arabome has eloquently explained this complicity¹⁶⁵ and suggested the Church should hear women, listen to them, and have compassion toward them.¹⁶⁶ To this I would add that women must be included in discourses and functions that shape theological reflection.

¹⁶² Francis, “AL,” para. 154.

¹⁶³ Francis, “Visit to the ‘Astalli Centre’, *The Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome*,” September 10, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130910_centro-astalli.html.

¹⁶⁴ Emmanuel Katongole, “The Gospel as Politics in Africa,” *Theological Studies* 77, no. 3 (September 2016): 705, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563916653089>.

¹⁶⁵ Arabome, “When a Sleeping Woman Wakes: A Conversation with Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* about the Feminization of Poverty,” 59.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

CONCLUSION—IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN AND AFRICAN ETHICS

This dissertation as a whole and Chapter Five mainly, provide grounds on which to answer the global ethical challenges of Catholic ethics concerning inequality between men and women regarding anthropological poverty. I focused on the particular question such as: What would a Catholic social ethic of political participation look like if it took the anthropological poverty of women of Sub-Saharan Africa seriously as a dialogue partner?

I situated this question in current theological-ethical thought, especially the African political theology of hope of Emmanuel Katongole and the liberation theology of Sobrino. Both develop a theology of hope from the perspective of the poor. Sobrino reminds all Christians to "live as resurrected beings" and insists that orthopraxy and orthopathy are grounds for orthopraxy. I argued that the latter must include solidaristic and resistant anger that inspires action, especially for women. I also entered into dialogue with Katongole regarding his claim that foundations are destroyed in the African continent and need to be restored. He suggests that the stories of lament of those who resist providing "insight into the cultural moorings of hope in the midst of Africa's multiple dislocations,"¹ are an "invaluable resource for a theological conversation about hope in Africa."² I claimed, besides, that an ethic of political participation that takes women's reality seriously as dialogue partners must consider women as *locus theologicus*. I provided the narratives of women to sustain the claim that the

¹ Katongole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, xv.

² *Ibid.*, xv.

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anthropological poverty of women of Sub-Saharan Africa offers valuable resources to theology and Christian ethics in Africa and globally.

Considering African resources, I suggested ways in which African myths and historical figures further the practices of the virtues that we can mobilize as political tools to bolster women's participation in African society. I reinforced the female biblical scholar Musa Dube's point that women in traditional Africa were not always submissive and confined to domestic spheres.³ My reading, moreover, added value to the existing feminist discourse assessing the African myths and female historical figures, charged with virtue ethics of courage and prudence, as well as the passion of anger concerning the subjugation of the African people in history. I argued that these virtues and passion are resources and political tools in bolstering the agency of women in contemporary Africa. Employing a sophiological reading, I argued that some historical figures women and myths do not convey the precedence of the community over the individual often emphasized by African theologians who are proponents of Ubuntu. Instead, they display that the individual is sacred within the community, as the protagonist of Kimpa Vita illustrated.

The political reading of the myths and historical figures undertaken in this work also adds value to conceptions of Wisdom-Sophia for Christian theology in the work of Fiorenza⁴ and Oduyoye.⁵ These scholars argued there is a need to recover divine wisdom, by rereading the traditions, to address the patriarchal tendency of cultures and traditions that exclude women from decision-making processes in both Church and society. African feminist scholars

³ Njoroge and Dube Shomanah, *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 4.

⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 163.

⁵ Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 35.

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emphasize the lack of participation of women in Church roles and leadership positions. However, I take this discussion higher, to the level of society and politics.

I argued that, in African cultures, the emphasis on community tends to ignore the sacredness of the individual, especially the individual woman, and too-often results in overlooking the abuses of women. This emphasis needs to shift to one of solidarity instead. The anthropological poverty of women, accentuated by sexual violence and cultural and biblical patriarchal biases, constitutes a challenge to the proponents of Ubuntu. The abuses of women in African societies are inconsistent with the African philosophy of Ubuntu: “I am because we are.” If Ubuntu cannot act as a political tool to help African societies address the marginalization of women, then its application must be questioned.

Sobrino's theology of hope inclines toward the educated non-poor of Latin-America and of the global North to whom he calls to take victims down from the cross. I advocate for an account of the hope that requires solidaristic and resistant anger of the victims themselves and those who enter in solidarity with them. The latter are not those powerful who will step in to take the victims down from the cross, but they are those poor and non-poor alike who engage in a faith journey towards a life of resurrected people alongside the victims. Ubuntu must provide an account of hope. I agree with Thaddeus Metz that solidarity, a salient value of Ubuntu, must take precedence in correcting any collective vision that neglects solidarity with the sufferers in Africa. Praxis of genuine solidarity, therefore, requires a collective consciousness capable of addressing the factors impoverishing women anthropologically.

Likewise, Catholic social ethics must take the anthropological poverty of women seriously. Christian ethics needs to articulate the option for the poor in light of the anthropological poverty of women. The stories provided in Chapter Five show the Church's discourse on this

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option needs to empower women to be agents in their own right. The Church needs to consider the move from a deductive and rule-based approach to embracing the knowledge that arises from women praxis of solidaristic and resistant anger. The epistemological function of this anger is similar to that of an alarm clock—a wake-up call to the Church. Catholic social teaching must go beyond speculative discourse to consider the suffering of women as experienced and articulated by women themselves, through their suffering bodies, and through the compassionate love that moves them toward a resurrected life. The importance of body-related language, rather than only cognitive or speculative language, in the moral process of healing from victimhood and increasing agency, it cannot be overlooked in contexts where human bodies are mutilated and human lives destroyed.

Moreover, when the impoverished women of Sub-Saharan Africa believe that they exist for men, that they are dependent on men, and helpers of men, it is not only their participation in Church and society that is in peril but also their dignity. Such beliefs subjugate women. The Church teaching on the poor must dismantle its own mechanisms that convey such teaching. One way of dismantling these mechanisms is shifting the option for the poor from paternalistic models to a solidaristic model that affirms women as resurrected beings and embraces their partiality. This shift echoes what Sobrino calls honesty with the reality of the poor, making the world of the poor a place of theology.

Finally, Catholic social teaching must consider how biblical patriarchal biases shape the concept of woman as inferior to that of man. The inferiority conception of womanhood hinders real solidarity with women victims. Thus, biblical patriarchal assumptions are more likely to reinforce women's poverty in the context of structural injustice.

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Rather than a gender-based theology of love that encourages the obedience and sacrifice of women, the virtue of solidaristic and resistant anger is a crucial criterion to guide a theology of suffering that can confront and change the unjust structures in Sub-Saharan Africa. Anger and lament can empower the preferential option for the poor that is central to Catholic social teaching. Thus, the Christian hope of resurrection can inspire all Christians, especially the abused women of Sub-Saharan Africa, to “live as resurrected beings.”

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