MEMORIALIZING THE UNSUNG

SLAVES OF THE CHURCH AND THE MAKING OF KONGO CATHOLICISM

ELOCHUKWU E. UZUKWU

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Slaves of the Church and the Making of Kongo Catholicism

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Contents

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In different academic settings, I tried out the thoughts that finally melded into this book. First, I thank my colleagues in the Theology Department, Duquesne University, for enabling me to discuss aspects of this research through WIFT (World Issues Forum in Theology), directed by Sebastian Madathummuriyil.

Two other academic gatherings, one in the United States and the other in Belgium, gave me the opportunity to test my interpretation of the historical data of my research before a wider scholarly audience. During an annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Denver, November 17–20, 2018), the Ecclesiological Investigations unit discussed my paper "Liberation and the Slave-Template: Catholic Church, Religions and Cultures and the Transformation of Society." The comments and remarks that emerged from the conversation helped me not only clarify but also further develop my ideas. I thank the members of the unit through the co-chairs, Brian Flanagan and Vladimir Latinovic. By 2019, I was getting close to delimiting the focus of the book project. In Belgium, at the Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology conference (LEST XII, October 23–26, 2019), I made another presentation. The theme of the conference, Theos and Polis: Political Theology as Discernment, guided me to present a paper interpreting the witness of the Slaves of the Church in terms of political theological action. Under the conference unit "Political Theology: Approaches from Global

Contexts," my essay, "Memorializing the Unsung—'Slaves of the Church,' the Margin, Challenging Church-Community," was discussed. The title of my presentation has been slightly modified as the title of this book. The feedback from the discussion enabled me to clarify my ideas. I extend my gratitude to the organizers of LEST XII through my friend Peter de Mey.

In evoking the two conferences, I would be remiss not to thank my university, through the dean (Chris Blair) and my departmental chair and younger brother (the late Marinus Iwuchukwu), for covering my travel expenses and hotel accommodation.

As the ideas contained in this book started coming together, one chapter leading to another, several colleagues read portions of (or the entire) project. I would like to thank Maureen O'Brien and George Worgul for reading different chapters and offering very helpful comments. Two outstanding colleagues read and commented on the many iterations of the work. My brother and colleague, James Chukwuma Okoye, C.S.Sp., read through the entire manuscript and made very helpful comments. Marie Baird, another colleague and friend, not only read the entire work but also did a careful page editing of the manuscript. I am deeply indebted to Chukwuma and Marie.

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I take full responsibility for my style of interpreting the historical data. There are certainly many shortcomings. However, the intent is to ensure

the memory of the unsung ancestors of the faith in western and eastern Africa, the Slaves of the Church, the People of the Church, or the Slaves of the Mission.

Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

INTRODUCTION

From Historical Memory to Ecclesiological Investigations

The intent of this study is to guard and cherish the memory of Catholic Christians in west central Africa who, from the mid-seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, were known as "Slaves of the Church." The Slaves of the Church were enslaved to the Capuchins (a religious order in the Catholic Church) and were often also referred to in the literature as "slaves of the mission" and "people of the church."[1] When the Capuchins started ministering in the Kongo-Angola region in 1645, west central Africa was a dark, trying, and turbulent zone overcast by intensive slave raiding and the pernicious transatlantic slave trade. Ironically, during this same period, the Slaves of the Church were becoming prominent pastoral assistants in the zones of Italian Capuchin ministration. Without them, church-becoming would have been impossible.

Church-becoming between 1645 and 1835 was different from the ancient Kongo Catholicism founded in 1491—150 years before the Kongo king invited the Capuchins to minister in Kongo-Angola. The ancient Kongo Catholicism was lay-driven. The *maestri*—translator-interpreter-catechists drawn principally from the nobility—supervised the Church. However, by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the descendants of the Slaves of the Church became the visible embodiment of this church. Spiritan missionaries (of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit), who replaced the Capuchins, testified to this in 1876. The Slaves of the Church they encountered in Saint Antoine, the principal city of Soyo (a powerful province in the northwest

of the Kongo kingdom), demonstrated through their Catholic performance the dynamic Kongo witness to the faith. The two religious congregations,
2 Capuchins and Spiritans, that ministered in west central and eastern Africa contributed positively, through evangelism, to church-becoming—but also negatively, through representation, to the imaging of the slaves, Black people, and Africans as inferior.

This study opens with a consideration of how the representation of Africa and Africans in European Enlightenment literature normalized the characterization of Black people and Africans as infrahuman. The egg of this prejudicial imaging or representation was laid in the racialized dirt- and filth-infested transatlantic henhouse (the Middle Passage) and hatched in the cornfields and minefields of the Americas. Thereafter, Euro-Americans' chauvinistic attitudes characterizing Black people, and Africans, as infrahuman prevailed. The transmission of this deep-seated prejudice through the best of the Enlightenment literary icons, including liberal authors such as Diderot and Voltaire, makes understandable the racialized scripts performed in encounters between southern European traders, priests, missionaries (male and female), and Africans (the nobility, the freeborn, and the slave).[2] In chapter 1, I use Andrew Curran's concept of representation to reconsider how the history of African slaves in the Americas shaped the prejudicial evaluation of Kongo Catholicism in the nineteenth century.[3] This prejudicial evaluation totally ignored the shape, or structure, of the ancient Kongo church that is foundational to the discussion of Slaves of the Church.

In chapter 2, I retrace the history of Kongo Catholicism in greater detail. Kongo became Catholic in 1491 (before Columbus traveled to the Americas in 1492), following the conversion of Nguzu a Nkuwu, the Kongo king, who was baptized as King João I, taking the name of his Portuguese counterpart. From the time of the longest-reigning evangelistic emperor-theologian, Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I, r. 1509–43), the Kongo erected the sociopolitical, religious, spiritual, theological, and ecclesiastical infrastructure on which later configurations depended. A shortage of ordained clergy being endemic, Catholicism evolved to become lay-driven. The driving force of church-becoming was literacy (the centerpiece of modernization) and creative, imaginative developments in liturgy and theology. The construction of the principal church, Nossa Senhora da Vitória (Our Lady of Victory), within the precincts of the ancestral burial ground in the capital (Mbanza Kongo, San Salvador) eternalized Kongo theological vocabulary, as did the 1624 Kongo catechism. Without the narrative of this ancient church,

it would not be possible to understand how the Slaves of the Church provide access to ecclesiological investigations from the underside of history. Capuchin priests, welcomed to the Kongo capital in 1645, were dedicated emissaries of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (hereafter Propaganda Fide), "bringing the sacraments of salvation" to a Catholic country "committed to strengthening the link with Rome."[4] Similarly, the Spiritan pastoral visitation to the Kongo (Soyo, 1876) was a ministry of reinforcements, bringing, especially, the sacrament of baptism to a lay-led church.

As I show in chapter 3, continuing the historical narrative, Soyo was renowned as a powerful coastal Catholic province of ancient Kongo. The preferred province of residence for the Capuchins, it was as expansive as the seventeenth-century Italian state of Milan.[5] However, the area focus of this study goes beyond the province of Soyo and the Kongo capital. Comments and reflections on church-becoming will be drawn from all six provinces of the Kongo kingdom—Soyo, Mbata, Mpangu, Mbamba, Mpemba, and Nsundi[6]—and the surrounding regions under Kongo influence, the Mbundu and Ndongo kingdoms.[7] The six provinces are all located within modern-day Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The fact that the Capuchins set up administrative headquarters in Luanda (a Portuguese settlement), away from the Kongo capital, created the potential for conflict with both Kongo and Portugal. Luanda, first given to Portugal by the Kongo, was later forcibly occupied by Portugal and became the center of Portuguese colonization in west central Africa. The tense relationship led to conflict and insecurity, which, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, called for the added services of the Slaves of the Church as ministerial "helpers" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8) and even as *vigilantes* (security guards) for the Capuchins.

As a careful consideration of the history reveals, the Slaves of the Church and Slaves of the Mission became fused in nineteenth-century Spiritan mission historiography. The Spiritan Slaves of the Mission were a colony in the Spiritan mission base in Landana, the principal city of Kacongo kingdom, north of the duchy of Soyo. Spiritans were officially assigned the mission in the Kongo region in 1865 by decree of the Vatican. In chapter 4, I show that in their ministry, they moved from purchasing or repurchasing children, child-slaves, to buying adult slaves called Slaves of the Mission, the cell (*noyau*) of their Christian villages. The strategy of purchasing or repurchasing child-slaves was approved by the supervisory organ of mission in the Catholic Church, the Propaganda Fide, and connects

the nineteenth-century Spiritan ministry in west central Africa with their mission in East Africa. Indeed, the normal mission strategy that Spiritan
4 priest Charles Duparquet adopted in Landana beginning in 1873 had been theorized and prosecuted in East Africa by 1870, when Duparquet was an inspirational member of the Spiritan team in Zanzibar-Bagamoyo (1870–73). In East Africa—in coastal Zanzibar and Bagamoyo and expanding into the interior (Mhonda and Mandera)—Spiritans established agricultural settlements, the prime location of the "Christian villages" populated by their liberated slaves. The Christian village was the key to the planned evangelization and Christianization of the deep East African interior.[8]

Consequently, it should not be surprising that *Memorializing the Unsung* fuses the study and evaluation of the Capuchin ministry in west central Africa (chapter 3) and the study and evaluation of the later Spiritan ministry in west central and eastern Africa (chapter 4). The involvement in ministry by these two powerful religious congregations was providential. They were drawn by their mission ideal to labor among Africans, ministering to the slaves and to Black people. Spiritan missionaries encountered, in 1876, the descendants of the Capuchin Slaves of the Church. Father Hippolyte Carrie, visiting and administering the sacraments to Catholics in the Soyo-Kongo church, was fascinated by their liturgy. The community had been sedulously practicing Catholicism after nearly a century of no regular pastoral visits. Duparquet (the narrator) insists, "They maintained their church with care and preserved with respect the sacred objects. One of them said the prayers and presided over the chanting of the hymns."[9]

From supporting the ancient Kongo church, the Capuchin and Spiritan missionaries expanded their ministry to the implantation of Catholicism in west central and eastern Africa. However, despite their laudable evangelistic and humanitarian labor, there were lapses. Based on the ideals of their congregations, the evidence shows that they committed errors (as a group and as individuals) and even crimes (like active participation in the slave trade) that contradict the guiding principles and truth of the Gospel. They must be held accountable.

On the other hand, the performance of the slaves in pastoral ministry, a major contribution to church-becoming, portrays those considered infrahuman as agents of a new church and a new humanity. This study memorializes that performance.

Honoring the unsung Slaves of the Church and their firm rejection of the condition of slavery requires that one get a handle on the group called "slaves" in the west central and eastern African regions before and after

the explosion of the transatlantic slave trade. This helps situate challenges to the uses and abuses of the term "slave" in scripture and theology (e.g., Christ Jesus "taking the form of a slave"; Phil. 2:8). In west central Africa and the adjoining regions, slaves fall into the sociological category of those unable to show evidence of descent from or rootedness in the dominant landed matrilineal clan system. When an individual could neither prove descent from four clan chiefs nor secure their support—that is, from the clans (*kanda*) of the mother and the father, of the mother's father and the father's father[10]—that person was not considered freeborn. He or she was a slave, a classificatory child of the owner, the classificatory father. When this system butted into the terror of the transatlantic slave trade, which peaked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the image of the "slave" was radically transformed, subjected to the racist, inhuman logic of the white man. West central Africans started living the unprecedented—an evil their ancestors could never have imagined. The Congolese capture the tragedy in a popular saying: "Bu bukala bambuta, ka bwa tumwene ko! Si nkondo nkadi" (What since the time of our ancestors has never been experienced [has never been seen] is here with us, the bitter fruit, the arrival of the white man).[11] The complicity of pastor-missionaries in the terror is unconscionable. The radical resistance of the slaves to their subhuman condition, in the name of humanity and Catholicism, sets a correcting course for the social reconstruction of reality, the reinvention of Catholicism.

Slaves of the Church and their descendants are memorialized and celebrated in this book with reason. Their "unsung" contribution to church-becoming and social engineering, their historic performance of freedom in west central and eastern Africa to the consternation of Catholic pastor-missionaries (or benefactor-masters), is being recovered. The slaves' struggle to absolutize human dignity, to reject through flight and escape their social condition of captivity, enslavement, and dehumanization, demonstrates their unequivocal claim of the "freedom" for which "Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1). Chapter 5 highlights what we learn from the Slaves of the Church about human dignity, about freedom, and about the precedence of ethical performance over and against the correct profession of the Catholic religion and its liturgical celebration.

Finally, this study is different. In addition to its focus on ecclesiology, it contributes to political theology by learning from the slaves to challenge the language of "slave of God/Christ," ensuring that the search for usable theological idioms does not compromise the priority of ethical performance, the priority of the human. From the underside of history, from the *Nobody*

of slavery, the Slaves of the Church demonstrate how the margin engages perceptions of sociality and takes steps to change sociality in the church and the world. *Memorializing the Unsung* enables us to redefine church-becoming, establish new sociality, and change Catholicism, Christianity, and the entire social world.

Chapter 1

REPRESENTATION

The Unmaking of Kongo Catholicism

This chapter intends to highlight the underlying presuppositions that generated prejudices that unmade Kongo Catholicism. The presuppositions, a soothing balm for the modern Western (Christian) conscience or consciousness, deadened any sensitivity to the exploitation of Africa and Africans. This resolves the riddle: committed proponents of universal freedom and justice—Diderot, Voltaire, the Encyclopedists, Enlightenment literature, and denizens of the entire Western metropole (e.g., France and England, on whose lands no one should be enslaved)—disengaged from the injustices and horrors of slavery and colonization.[1] "The Enlightenment as an intellectual movement debased the meaning of African cultures," preferring to defer (for Africans) its own vision of "fraternal and egalitarian ideals."[2] Paul Gilroy is right: "Racial terror is not merely compatible with occidental rationality but cheerfully complicit with it."[3] The presuppositions that went viral in the nineteenth century made it impossible to appreciate the historical relevance of precolonial Kongo Catholicism. Rather, Catholic performance was ridiculed as "fetishism" or "paganism" in travelogues and missionary notes.

This chapter therefore attends to the drivers of the negative assumptions and prejudices that normalized violence against Africans, Africa, and the Kongo such that "the groans" of brutalized Africans, Congolese forced into labor to nourish Leopold's Belgium (and European civilization), "fell on deaf ears."[4]

Critical Distance as Method: The Value of a Hermeneutic of Suspicion

8 I use Andrew Curran's suggestive concept of representation to clarify, in this chapter, the ambiguity and ambivalence of "classical Enlightenment sentimentalism" about slavery and the overall prejudice against Africa and Africans. Next, this chapter trains an eye on the ecclesiological pendulum. The pendulum swings from the sociopolitical and economic to the historical performance of church-becoming. It swings from the establishment of a noncolonial Kongo Catholicism to the flourishing of Kongo sociopolitical and economic structures. At the peak of the Kongo performance of church-becoming, one encounters Kongo-style Christendom, like Portuguese Catholicism, the source of the evangelization of the Kongo in the fifteenth century.

Third, following the ecclesiological pendulum to discover, historically, a vibrant Kongo church, the chapter indexes the historical, socioeconomic, and political reasons for the caricature of Kongo Catholicism as heathenism. I read African church historiography with a backward glance (from the nineteenth century back to the fifteenth). Navigating the murky and complex historiography of slavery and colonial Africa requires vigilance. The backward glance sharpens that methodological vigilance while I pore through and analyze differing viewpoints on slavery, the slave trade, and the colonial and postcolonial African economic, sociopolitical, and ecclesiastical performance.

Adopting a methodical and critical second glance (the hermeneutic of suspicion), learned from Africa's well-known storyteller Chinua Achebe, enables the search for a balanced narrative. Voiceless peoples must share their stories, Achebe insists, to create a "balance of stories," to enable all peoples to "contribute to a definition of themselves" rather than being "victims of other people's accounts": "It's in the interest of everybody, including the winners, to know that there's another story. If you only hear one side of the story, you have no understanding at all."[5] The methodological choice of "looking at everything twice," in a world that "holds many perils for black people," displays the freedom embedded in the African (Igbo, Nigerian) wisdom tradition: "When something stands, something else will stand beside it."[6]

Finally, the hermeneutic of suspicion enables one to appreciate the deleterious impact, on Africans, of "double consciousness"—what W. E. B. Du Bois calls the "peculiar sensation . . . of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks

on in amused contempt and pity."[7] Where, or how, did the taken-for-granted-ness of listening to or learning from the European other (through his/her writings, his/her opinions and prejudices) about the self originate—and the acceptance of that same narrative as the correct or true story of the African self? How did Muslim or Christian outsiders, those marginal to the religions and cultures of Africa, turn out to be those whom "we are prone to accept" in "their self-assumed role of judges" of our religions?[8]

Attentiveness to critical sources of the African historical performance of church-becoming enables one to dismantle representation. Hermeneutical vigilance is crucial to ecclesiological investigations. For Kongo Catholicism, attentiveness to the enmeshment or fusion of Kongo Indigenous sociocultural and religious motifs with the motifs and horizons of medieval Catholicism enables the celebration of "translating the message" in Kongo idioms and the performance of Christianity as a Kongo, non-Western religion.[9] The Slaves of the Church were key protagonists of this Catholic performance, embodying freedom and liberation. Did the African Catholic slaves embrace or enflesh freedom because of or in spite of enslavement? Or did they doggedly embrace freedom (e.g., through flight or escape) as a statement of their novel and truer hermeneutic of the Gospel of liberation?

Finally, posing questions as to whose authority or judgment should prevail in the choice of research methodology indicates my postcolonial methodological position. The patient student of African religious history and cultures—vigilant, not romanticizing—puts African agency firmly on the front burner. S/he is to be preferred to the chronicler (travelogue) and popularizer, with notes focused on home (European) consumers of exoticism. I therefore align with Achebe's second glance and Curran's dismantling of the Enlightenment representation of Black people and Africans as infrahuman.

Representation, Caricaturing Black Africans, and Justifying Imperial Robberies

Andrew Curran's *Anatomy of Blackness* throws light on the African condition and illuminates the review of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kongo church historiography that I read backward, from the nineteenth century to the fifteenth. To understand the nineteenth-century discourse on Black people and Africans, one must reexperience the slave mill of the Antilles, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Taking full account of the originary

pseudoscientific imaging of Africa and Africans as *nègre*-Negro-slave, the degenerate, the subhuman, one appreciates the nineteenth- and twentieth-
10 century representation (or invention) of the "Africa that never was."[10]

Representation flourished in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Enlightenment literature that disseminated, for public consumption, caricatures of Black people and Blackness. The stress on physiological or anatomical differences suggests low intelligence, separating the African from the European *Homo sapiens*. The *nègre*-slave, if not nonhuman, is subhuman. Yet Enlightenment authors sympathize with this degraded Black and fight for the abolition of slavery as if there were no connection between caricature, enslavement, and colonization.

The decision to read history backward clarifies how inferiorization was normalized. Black bodies (or "Tasked" Africans, in the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates) in the Black Atlantic had to be represented as degenerate in order to bestow identity and self-definition to the "Quality," white Europeans who could then exploit those Black bodies more profitably.[11] The interconnections between representation and the brutalized lives of Africans, which strengthened prejudices, account for the ridiculing of precolonial Kongo Catholicism, which was reported to have disappeared by the nineteenth or twentieth century.

The definition of slaves as bodies, *ta somata*, dominates Greco-Roman literature.[12] Through the "doctrine of dominium" (the slave, subject to the *dominus*),[13] Roman legal fictions delineated their lack of status. They are property totally at the disposal of the slave master. It is interesting that when the demeaning nature of labor (based on the ideology of total "power," *dominium*) became evident to non-slave laborers, there was massive "migration of free white labor from the Caribbean at the end of the seventeenth century."[14] This ideology of "total power over" was displayed in the taken-for-granted-ness of the inhuman treatment of the slave. There was confluence, in language and culture, between the Black African, the maltreated slave, and all maltreated "white" people. The result was that *nègre* became a metaphor for the "ill-treated" or "overworked"—sympathy was, of course, on the side of the "ill-treated" or "overworked" white laborer.[15]

The above represents the condition of the unfree Africans in the Americas. The economic intent that drove the transatlantic slave trade ensured that "Africa was the privileged site for the extraction of ore, the New World plantation was where it was cast, and Europe where it was converted into financial currency."[16] Just as slavery-colonization created the development of Europe and white America, it caused the underdevelopment of Africa.

"By its very nature," Walter Rodney emphasizes, "colonialism was prejudiced against the establishment of industries in Africa." To have "no industry meant no generation of skills."[17]

Ultimately, the normalization of the lie of representation devised in the experimental field of the Antilles, the Caribbean, and the southern United States justified the colonization, occupation, and imperial robbery of African lands. This successful construction of Blackness, the "invention of Africa" by European modernity, assured the persistent taken-for-granted-ness of *nègre* as subhuman in narrative and field performance.[18] The imperial dissemination of this prejudice ensured that "the Negro" becomes "not just America's metaphor but rather a central symbol in the West . . . linking America to Europe and its empires." As it turns out, "the transmutation of the African into the Negro" becomes "central to western civilization, especially to the primitive, irrational, and mystical elements in European culture."[19]

The regime of the primitive or irrational, in the Western consciousness, compromised abolitionists. Before the American Civil War, says Henry Louis Gates, "it was entirely possible for many in the country, even some abolitionists, to detest slavery to the extent that they would be willing to die for its abolition, yet at the same time to detest the enslaved and the formerly enslaved with equal passion."[20] Systemic racism defaced abolitionism. "Opposing slavery and hating its victims has become a very common form of abolitionism," said Frederick Douglass.[21] That it persists in the human and cultural drama of the United States suggests that the American story recaptures today the "arch question" posed by Samuel Johnson in 1777: "How is it that we hear the loudest *yelps* for liberty among the drivers of negroes?"[22]

The normalization of prejudice, the programmatic process of enslavement and colonization constructed by European powers, was built on the altar of injustice. Not to hold them accountable would be to collude with the criminal imperial "robberies." Saint Augustine's (354–430) definition of this crime in book 4 of *City of God* clarifies the hermeneutical distance I adopt regarding the representation of Black people that justified, with impunity, the robbery of bodies and lands, the transformation of peoples and territories into booty, into property:

> Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned

> men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity.[23]

Enslavement and colonization, performative actions of great robberies, were constructed with impunity on the cornerstone of representation. The collusion of absolutist papal power with colonizing imperial powers to justify injustice and robbery challenges the memory of world Catholicism and world Christianity. The plunder of lands and subjugation of peoples, the enslavement of Saracens and pagans in "discovered" lands, was "sacralized" (what blasphemy!) by Nicholas V's *Romanus Pontifex*, issued in 1455. The worldwide search today for mutual understanding and reconciliation must not obscure the ethical imperative of bringing world Catholicism (and world Christianity) to account (see chapters 3 and 4 below).[24] Western modernity, which kissed the internal unity between ethics and politics goodbye through unjust racialized slavery—and sundered the connection between the good, the true, and the beautiful—must be held accountable. Slave literature and performance prove that the Western "tradition lost its exclusive claim to rationality partly through the way that slavery became internal to western civilisation and through the obvious complicity which both plantation slavery and colonial regimes revealed between rationality and the practice of racial terror."[25] The postcolonial emergent independent African states continue to steam in injustice, robbery, and dehumanization.[26]

In this study, adopting a critical second look at "everything that is presented to us" becomes foundational to ecclesiology. The power and historical performance of African and Kongo Catholicism from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, in a noncolonial Kongo kingdom focused on its interests, contradict and categorically reject the representation of Kongo or Africans as infrahuman. Identifying, and rejecting, the politics or ideology of representation negates the caricaturizing of Africa and Africans, west central Africans in particular, in popular travelogues such as that of Captain J. K. Tuckey from 1816.[27] It also rejects the racist tropes of Joseph Conrad, whose invention of the "heart of darkness" (1899)[28] prolonged the tragic normalization of racism. "Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist," says Chinua Achebe. "That this simple truth is glossed over in criticisms of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked."[29]

Finally, the hermeneutical second look helps one appreciate performed Kongo Catholicism of the fifteenth to the nineteenth century in the colors of medieval Christendom, which appeared heathenish to the Protestant missionary Charles Thomas in 1860.[30] Reverend Thomas could not be more wrong (as developed below). While Catholicism or Christianity in the Kongo changed little through the centuries, "the way in which it was perceived by foreigners changed substantially." As a result, "what had been considered orthodox before were now no more than interesting and unedifying survivals."[31] This compares with the prejudices that undergirded Black Catholicism or Black "religion" in the southern United States in the nineteenth century. For example, Orestes Brownson (1803–1876), a former Presbyterian and Unitarian minister and convert to Catholicism, characterized Black southern US Catholics as purveyors of superstition, "the religion of the degenerate." Curiously, Brownson was an abolitionist and a supporter of Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo Apostolatus* (1839), which American bishops did not support. "We have judged that it belonged to Our pastoral solicitude," declared the Pope, "to exert Ourselves to turn away the Faithful from the inhuman slave trade in Negroes and all other men." Brownson stood by the Pope (and against American bishops) at a time when "the Catholic church in the United States found itself incapable of taking any decisive action or of enunciating clearly thought-out principles regarding slavery." The American bishops' blinkered position, Cyprian Davis concludes, "unfortunately prevented the American church from playing any serious role until the middle of the twentieth century in the most tragic debate that this nation had to face."[32] Nevertheless, Brownson's racialized consignment of Blacks and their Catholicism to degeneracy and superstition, as contrasted with his unflinching support for abolition, captures the mindset of the time: Negrophobia. This mindset was on display in the evaluation of nineteenth-century Kongo Catholicism.

Brief Introduction to Kongo Catholicism

The Kongo kingdom, west central Africa, and Kongo Catholicism have been the most analyzed as well as the best documented study areas of sub-Saharan Africa. The literature is abundant, even intimidating. To give a brief introduction to Kongo Catholicism, intimately connected with church-becoming from the fifteenth century through to the nineteenth (and faithful to the methodical backward glance), one must decide, depending on one's

overriding interest, on one's area of focus. The period is of major interest to historians, archeologists, missiologists, and theologians. Kongo historian Kabolo Iko Kabwita, in his well-researched *Le royaume Kongo et la mission catholique,* bemoans the "decline" and eventual "extinction" of both the kingdom and Catholicism. This orientation is interesting and helpful.

Kabwita's contribution painfully clarifies the complexity and ambiguity of the "modernization" (he prefers "civilization") and "evangelization" that led to the consolidation of political power in the Kongo. From the earliest encounter of the Kongolese with southern Europeans, modernization took the form of a passionate pursuit of literacy, which was closely aligned with (and an instrument of) Christianization.

The first Mani Kongo (Kongo king) to accept baptism was Nguzu a Nkuwu, baptized in 1491 and named João I (like his Portuguese namesake, João II). He ruled until 1506. Nkuwu converted with other members of the Kongo royalty—a high-profile conversion that follows in the tradition of conversions of African kings like Ezana of Ethiopia (fourth century) and Silko of Nubia (fifth century).[33] However, it was during the reign of the longest-ruling Mani Kongo, Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I), and successive Mani Kongo that modernity and its ambiguity spread throughout the Kongo. The ambiguity is captured in the growing influence of settler Portuguese (pastors and traders in the capital, Mbanza Kongo) and their intrusion into the power struggle for succession. This led to the eventual victory of the "Portuguese party." Georges Balandier defines the "Portuguese party" as "the modernists" who positioned themselves against the "traditionalists," that is, the *kimpasi* initiates who played a crucial role in Indigenous Kongo religion and politics.[34] The Portuguese party, made up of Portuguese merchant-colonists as well as pastor-missionaries, was visible and influential in Mbanza Kongo. The priests were initially Franciscans. Later there were Jesuits, (Spanish) Carmelites, members of the diocesan clergy, and other interested religious congregations. Much later, in the seventeenth century, there were Spanish and Italian (Franciscan) Capuchins.[35] These elements of the clergy were more or less supporting—politically and, at times, militarily—their preferred pretender to the Kongo throne.[36]

Though the complex, often ambiguous, and murky history of the encounter between Kongo and Europe might be frustrating for the Kongo-phile, one must not fail to emphasize that the encounter, from the fifteenth century, was positive and promising for the Kongo. One must not underestimate the impact of the initial sociopolitical and economic choices made by the Mwene (lord governor) of Soyo and the Mani Kongo.

It opened up a relationship with southern Europeans. The choice to modernize resulted in the enthusiastic embrace of Christianity in a noncolonial and noncolonizing setting. Historians are divided in their evaluation of the mixed interests of Kongo kings that affected and guided their performances. A. J. R. Russell-Wood interprets, in an interesting way, the "unusual" Kongo socioreligious, economic, and political choices that sharply contrasted with those of west African and neighboring west central African kingdoms and communities: "In the case of the Kongo, the African king hoped to expand trade and obtain military and technical assistance through this new relationship. It is unclear whether the apparent interest in Christianity, which was enthusiastically embraced at least by the ruling cadres, was sincere, or whether it represented a shrewd assessment that this was a means of drawing the Portuguese into the relationship, or was seen as yet another factor that could only enhance their own religious beliefs and relations with the divine or the supernatural."[37]

The four centuries of unbroken and widespread performance of Catholicism, not only by the elite but by the ordinary Kongolese, cannot be interpreted in a unidirectional way. There were political, economic, and military interests. The religious interest was not decoupled from the politico-economic and military interests. The Kongo elite, it appears, shrewdly combined all these factors in their interaction with southern Europeans. Russell-Woods's reading of sixteenth-century Kongo as "an example of the Europeanization of an African people and the Africanization of Europeans" is sustainable.[38]

The freedom of action of the Kongo elite is unquestionable. The encounter with southern Europeans, in 1491, happened before the voyage of Columbus to the Americas (Columbus landed on Hispaniola in 1492). That is, it occurred before *Inter Caetera*, Pope Alexander VI's notorious bull from 1493 that weaponized Spain and Portugal, spiritually, to sow terror all over the world in the name of Christendom. Guided by the spurious doctrine of discovery, *Inter Caetera* decreed that "all islands and mainlands found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered toward the west and south . . . from the Arctic pole, namely the north, to the Antarctic pole, namely the south, no matter whether the said mainlands and islands are found and to be found in the direction of India or toward any other quarter," were to be legitimately acquired by the kings of "Castile and Leon." The line of demarcation between Spain and Portugal was "one hundred leagues toward the west and south from any of the islands commonly known as the Azores and Cape Verde."[39]

Inter Caetera, the founding document of Spanish and Portuguese "patronage," of enormous importance and with implications for evangelization, could not apply to the Kongo, which became Catholic in 1491—the year Nguzu a Nkuwu was baptized as João I. A proviso of the bull excluded the possessions of Christian kings: "With this proviso however that none of the islands and mainlands, found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered, beyond that said line towards the west and south, be in the actual possession of any Christian king or prince up to the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ just past from which the present year *one thousand four hundred ninety-three begins*" (my emphasis). The limitations of the proviso made it clear "that by this our gift, grant, and assignment no right acquired by any Christian prince, who may be in actual possession of said islands and mainlands prior to the said birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, is hereby to be understood to be withdrawn or taking [*sic*] away."[40] Kongo was off-limits.

No matter how one criticizes or lauds Mvemba (Afonso I) and his successors, one must applaud the insight of the Kongo elite in aligning Catholicism with the development of the Kongo. The project, initiated by Mvemba's father, Nguzu a Nkuwu—who later abjured Catholicism and returned to full ancestral Kongo religious practice, despite the trying beginnings—flourished. Catholicism not only survived as a national religion but matured and prospered during the evangelistic Mvemba's long reign (1509–43). His religio-political grasp of the signs of the times could be compared to those of Christian emperors like Constantine the Great (d. May 22, 337 CE) and Charlemagne (d. January 28, 814 CE).

Alongside Kongo historians, European and American scholars—particularly Richard Gray, John K. Thornton, Anne Hilton, Joseph Miller, and Cécile Fromont—highlight the major contribution of Kongo Catholicism to Christendom-style church-becoming. These historians successfully describe the complex interweaving of the political, social, and economic realities and interests, local and European, in the Kongo kingdom and church. Their studies celebrate the Kongo state and the province of Soyo, which freely and passionately embraced Catholicism. Conversion to Catholicism, fundamentally a change of religious performance (here the authors differ), was part of the political decisions supporting the Kongo's socioeconomic progress.[41]

Kongo Catholicism was lay-driven. I applaud Kabwita for calling attention to the dominant and popular sacramental rituals and relevant church-leadership practices of this church. These ensured the continuity of Kongo Catholicism in the absence of the clergy or missionaries for almost a

century. At the top of the list of Catholic ritual performances administered by visiting clergy was the sacrament of Christian initiation (baptism). This was popularly known as *curiamunga* (*kudia mungua*, "eating salt"), according to Father Diego de la Encarnación, a discalced Spanish Carmelite who arrived in Mbanza Kongo in 1584. This performance, "to eat salt,"[42] positioned Christian initiation as the core Catholic ritual, central (as it should be) to church-becoming. "The diocesan priests," Hilton notes, "after touching the peoples' heads with water and reciting the formula of baptism, gave them a piece of salt to eat."[43] In the context of a lay-driven church, this sacrament formed the fulcrum of priestly ministry in the Kongo and west central Africa. Statistics on its administration in the Kongo-Angola region (Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms of west central Africa) at the peak of Capuchin presence, from 1645 to 1700, are staggering. For example, the energetic pastor and missionary Girolamo da Montesarchio, a major historical source for Kongo genealogy and political culture, was reported to have baptized one hundred thousand neophytes during the period he served in the region.[44]

Other dominant sacramental rituals, besides Christian initiation, were matrimony and the sacrament of reconciliation. In the pastoral-missionary effort to apply the canonical decrees of the Council of Trent (which started in 1545, fifty-four years after the establishment of Kongo Catholicism, and closed in 1563), marriage was a flashpoint. (Indeed, marriage was a common area of controversy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medieval Christendom.) Consequently, the solemnization of marriages was, for the Capuchins, the next sacrament in order of importance. Finally, the sacrament of reconciliation (penance or "confession") was also popularly sought after. In the administration of this sacrament, the Kongo church developed unique performances that differed from the rest of Christendom. The priest and interpreter-catechists (*maestri*) worked hand in hand in its administration. This posed a challenge to the understanding of the confessional "seal," or secret. The sociocultural situation decreed a fluid perception of trust. Kongolese faithful felt reassured of the security or secrecy of their confession with the presence of the interpreter. Capuchin missionary Giovanni da Romano Belotti indexes in 1680 the impossibility of structuring this sacrament in a different way: "The Blacks are distrustful of the white Europeans . . . so that with the presence of men from their nation as interpreters, and almost as witnesses and advocates in their defense, thus reassured, they remain more content in particular in the act of the sacramental confession."[45]

From the above, one finds convincing the assertion that the Kongolese were the drivers of the localization of the Catholic Church. When historians

like Kabwita, Gray, Thornton, and Fromont point to the normalization of the lay character of the Kongo (-Angola) church, this comes as no surprise.
18 Catechists or interpreters took charge of Sunday assemblies in the absence of the priest (who visited less in the rainy season and more in the dry season). The catechists also took charge of children's education and supervised the correct Christian behavior of the faithful while awaiting the priest's arrival for the next round of core sacramental administration.[46] Spiritans who arrived at Soyo in 1876 continued the priestly ministry of administering baptism.

Interweaving the Kongo Kingdom and Catholicism: The Challenge of Political Realism

Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I) and subsequent kings saw to it that Catholicism took center stage in the reinvention of the sociopolitical order. Indeed, the entrance of Catholicism into Kongo civilization assumed mythological dimensions, popularized after Mvemba's reign. The narrative of conversion (i.e., Mvemba's) became fused with the etiology of the birth-baptism of the founder of Christianity, Jesus the Christ.

The founding events of Christianity (the Nativity and Baptism of the Lord) effortlessly intermeshed with Kongo history and geographical location. The result was a reinvention of Kongo civilization and Christianity. This fascinating mythological reinvention of Christianity rewrites history in the popular imagination and presents Catholicism as indigenous to the Kongo. During the troubled times of the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, the Antonine movement, led by the charismatic Kimpa Vita, sharpened the mythology. Rewriting history was necessary because the Franciscans (Capuchins) had failed to provide the true picture of the Nativity saga. The truth is that "Jesus had been born in the royal city of São Salvador [Mbanza Kongo], and when the catechism mentioned Bethlehem, it was this city that was meant. He had been baptized in Nazareth, but this was really a disguise for his real place of baptism, which was the northern province of Nsundi. Jesus and Mary were actually Kongolese; Mary's mother was a slave of the Marquis Mpangi when Mary gave Jesus birth."[47]

Mbanza Kongo (San Salvador) and the province of Nsundi, where Mvemba was governor before becoming the Mani Kongo, were, respectively, the places where Jesus was born and baptized. Christ and Christianity are African in flesh-blood and geography. Could one go further than this in the ideological reinvention of the Christian religion and the Catholic kingdom?

For Kabwita, etiological narratives popular during the troubled days of the Antonine movement, led by Kimpa Vita (or Dona Beatrice), were a function of Kongolese identity, the struggle for human rights and human dignity. The Antonine movement, as a prophetic movement, was embraced to ensure social harmony and the cohesion of the Kongo people in a kingdom torn apart by internecine wars.[48] However, in my view, in addition to identity, the popularity of the narrative derived from the ongoing and fluid "translation" of the Catholic faith as the Kongo faith.

All in all, the Kongo ruling elite that embraced the Catholic faith from the fifteenth century on saw the relationship with Portugal and Europe as good for Kongo's socioeconomic, political, and religious progress and advancement. This Catholic kingdom developed a warm relationship with the Vatican and paid fealty to the Pope, as a century-long correspondence testifies.

Kongo Ambassador to the Vatican: Manuel, the Marquis of Vunda

Those who underestimate the passionate devotion of the Kongolese to Christendom-style Catholicism should revisit the powerful documentation of the brief presence and subsequent death of the Kongo ambassador to the Vatican. The narrative of the journey to Rome of Dom Antonio Manuel, marquis of Vunda, a Black man from lower Ethiopia, is highly emotional. Appointed ambassador to the Vatican, the marquis made his journey to Rome to assume office as the royal representative of the Kongo kingdom. The journey to the residence of the visible head of the Catholic Church took three years. It was a journey amid "danger at sea" (2 Cor. 11:26); Dutch pirates attacked their party and took all the valuables, including royal gifts from the Kongo king to Pope Paul V. It was a lengthy journey amid illness and death (including the death of Manuel's own brother and companion). These trials testify to church-becoming with all the flourish of Christendom. Finally arriving in Rome, the dying ambassador was given lodgings in the Vatican quarters. He was assigned the very rooms recently occupied by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, that "hammer of heretics" or the "model of defenders of the faith," the prefect in charge of the Holy Office of the Inquisition.[49]

The dying Manuel was able to present his letter of credence to the Pope and the request of his cousin, the Kongo king Álvaro II (1587–1614). Pope Paul V was at his bedside at 1:00 am, January 5, 1608, the eve of Epiphany. The prayer of the Kongo king and church was presented by the fading

marquis. The uppermost priority of the Kongo church was missionaries. Next came prayer for the progress of Christendom in the Kongo, and finally,
20 the request of prayers for his own soul. It was a moving meeting. Paul V consoled the dying ambassador, signing him with the cross and blessing him. As required by protocol, the Pope had scheduled a formal reception on the day of Epiphany, in royal style, as is customary with royal ambassadors and legates. On January 7, 1608, during the papal consistory, the Pope spoke highly of Dom Manuel and the Kongo church. On the orders of Paul V, Fabio Biondi, the Patriarch of Jerusalem and papal chamberlain, presided at the funeral mass, which was celebrated on January 24. Dom Manuel was buried in a special tomb at Saint Mary Major. (The visit of Paul V to his bedside is captured in a fresco; the inscription on his monument memorialized the ambassador.)[50]

The narrative of the seamless interweaving of the Kongo kingdom with political (Christendom-style) Catholicism forces one to view with caution Kabwita's pessimistic narrative of the victory of the Portuguese party and his claim of the Kongo church's decline or extinction. His pessimism, rooted in the reality of the destructive power struggles, dims before art historian Cécile Fromont's optimism, which should also be viewed with caution. "Christianity," writes Fromont, "entered into the political, social, and religious realm of the Kingdom of the Kongo at the demand of its own rulers and without foreign coercion, and a lasting relationship was established between Europeans and central Africans without colonization."[51] There was a period of glory, no doubt. But something went wrong before and after the battle of Ambwila in 1665 that destroyed the foundations laid by Mvemba.

One should dismiss neither Kabwita's pessimism and lamentation nor Fromont's optimism. Kabwita draws attention to the causes of the decline and extinction of the kingdom. He highlights the original sin of abandoning the democratic and elective system through which the Mani Kongo is chosen, by royal electors, in a non-dynastic, non-hereditary Kongo political culture. The abandonment or diminishment of this elective politics sowed the bitter seed of endless bloody conflicts of succession and validation. Kabwita also underlines the dilemma faced by successive Kongo regimes in the turbulent relationship with Portugal, "either to betray the tradition and abandon themselves to the will of the Portuguese" or "to confront head on the system of the colonizer and try to beat the enemy [Portugal] in the political game." Their choice of confrontation, the weakening of the state by disastrous power struggles, and the Kongo kings' inability to defeat colonizing Portugal at the economic, political, and military contest culminated

in the battle of Ambwila. The Portuguese set foot on Kongo soil in 1483 and started building Luanda as a colony in 1575. As Catholic Kongo never accepted Catholic Portugal's economic interests in the Kongo mines or the Portuguese occupation and takeover of the isle of Luanda, Ambwila set the path to decline.[52]

The See or Bishopric of Mbanza Kongo (1596), Portugal, and the Regime of Padroado

The battle of Ambwila revealed not only Kongo's political and military miscalculations but also the weakness of church-becoming. It reveals, ecclesiologically, the weakness of the Padroado, which ensured Portuguese leverage over the appointment of bishops and priests. It reveals the weakness of the Vatican, which Kongo monarchs courted and with which Kongo had diplomatic relations. Finally, it reveals the weakness of the clan system that created the Kongo kingdom.[53]

The ecclesiastical politics and nationalist missiology of the Padroado gave Portugal overriding rights over the appointment and maintenance of bishops and the clergy. Portugal had supervisory rights, then, over the Kongo church. Despite the creation of the See or bishopric of Mbanza Kongo (San Salvador) in 1596, the Vatican was unable to reverse this situation. The establishment of the Propaganda Fide in 1622, which strengthened Vatican control over worldwide missionary activities, sapped—but did not eliminate—the Padroado. Nevertheless, since Kongo and Portugal were often on good terms, the operationality of the Padroado was nuanced. Right from the baptism of Nguzu a Nkuwu in 1491 up to the 1620s, the relationship was often cordial. Fromont notes that during this period, "a first phase of development of the Church took place in Central Africa, on the basis of the good relationship between Kongo and Portugal. The Iberian Crown controlled, by right of Tordesillas[54] and related treaties, the bishop and clergy of the region and, therefore, hoped to hold sway over the spiritual and secular affairs of the African kingdom. However, in reality, *the Kongo crown maintained throughout the period financial responsibility and de facto authority over the priests active in the region*."[55]

Kongo Catholic royalty related warmly with the Pope for their political, economic, and religious interests. They saw in the papacy a bulwark against Portuguese incursions. The head of the Catholic Church could be an ally, a restraint on Portuguese colonial ambitions in the southern border of the kingdom. For example, the uneasy relationship between Álvaro I (Ndo Luwalu I, r. 1568–87) and Portugal arose from Álvaro's strong opposition to

the Portuguese installation in Angola. His decision to send an ambassador to Rome and to donate a rich mining territory to the Holy See was, in the view of Jean Cuvelier and Louis Jadin, not simply to secure more missionaries. It also aimed to secure papal support and protection against Portuguese aggression.[56] Portuguese maneuvering successfully controlled the appointment of bishops and the supply of pastor-missionaries. Kongo Catholicism, deprived of regular priestly ministry, became dominantly lay-led.

Next, after Portugal routed the Kongo army and King Antonio I (Ne Vita a Nkanga) in Ambwila, inter-clan or internecine wars became endless, leading to the fragmentation of the kingdom. Compared to the golden age, where energy was spent in proclaiming the Gospel as well as advancing the faith and converting neighbors to Catholicism, the bitter events that preceded and followed the defeat of Antonio at Ambwila—in which the king and the pearls of the Kongo nobility, including the one and only Kongolese Capuchin, perished[57]—signaled the kingdom's gradual march toward demise or eclipse. It was tragedy writ large. The palace archives carried to the battlefront all perished.

The spirited efforts to bring the nation together, to rebuild and repopulate Mbanza Kongo, were guided by leaders endowed with charisma, like Kimpa Vita (Dona Beatrice, leader of the Antonine movement), and show the close connection between church and state. The Antonine movement was rejected by official Catholic leadership; the Capuchins prevailed on the presumptive king, Pedro IV, to withdraw support from Kimpa Vita. Condemned as a heretic, she was burned on the pyre with her consort, John, in 1706.[58] On the other hand, the persistence of wars at a time when the slave trade was at its peak explains the close connection between the fragmentation of the Kongo, the exponential increase in Catholic war captives sold into slavery, and the peopling of the Americas (Brazil, South Carolina, Haiti) with Catholic slaves.

One could learn a lesson or draw a conclusion from the unhappy depredation of the Catholic kingdom. As the colonial interests of Portuguese officials, driven by greed for mineral deposits denied them by the Kongo, exacerbated conflict, the discovery of gold in Brazil also increased the demand for "Tasked" Black bodies to work the Brazilian mines. These seventeenth- and eighteenth-century economic and political interests of the Atlantic world fueled the conflict in west central Africa. Predictably, this increased the drive for slaves exponentially—and a high percentage of them were prisoners of war. Others were obtained as "vassal tributes" (from neighboring kingdoms) paid as compensation to the Portuguese king for

the African king's failure to comply with the terms of one-sided treaties.[59] The anxiety provoked by these uncertain situations and the decline in the number of priests and missionaries bring into sharper focus the role of laypeople in the Kongo church.

A Lay-Driven Church: Kongo Catholicism Beyond the Corrosive Logic of Representation

There is an inspirational, instructional takeaway from the dynamics of Kongo church historiography despite the weakening of this church and the ultimate demise of the kingdom. The methodological backward glance at history justifies my claim that one is at an interesting juncture of Kongo church-becoming that needs careful evaluation. No matter how unusual it sounds, Kongo's construction of reality from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century forces one to appreciate the challenging novelties in ecclesiological investigations. Plagued with a sharp reduction in (and, at times, absence of) ordained clergy, the lay-led Kongo Catholicism re-presents the "flesh of the church," the "flesh of Christ."[60] This should be memorialized and celebrated. While this will be developed in subsequent chapters, highlighting the performance of the Slaves of the Church and Slaves of the Mission, I conclude this chapter by responding to the skeptics who deny the survival of true Catholicism in nineteenth-century Kongo.

To situate my response to skeptics, I affirm that Kongo Catholicism, up to the nineteenth century, represents a true incarnation of Christianity, a true display of the People of God (*laos tou theou*). As I argue in chapter 2, this church of laypeople did not shy away from conflicts with pastors or missionary priests, confirming its rootedness in the Kongo context. Of salience is the period when pastoral ministry was under the control of Italian Capuchins—the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century age of confusion, dominated by the terror of the slave trade. The conflicts between clergy and laity displayed the complex exercise or performance of *sensus fidelium*, the understanding of the faith by the faithful. No conflict captures this as well as the dispute over eschatology and ancestrology. The location of ancestral cemeteries, the location of churches, and the paraliturgical celebration of All Souls' Day manifest the fusion of the ancestral and the Christian memorial, the merging of the Indigenous and the Christian.

It is important to insist that the stress on rootedness in context takes the conversation on lay-driven Catholicism beyond a discussion of collaboration

or conflict between the missionaries and the Kongo political elite, between the Mani Kongo and the king of Portugal, between the Kongo royalty and the Vatican. The dominance of a lay-led church was the fallout or result of the cumulative effect of the politics of the Padroado, which enabled the Portuguese crown to supervise and approve the appointment of bishops and priests. Following the suppression of the Jesuits, supervised by the Marquis de Pombal, as well as the suppression of seminaries and congregations, the paucity of priests in the Kongo only captures a sign of the times. Could the church survive without clerically rooted (ordained) leadership?

I stress the resilience of the lay-led church based not only on the ingenuity of the Kongo nobility, which prioritized literacy, and not only on the power and role of the highly esteemed *maestri* (catechists, interpreters, and translators), but also on the limited success or the struggle by Kongo Catholics and the pastor-missionaries to make Christ incarnate in the Kongo. Above all, I underline the role of the hitherto unsung Slaves of the Church, or Slaves of the Mission, whose descendants were competently directing the church-community in Saint Antoine, Soyo, in 1876. Spiritans reported that they were taking good care of their church-community almost a century after the departure of the Capuchins—and without the regular presence of the clergy.[61] Attentiveness to this category of the Kongo Catholics, their sociopolitical and ecclesial performance, expands to the necessary conversation on enfleshing the freedom of the children of God. Here, the Kongo-Capuchin narrative merges with the narrative of the nineteenth-century Spiritan mission priority of redeeming slaves, buying back slaves, and creating Christian villages in the Kongo region and in Bagamoyo-Zanzibar (East Africa).

The above observations on lay-driven Catholicism and, particularly, on the Slaves of the Church bring to the fore questions that have divided historians. Was there indeed an extinction of Kongo Catholicism with the fragmentation of the Kongo kingdom? Or, rather, was the situation whereby the kingdom, in the nineteenth century, was reverting to a pre-1480 model in which the "Mwene Kongo was *primus inter pares*"[62] a statement of the total eclipse of Catholicism? Or is it a (mis-)representation of the Kongo church to claim that it was not sufficiently Catholic, or perhaps not sufficiently Protestant? One could pose the question in another way, following historian Richard Gray (as against sociologist Georges Balandier). Was Kongo (Soyo) Catholicism so "associated with traditional usages," so "absorbed into an unchanged cosmology" (i.e., absorbed in "'a system of thought that remains African and traditional rather than European and Christian'"), to

become syncretistic and unchristian? Or, on the other hand, and in favor of this church, had "the new religion, through its sacraments, liturgy, discipline and literacy, possessed sources of strength which enabled it over time to exert a cumulative impact?"[63]

The above questions help me clarify my disagreement with scholars, like Balandier, who do not believe that there was ever true Christianity in the Kongo. In agreement with the close historical scrutiny of the facts by scholars such as Thornton, I insist that since Christianity was profoundly interwoven with Indigenous Kongo religion, "its survival" was never "in question." Therefore, the debate over the survival or the true reality of Kongo Catholicism is based on the wrong set of assumptions. Historically, the question arose from "a changing definition among European clergy (including Rome) as to what constituted Christianity, coupled with more chauvinistic attitudes towards non-Western (and especially colonial) peoples that arose after 1850." As a result, "what had been considered orthodox before were now no more than interesting and unedifying survivals."[64]

I now respond briefly to the skeptics who cast doubt on the existence of true Catholicism in nineteenth-century Kongo. First, the influential historian W. R. G. Randles claims that no true Christianity ever existed in the Kongo. Rather, it was "fetishism" in the garb of "Catholicism." However, Randles's analysis and evaluation of the facts bristle with prejudice. One example will suffice. In his comparative analysis of seventeenth-century popular devotion to Saint Anthony in Portugal and in the Kongo, the same "popular devotion" practiced by Portuguese Catholics is transformed into "fetishism" when practiced by Kongo Catholics. Randles wonders why the Franciscans (Capuchins) who popularized the devotion, the miraculous powers attributed to Saint Anthony (from facilitating suitable spouses for young girls to finding lost things), would not have known that the devotion would be inopportunely conflated with "African fetishism."[65] Popular piety is Catholic when practiced by the Portuguese in Portugal and in Brazil, whereas in the Kongo, it becomes African "fetishism"—the display of the retrograde and false religion of the *nègres*! Randles's conclusion that Kongo was never truly Christian or Catholic implies that because Kongo's enfleshed Catholicism was not Portuguese, was not European, it could not be Christian. European Catholicism or Christianity defines Christianity itself; it is the definitive model and the basis for any further definition of the Christian.[66] Such ideas emerge from a fictitious essential Christianity that never existed.

My response to Randles is guided by the logic of always taking a second look, preferring a balance of stories to a single narrative. Patristic

ecclesiology—as represented, for instance, in the often-quoted insight of Augustine of Hippo—insists that we are Catholic Christians by being firmly
26 located in our geographical space, firmly rooted in our different lands, and unanimously confessing the same faith in the same Lord. "But how will that prophecy otherwise be fulfilled, *All the nations whom you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord* (Ps 86:9)?" Augustine responds: "For they will not come by migrating from their own places but by believing in their own places."[67] The Patristic insight is inoperative in situations where foreign places (Kongo and other African locations) are declared, in principle, incapable of professing the same faith.

Randles confirms the value of our critique of the representation of the African as *nègre*/slave or infrahuman. Like many Eurocentric historians of the Kongo and Africa, Randles shares this foundational prejudice. He argues in *L'ancien royaume du Congo* that Kongo merits study because it is one of those "archaic" or "barbarian" societies (similar to the kingdom of the Aztecs or the Indian Ocean peoples) located midway between "savage" societies and "pre-industrial" Western societies.[68] Archaic or barbarian societies, radically distinguished from "our home" (*ce n'est pas comme chez nous*), the "pre-industrial" home of our (European) ancestors, are constructed and peopled by infrahumans. This undermines the foundational imperative of sharing knowledge and wisdom by appropriation. Kongo tradition insists that one grows and becomes stronger by learning from the complexity of societies, by delighting in the interconnectedness of societies and peoples, drawing nourishment from their fascinating pieces of wisdom.[69] If Randles doubts the equal humanity of the Kongo and Western peoples, one does not expect him to embrace the nonracialized Patristic principle that locates the "flesh of the church" within Kongo Catholicism, as this study does. I therefore conclude that Randles's argument for the non-survival of Catholicism in the nineteenth-century Kongo space is without merit.

Similarly, and guided by the hermeneutic of suspicion, it is important to address and to dismiss those travelers' tales and missionary notes that claim the disappearance of Catholicism in nineteenth-century Kongo. Such accounts, products of the ideology of representation, come as no surprise. Reverend Thomas, bristling with Reformation fervor, excoriates Kongo Catholicism as heathenism. In expansive notes on travels along the Kongo-Zaire (published in 1860), Thomas fantasizes over the departure of the Capuchins and the return of the Kongolese from Catholicism (grafted onto fetishism) to their normal heathenism: "The priests saw their followers, one after another returning to their original superstitions and neglecting

the ingrafted rites, because not suited to their likes and wants. Disheartened and despised, they [Capuchins] retired from the faithless field, and in this, the year of grace of 1859, there are no traces of Catholicism to be found among [the Kongo] except here and there a decayed temple, the picture of a saint, or a crucifix, and to these the present generation attach a heathenish significance." Thomas goes on to clarify the intimate connection between Protestantism and colonization-civilization. His political theology demonstrates the impossibility of humanizing-Christianizing-civilizing the Kongo savages through Romanism: "That Roman Catholicism, as a religious system, has not the power to raise a barbarous people to a high degree of civilization and practical Christianity, will not be wondered at by Protestants; but that in Congo, the relapse from Catholicism to heathenism should have been so sudden and complete, is a matter of wonder to Protestants and Catholics alike." The Kongolese, according to him, were never taught about practical Christianity. They were unable to appreciate the doctrine of justification; their conversion was only nominal. Thomas concludes, triumphantly, that "heathenism has not been destroyed."[70]

In Thomas, one has not just interdenominational rivalry between Protestants and Catholics (popish Romanism) but the cumulative effect of representation. It is important to repeat that the prejudices were created by slavery, brutishly nurtured in the Americas, and popularized and normalized (even by the Enlightenment gurus the Encyclopedists) to keep Euro-American consciousness in generalized captivity.

One must exercise caution, though. There must be a balance of stories. Some abolitionists fought against the infrahuman characterization of the Negro. They inspired the distinction between the nonracialist term *Noir*, Black, and the dehumanizing *nègre*, slave. As will be shown in chapter 4, nineteenth-century Spiritan missionaries to the Kongo region, with a more inclusive mission theology (though not abolitionists), would speak in glowing terms of the Soyo church, whose performance was neither "heathenish" nor "superstitious" but Catholic. However, this exception proves the rule. The ideology of representation ensured the victory of the deep-rooted prejudice. "The West," says Chinua Achebe, "seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa."[71]

Besides missionary notes, travelers' tales made an impact on the home (European) audience with an insatiable appetite for exoticism. The widely diffused report of Captain Tuckey's voyage on the Zaire River (1816) recognized the Portuguese-style Catholicism of the Soyo. The captain writes,

"Several of the Sonio men who came onboard were Christians after the Portuguese fashion, having been converted by missionaries of that nation;
28 and one of them was even qualified to lead fellow negroes into the path of salvation, as appeared from the diploma with which he was furnished [i.e., *maestro*]. This man and another of the Christians had been taught to write their own names and that of Saint Antonio, and could also read the Romish litany in Latin." Then Tuckey observes, "All these converts were loaded with crucifixes, and satchels containing the pretended relics of saints, certainly of equal efficacy with the monkey's bone of their pagan brethren." These relics were not different from their heathen fetishes.[72]

Tuckey's and Thomas's declarations of the extinction of Catholicism (or the absence of Protestant-style Christianity) in the Kongo are contradicted by the evidence of their testimony, notes Fromont. Their conclusions have perhaps more to do with racism than with the examination of the contemporaneous practice of Catholicism worldwide. They were "dismissive" and "derisive" of their own carefully observed and recorded evidence, preferring a "hardening gaze."[73] That "hardening gaze" denies the humanity of the Kongo-African, generates the "double consciousness" driving the African to self-define only with the categories established by the other, who, as Du Bois puts it, "looks on in amused contempt."[74]

In response, I would like to indicate that I find the evaluation of the evidence by Thornton more convincing than that of Randles, Thomas, or Tuckey. In the Kongo-controlled Church, in a noncolonial situation from the sixteenth century, one could not deny "considerable syncretism in Christian practice." Yet missionaries and their "superiors in Rome . . . accepted it [Kongo Catholicism] as orthodox." It was a different matter in the nineteenth century. Then, there was "a changing definition among European clergy (including Rome) as to what constituted Christianity, coupled with more chauvinistic attitudes towards non-Western (and especially colonial) peoples that arose after 1850."[75]

The "chauvinistic attitudes towards non-Western . . . peoples" that dog even the best studies about Africa explain the negative comments on the survival of Catholicism in the Kongo. Even Kongo historian Anne Hilton, critically examining the seventeenth-century European sources for Kongo history, observes that Kongo Christianity in the capital reflected the practice of the king. In the provinces, Catholicism "was restricted to baptism" (*curiamunga*, "to eat salt"), "without any Euro-Christian understanding." Her conclusion degrades Kongo Catholicism. She notes that "from the Kongo perspective, Christianity was located within a category of thought

and practice which was concerned with the public cult of the ancestors, and notably of the royal graves, on the one hand, and protective magic on the other."[76]

From my review of the historical evidence, Christendom-style Catholicism, as a national religion, was instrumentalized to validate the position of the Mani Kongo. Following the decline in the Kongo political order after the disastrous battle of Ambwila in 1665, events in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the whole of the eighteenth cascaded to the eventual demise of the Kongo kingdom in the nineteenth century. One notes the absence (or sporadic presence) of foreign pastors and missionaries. These events lead both opponents and supporters of the existence of Catholicism in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kongo to curiously evoke the same reality. Their conclusions are a matter of interpretation based on different sets of assumptions. In my view, the report on the lay-led Catholicism of the Slaves of the Church clearly presents, more than any contemporaneous narrative, Kongo Catholicism in operation. Fascinated by the welcome accorded to the Spiritans in Soyo and the pressure on Hippolyte Carrie to delay his departure, Duparquet mused, "It is more than a century since these poor people had a missionary, yet they preserved the faith and most practices of the religion."[77] In Saint Antoine, the Slaves of the Church, numbering close to three thousand persons, were self-governing and effectively administering their church. "You have there your children," remarked the people guiding the missionary through the residential area of the Slaves of the Church. The reigning king (governor) of Soyo pleaded with the visiting Father Carrie to receive baptism, the most important sacrament in lay-driven Kongo Catholicism.[78]

Catholicism, in fifteenth- to nineteenth-century Kongo, rather than being "weakly established" or performed by only a "slim minority," was vigorous, as exemplified in Soyo. In tune with the logic of Christendom, Soyo Catholicism was triumphalist and affected every segment of society. Sociality was legitimated by "recognized Christian ritual experts." The community leaders were "trained and recruited through exposure to an extremely rigorous religious discipline." Novel marriage practices were imposed, and Indigenous festivals revolved around the "Christian calendar, with the Mass as perhaps the principal ritual focus in Soyo life."[79] Church-becoming, therefore, profoundly touched the sociopolitical and economic dimensions of the kingdom. However, power politics within the ruling Kongo clans, the role of foreign priests and missionaries in the political power struggle, the competition with Portugal in neighboring Luanda, and the impact of slavery

and the slave trade radically weakened the kingdom and church from the middle of the eighteenth century on.

No matter how weak this church appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the ecclesial performance illustrated in Soyo-Kongo recognizes the Pentecost principle that illustrates the genius of Catholicism: accepting the other. The alternative—that is, purism or exclusivism (illustrative of the biblical Jonah principle)—would prefer sterility.[80] This Kongo church carved in the form of Christendom since 1491 welcomed the Capuchins in 1645. It was a Catholic church of a Catholic kingdom "represented by Garcia II and its male and female ruling elite," unquestionably loyal to the Pope. The dominance of the Christendom church model is proved by the fact that the Capuchins did not find it remarkable that "Garcia could believe that the papal monarch, so remote and difficult to contact, could be persuaded to alter radically, yet effectively, the established Kongo custom of electing and legitimating royal succession."[81] Kongo Catholicism, Soyo Catholicism, was comparable to Portuguese, Milanese, or Roman Catholicism.

In the next chapter, I highlight and discuss the underlying features that enabled the Kongo church to survive, despite the disintegration of the kingdom and the absence of the regular visit of ordained priests for almost (or over) a century.

Chapter 2

THE SHAPE OF THE KONGO CHURCH

Chapter 1 introduced representation that not only influenced but also continues to shape the consciousness of Euro-Americans as well as Black people and Africans. Representation normalized the perception of the African through the "hardened gaze" created in the murky field of slavery in the Americas and popularized by Enlightenment literature, travelogues, and missionary notes. Africa became the "dark continent." Kongo became the heart of darkness. Kongo Catholicism, Black Catholicism, became "heathenism," "fetishism," "the religion of the degenerate." This perception continues in our digital age. The hardened gaze impacted the self-perception of Blacks and Africans, burdened with "double consciousness"—looking "at one's self through the eyes of others," measuring "one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[1] It nourished the psychopathology of Black performance. On home ground, the Antillean does not subscribe to the myth of inferiority. However, landing in France, "at the first white gaze," the Antillean "feels the weight of his melanin."[2]

The postcolonial approach to African and Kongo historiography takes a second look at everything to appreciate Kongo's deliberate choice of communication with Europe for its own good. There was no cringing at the white gaze. Catholicism, central to Kongo choices, to the modernization or transformation of the Kongo, assumed the features of national religion. Kongo reached its golden age during the reign of Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I) in the sixteenth century.[3]

This chapter expands the conversation on historic church-becoming in the Kongo. Two vital decisions made by the Kongo elite that led to

modernization and/or Christianization capture my attention. First is the prioritization of literacy, which from the fifteenth century on produced the cohort of translators, interpreters, and *maestri* without whom communication with southern Europeans and the translation of Catholicism into Kongo would have been impossible. Second is the interruptive dynamics of a new religious culture that generated a novel force for nation-building and made Catholicism become traditional or indigenous to the Kongo. Christianity took flesh in the Kongo. The message, translated-received, is embodied in the Kongo catechism, a labor of love by the Jesuit priest Mateus Cardoso and the *maestri*. The miracle of Pentecost was real: "'In our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power'" (Acts 2:11).

This universalist Pentecost principle, the experience of the Word that "became flesh and lived among us [Kongolese]" (John 1:14), was not a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century flirtation. It was theologically and juridically incarnate in the Kongo "language," in the shape of the political Catholicism from the fifteenth century forward. This Christianity with sociopolitical, religious, and economic consequences was not limited to the creativity of the most researched and celebrated Kongo king, Mvemba.

The centuries-long entrenchment and normalization of Catholicism was demonstrated by Álvaro III (Ndo Luvwalu III Nimi a Mpanzu). In a missive from August 31, 1620, the Roman pontiff Pius V acknowledged that King Álvaro was a "very pious king," highly "devoted" to the Apostolic See. The Pope was writing in response to the Kongo king's letter of October 20, 1619. The words "very pious king" and "devoted" should not be read simply as Vatican diplomatese. The same Pius V sat at the bedside of the dying Kongo ambassador to the Vatican, Manuel, the marquis of Vunda (the Black man from lower Ethiopia, in the Vatican archival language), on the eve of Epiphany 1608.[4] The marquis was, for Pius V, the Kongo church in flesh and blood. In using diplomatic language in his letter of 1620, the Pope was addressing a Catholic king in the Catholic language of the seventeenth century. The abundant correspondence between the Kongo and the Vatican paints a captivating picture of a local church that placed a high premium on literacy to communicate with the kingdoms of southern Europe—and on contextual appropriation of Catholicism for the development of the new Catholic kingdom.

The Power of Literacy in the Kongo Church and State (Political Ecclesiology)

The Kongo church, by the eighteenth or nineteenth century, lacked a regular supply of priests. Right from the start, this church was unable to establish a badly needed seminary for the training of local clergy. The Kongo church thus appeared to have been structurally destined to fail. In *Les missions*, Henri Maurier argues that the Kongo civilizational layout (society, politics, economy, technology, art and artifacts, writing, and the like) did not produce an economic surplus that assured the support of a clergy to ensure sustainable ecclesiastical structures: "Evidently, the Congolese civilization was incapable of supporting the burden of such a complex clerical structure."[5] Perhaps Maurier has a point. Yet the judgment on the financial situation of the Kongo, and Kongo's responsibility for financing the Church, requires careful evaluation based on documentary evidence.

In the fifteenth century through to the nineteenth, Kongo politics and economy were interwoven with church-becoming and factored in the welfare or maintenance of the clergy. From 1491 to 1620, the Kongo royalty took charge of the maintenance of the clergy. Mvemba's passion to construct churches and schools led to diverse requests to his Portuguese homologue. At the top of his list were masons, doctors, pharmacists, carpenters, and, above all, fifty missionaries. He gave full assurance of their adequate maintenance. The regime of Padroado ruled that the maintenance of the clergy was the responsibility of Portugal. However, through the *regimento* (an agreement between the kings of Kongo and Portugal) effective from Mvemba, this responsibility was transferred from Portugal to the Kongo. As a result, one can conclude with Cuvelier that if Mvemba, and subsequent sixteenth- and seventeenth-century kings, did not "provide abundantly the financial resources" for the mission, the whole project of "evangelization would have been ruined in advance."[6]

The structure of revenue collection through taxation in the various towns and villages in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kongo is well documented. The correspondence in 1622 between Pedro II and the Pope, through the intermediary of Msgr. J. B. Vivès (Kongo's representative to the Vatican), discussed the "funds to support the clergy of the royal chapel," the church dedicated to the "glorious apostle St James" (under whose banner Mvemba overpowered his brother in the struggle for the throne). Pedro II Affonso (Nkanga a Mubika) committed himself to make available 440 *cofos* (*kofu*) for the support of the clergy.[7] In addition, tithes were continuously

collected for their support. Randles suggests that the collection appears to have been controlled by the Kongo king. The Portuguese king (or Spanish, when Spain occupied the Portuguese throne) was also, after 1620, paying for the maintenance of the bishop.

The Kongo kingdom, never comfortable with the Padroado (which was never fully operational), had a strained relationship with Portugal and the Vatican. The struggle to have its own residential bishop, to end the dependence on Lisbon or São Tomé (a Portuguese island in west central Africa, with the bishopric created in 1534), only succeeded in 1596. The numerous communications between the Kongo and the Vatican (1534 to 1596) prove this. In the consistory of May 20, 1596, Pope Clement VIII (in *Super Specula Militantis Ecclesiae*) erected the diocese of San Salvador.[8] However, as Randles rightly notes, it was a grand deception. The bishops appointed to the Kongo preferred to stay in Luanda (a Portuguese colony since 1575), in the company of white Portuguese nationals, rather than take up residence in Mbanza Kongo (San Salvador). Not even the appointment of Manuel ne Vunda as Kongo ambassador to the Vatican (1604) resolved the matter. It took ne Vunda three years to arrive in Rome with the message from the Kongo. The papal approval of the request of King Álvaro II (Mpanzu a Nimi, 1574–1614) to elevate his confessor to the rank of protonotary apostolic was granted in 1613. However, the official papal brief reached the Kongo only in 1618, during the reign of Álvaro III (Nimi a Mpanzu, r. 1615–22). The brief appointed the king's confessor as the official papal representative in the Kongo.[9]

It emerges, from the above, that multifarious factors—not simply economics—impeded the development of efficient and functional ecclesiastical structures supervised by local clerics. The political realities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dominance of the Padroado, and the Portuguese colonial presence in neighboring Luanda and Angola frustrated the establishment of firm Kongo ecclesiastical structures. This was exacerbated with Portugal's invasion of southern Kongo in 1622, leading to the permanent recall of the Kongo bishop to Angola in 1624. This restricted or "prevented further ordination of local clergy," leading to the Kongo king's request for Capuchin missionaries.[10]

The Kongo had an inbuilt response, one that historians from all sides unanimously acknowledge as impactful: widespread literacy and the ministry of the *maestri*. This developed early in the history of the Catholic kingdom, thanks to the intrepid King Mvemba. From the northwestern province of Soyo to Mbanza Kongo, from the northeastern province of

Nsundi to neighboring provinces of Mbata and Mpangu, literacy played a central role in the process of "centralization of the kingdom" and the propagation of the faith. Bostoen and Brinkman insist that "cohesion in the kingdom was partly established through the Christian church, education, and the spread of literacy."[11]

*The Ideology of "Book" Knowledge and the Emergence of Interpreters (*Maestri*)*

Literacy and "book" knowledge in the Kongo attract the interest of commentators and historians. Among the eight important areas of "acculturation" listed by Randles in the encounter with southern Europeans, literacy merits special mention. The Kongo elite appeared to adapt the symbols of royalty and nobility quickly in their modes of dress. However, they found the Portuguese legal system less attractive. Next, there was expansion in commerce, then minor changes in agriculture, with the introduction of technical innovations. However, the determinant of the drive toward radical change was literacy. What is remarkable in Randles's inconsistent narrative, always doubtful of the existence of true Catholicism in the Kongo, is the Kongo fascination with reading and writing. He notes that the Kongolese had a consummate passion to be instructed and were prepared to "sell everything they have to buy a book or a manuscript."[12] Kabolo Iko Kabwita agrees: the great reform movement of the longest reigning and most influential Kongo king, Mvemba a Nzinga, stood upon three interconnected pillars—"the struggle against traditional or Indigenous religious practices, the promotion of Portuguese-style education, and the construction of churches."[13]

The determination of the Kongo elite to expand and strengthen their civilization in the encounter with Europe is unquestionable. Their choice of literacy to introduce wide-ranging sociopolitical, economic, and religious changes started right from the first contact with southern Europeans. John Thornton reports that they "developed literacy in Portuguese" and that the "first letter composed by a literate Kongolese dated from 1491." (Note that Nguzu a Nkuwu was baptized in 1491). "Schools developed rapidly in Kongo," says Thornton, "and by the seventeenth century there was a school in every major provincial capital" of the six Kongo provinces. "Literacy was more or less restricted to the upper class, but the fact that Kongo's archives and official documents were written in Portuguese helped create a general familiarity with the language among the ordinary people."[14]

The fluency in Portuguese projected into prominence a category of professionals whose influence has not been fully acknowledged—the

translators, guides, and even porters of missionaries and explorers.[15] Translators perhaps constituted the cornerstone of modernization in the capital and provinces in a noncolonial situation. Their creativity and resilience enabled a determined literate Kongo elite to reinvent and Christianize the Kongo.

From the start of the encounter, Kongo kings and the Kongo people found themselves at the crossroads of history. On linguistic grounds, there was the initial difficulty in communication. The Kongo elite pondered and made reasoned decisions for their people. It is reported that Diogo Cão, who arrived in the Kongo in 1482 (in the province of Soyo), took four hostages. According to some accounts, this may have been in retaliation for the supposed kidnapping of his companions—missionaries who were sent inland (his ship still at sea) to pay homage to the king. The delegation (i.e., the missionaries) failed to return before he set sail from Mpinda back to Portugal. Or perhaps Diogo Cão was following the normal ("barbaric") Portuguese practice of "kidnapping," sanctioned by the Portuguese royalty. Reports had it that there was "a royal command of 1436 that ordered Portuguese explorers to seize local people during their voyages to be trained as interpreters."[16] Since the kidnapped Kongolese were of the nobility, there was deep concern in Soyo. Calm returned thanks to the missionaries who remained behind, who persuaded and convinced the Soyo-Kongo of the good faith of the king of Portugal. The hostages would certainly be returned.[17] Two years later, during his second passage, Diogo Cão berthed again at the Kongo estuary. Onboard his vessel were the Kongo hostages back from Portugal. They were communicating in Portuguese and Kikongo. The Portuguese imperial logic appeared unimpeachable. Inge Brinkman explains, "The four hostages taken to Portugal should also be regarded in this light [acting as interpreters]: sources in the *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* explain that they were taken to learn the language and the customs of Portugal, so that 'they could communicate well. Because in any other way, given the language diversity, this was not possible.'"[18]

The above historical snippets introduce the courageous interpreters without whom communication between the European trading nations (Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Flemish, Spanish, French, English) and peoples of west central Africa would be impossible. It comes as no surprise that the interpreters were on hand when, later in 1491, a mission sanctioned by the king of Portugal set sail for west central Africa in more friendly conditions. Accounts narrate a shopping list of presents from the king of Portugal for the Mani Kongo as a gesture of friendship: "cloth, clothes, ornaments,

instruments, horses, and many people, including priests, stonemasons, carpenters, and also women."[19] From the baptism of Nguzu a Nkuwu (King João I) to the reign of the colorful and evangelistic Mvemba (Afonso I), the priests, closely associated with Kongo interpreters, left an indelible imprint on the Kongo kingdom and on Kongo Catholicism.

The School in the Service of Evangelization: The Ideology of Mvemba a Nzinga

Kongo historian Sébastien Meno Kikokula, fascinated with the educational ideology of Mvemba (Afonso I), enthusiastically serenades this king's dedication to literacy. Mvemba's incredible passion for education was propelled not simply by the need to produce interpreters but above all by the desire to advance the faith. The pity was that the project of modernization through literacy ultimately proved abortive.

Mvemba's passion for education was already on display when he was the governor of the northeastern province of Nsundi. Then, two missionaries banished or exiled from Mbanza Kongo to Nsundi in 1491 by his father (in renunciation of the Catholic faith?) were persuaded by Mvemba to open a school. This initiated the "first embryonic educational project in the provincial capital." Thanks to this early project, Mvemba's sons were introduced to reading and writing and to "the teachings of Christianity."[20] In 1509, as Mani Kongo, Mvemba ordered the construction of a palisade, an enclosure, to host a school in Mbanza Kongo. This held about four hundred youngsters. The palisade, almost in the form of a prison (or a monastery), had a high fence secured with thorns to prevent the students from scaling the fence and running away. Gradually, the new school regime proved acceptable and spread to the neighboring provinces of Mbata and Mpangu.

Mvemba's imaginative creativity ran riot! In the effort to ensure quality education in a secure environment, free from rural distractions, Mvemba planned to move the educational center to the island of São Tomé, away from Mbanza Kongo. São Tomé, a Portuguese possession, is close to the Kongo. Mvemba believed that the Kongo could, by mutual agreement, take it over from Portugal. However, Portugal had other ambitions more pressing than schools in the service of evangelization. São Tomé was invaluable in firmly securing the sea route to India. It was also an important trading and slaving port. Portugal would not hear of giving up such a prized possession. Disappointed, but never one to give up, Mvemba requested more competent instructors (grammarians) to guide Kongo students to an advanced level of education.[21]

Perhaps Meno Kikokula could have been carried away in his enthusiasm and admiration for Mvemba's educational policy. For example, the stress on quality education could have been exaggerated. However, that such ideas on education were a matter of policy for Mvemba's Kongo in the sixteenth century, when education in southern Europe was for the elite, should be cause for wonder and admiration. Mvemba's ideas in the sixteenth century even outpaced the revolutionary nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionary strategy of developing "the school in the service of evangelization." (Spiritan missionaries in eastern Nigeria, from Léon Lejeune through Joseph Shanahan and after, deployed the school as a motor for evangelization.)[22] Education, in Mvemba's Kongo, was not devised for the elite (though in execution nobles were the beneficiaries). The king of Portugal, Manuel I, in his correspondence with Mvemba, counseled his brother king to limit the number of students to make the classroom manageable. However, Mvemba's consummate passion to evangelize and Christianize dictated otherwise. The more educated or trained personnel available, the easier it would be to evangelize the general Kongo populace.[23]

Mvemba's desires were extraordinary, despite the modest achievement. Not only were students to be taught the rudiments of Latin and Portuguese, quality and/or higher education required professors in the humanities and exegesis. Theologians and canonists were in demand to train the Kongo "intellectual elite." No surprise, then, that the first official delegation from the Catholic Kongo to the Vatican, which included Henrique (Kinu a Mvemba), the king's son and a student in Portugal for three years, would have presented a letter of credence. Henrique, who knew Latin—and was later ordained the first and only Indigenous Kongolese bishop—was to read the letter to Pope Julius II in Latin.[24]

Furthermore, to ensure continued delivery of education and the availability of personnel to enhance quality, Mvemba wanted two of his nephews to pursue higher studies in Portugal, be ordained bishops, and return home to supervise the Kongo schools. In this way, advances in religious and theological education would be assured. The desire for higher education explains his vision of São Tomé as the center for intellectual formation. The politics and desires of the Kongo were, however, radically at odds with those of Portugal. As noted above, the Portuguese were more interested in trade with India and in the slave trade.[25]

Nevertheless, the point must be made that Mvemba's passion for education yielded the concrete result of the qualified experts (or masters) either honed in the schools or the churches (*mestres da escola* and *mestres da capela*

or *da igreja*)[26] as well as the diplomatic service. This facilitated "a pattern of 'elite exchange' . . . between southern Europe and the Kongo Kingdom."[27] Some who were trained in Portuguese schools or at the Vatican returned home to be part of the advancement of the sociopolitical and religious transformation of Kongo civilization.

Was Mvemba's Political Catholicism a Betrayal of Kongo and Christianity?

It is surprising that the Congo historian Kabwita, following the influential French sociologist Balandier, concluded that the Kongolese political-economic connection with Portugal, intermeshed with the extraordinary evangelistic propagation of Catholicism to modernize ("civilize") the Kongo, was a betrayal of Kongo tradition and of Christianity. The encounter with southern Europeans was certainly challenging, treacherous, complex, and even conflictual. But how could such a reasoned choice by the Kongo nobility, even for limited interests, be a betrayal?

Kabwita insists that from Mvemba through the succeeding Kongo kings, the democratic (elective) process was betrayed. The democratic elective process, based on the matrilineal hierarchical descent ideology in which the Mani Vunda, Mani Mbata, and Mani Soyo were electors, was corrupted by Mvemba. The politico-military power struggle that led to Mvemba's rise to power (a coup d'état) upset the elective structure. Furthermore, Kabwita argues that Mvemba's Catholicism took its eye off the kerygma, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the central message of Christianity: his conversion, his energetic propagation of the faith, and the Christianization process were directed toward his hold onto power, a betrayed of Christianity. Kabwita concludes that Mvemba's Catholicism was "a truncated interpretation of Christianity." He neither believed in nor kept the kerygma at the forefront.[28]

Historians such as Anne Hilton are probably right in suggesting that "Christianity provided the ruling elite with a legitimating ideology which was understood in terms of existing categories of thought, which was under its direct control, and which was associated with the power and prestige of the Atlantic trade."[29] However, does this justify the conclusion that Mvemba's Catholic performance was a truncated version of Christianity? Such a conclusion fails to pay attention to the challenges of the time and the complex appropriation of conversion in the Kongo. The judgment is also inattentive to the structures and interpretation of late medieval and modern (European) Catholicism before the Reformation—and the reality of contextualized Kongo Catholicism.

Surprisingly, Kabwita uncritically endorses Balandier's negative evaluation of Kongo modernization through Christianization. Balandier's
40 position, constructed on a reification of Indigenous Kongo culture and religion, assumes that nothing changed, nor could ever change, in the Kongo cultural and religious world. Kabwita follows Balandier's historically indefensible position that the Kongo state was a colonial state ("first colonization" by Portugal) and that Kongo Catholicism was a colonial church. He quotes Balandier with approval: "Western civilization was imposed ['s'est imposée'] on the people of the Kongo because of its relative material power, the effectiveness of its technology, and the allure of its material goods. From the sixteenth century on, discovery of the 'European secret' was a constant preoccupation. It was sought on the level of revealed knowledge—Christianity—and recorded knowledge—book learning. . . . 'Almost all . . . are learning to read in order to be able to recite the divine office [and] they sell everything they have to buy a manuscript or a book.'" The focus on literacy leads to an interesting remark by Balandier: "The merchant Pieter van den Broecke mentions the presence in Mbanza Soyo, in the early seventeenth century, of 'eight or ten schools of the Portuguese type.'" While this may be exaggerated, "the influence of modern education cannot be disregarded: secretaries wrote in Portuguese, ambassadors from Soyo to Brazil understood Latin and held forth in the language." In conclusion, Balandier states, "Again and again the Kongo missed its opportunity to enter the modern age: the freedom of action and the necessary assistance were lacking."[30]

Whichever way one evaluates Kongo society and church, historians and commentators strongly underline that literacy was key to the development and survival of the kingdom and Catholicism. It is highly questionable, and perhaps historically inaccurate, to suggest that modernization was imposed on the Kongo. This underestimates the choices made and the agency of the Kongo elite and Kongo people. It reads into fifteenth- to nineteenth-century Kongo historiography the nineteenth-century predatory partition of Africa (1884–85) and the horrors of Leopold's Congo Free State. The pernicious ideology of representation is displayed in Balandier's analytical assumptions. In his lament over the demise of the kingdom, Kabwita, a Mukongo, fails to recognize the unassailable contribution of Mvemba, who was ahead of his time. "The memory of this chief, whose character equaled genius," Joseph Van Wing notes, "remained alive within clans, no matter how distant, from the ancient kingdom of the Congo."[31]

In his review of Balandier's translated book, Richard Gray acknowledges the interesting contribution to Kongo studies by the French sociologist. Gray

praises Balandier's beneficial use of historical materials, such as the works of Canon Jadin, and also his popularizing of reports by "contemporary European observers, whom he [Balandier] quotes lavishly." However, Gray reports that *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo* makes a disappointing contribution to the history of the Kongo state and Kongo Christianity: "As a piece of historical analysis . . . the book was a disappointment. With his model of Kongo culture, he has underestimated, and at times has even failed to notice, the process of change." Balandier's treatment of the central theme of his work—the reaction of the Kongo to Christianity—was "seriously deficient." Balandier was working from the false premise that, in its contact with Christianity, Kongo's Indigenous religion never changed. He assumed traditional Kongo religion to be foundational, fixed, and unchangeable, a religion "which for three centuries successfully assimilated and transformed the alien faith appropriating 'its symbols for ends which the missionaries indignantly condemned.'" Balandier echoes Rev. Charles Thomas's claims in 1860 that Kongo Catholicism was "fetishism" and "heathenism." Such assumptions ignore the important realities of Kongo Catholicism and mistakenly believe that "syncretism" is a "one way process." They ignore not only the commitment of the royalty, crystallized in Mvemba (Afonso I) and Garcia II, but also the role of the very influential catechists and *maestri*. The catechists and *maestri* "as late as 1814 were described by a Kongo king as the fire under the cinders, preserving 'the Holy Faith ever alive in this kingdom.'"[32] I align myself with Gray to conclude that wide-ranging world events impacted the eclipse of Kongo Catholicism. Not only events in the Kongo but also events in Europe, such as the suppression of the Jesuits under the Marquis de Pombal and the suppression of the seminaries and religious congregations, negatively affected Catholicism and made it impossible for Catholic leaders to furnish Kongo with missionaries for almost a century.

Honoring the Contribution of Interpreters in the Kongo Church and State

The remnants of the Kongo kingdom and its Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may not compel admiration. Nineteenth-century records, following the annotations of Cuvelier (explaining Kongo finances), show that missionaries refused to go to the kingdom because it was not financially viable. Cuvelier wrote, "The king of the Kongo is very poor and naked like the rest of the people." Unlike the situation between 1491 and the 1620s, "this sort of king cannot cover the expenses of missionaries

nor provide for their sustenance."[33] Any wonder? With the depopulation of Mbanza Kongo through wars, the breakdown of the Kongo state, absence of fiscal control, and the intensified slave trade, the power of the elite was frittered away. From the perspective of 1491 to 1620, a reasoned dismantling of Enlightenment prejudices might lead an observer like R. E. Dennett (*At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*) to reevaluate Africa and the Kongo from the insightful comment of Flora Shaw (a London *Times* correspondent who later married Frederick Lugard, the architect of the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria). In *A Tropical Dependency,* Shaw wrote about Sudanic sub-Saharan Africa:

> When the history of Negroland comes to be written in detail, it may be found that the kingdoms lying towards the eastern end of the Soudan were the home of races who inspired, rather than of races who received, the traditions of civilisation associated for us with the name of ancient Egypt. . . . If this should prove to be the case, and the civilised world be forced to recognise in a black people the fount of its original enlightenment, it may happen that we [i.e., children of the European historiography of representation] shall have to revise entirely our view of the black races, and regard those who now exist [in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries] as the *decadent representatives of an almost forgotten era, rather than as the embryonic possibility of an era yet to come*.[34]

The concession by a journalist who doggedly defended, despite her own evidence, the Egyptian and Arabian origin of present-day (nineteenth- and twentieth-century) Sudanic civilization hardly recovers Africa's defaced past—unlike Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga. The decadence of the nineteenth century was the fruit of four hundred years of plunder in human and natural resources.[35]

The Kongo elite and the Kongo people were not mistaken in embracing literacy as the motor for their sociopolitical advancement and the spread of Catholicism. It opened for them a whole new world. Thornton, among others, affirms this unequivocally:

> The base of Kongo's Church, since the days of Afonso [Mvemba], was its local educational system, which made Kongo into a literate as well as a Christian country. In the sixteenth century these literate students went into the priesthood as well as into government service,

> and when the priesthood was closed off they formed a group of lay assistants to the ordained clergy. Some were interpreters, others "masters" of churches or chapels, others still were catechists. They were recruited from the highest levels of the nobility, and in Soyo, in the late seventeenth century a career as an interpreter or master could lead one right to the office of Prince.[36]

Others who celebrate the educational impact of Kongo Catholicism include Cécile Fromont and Adrian Hastings. Fromont discusses at length the position and dress code of the interpreter-catechists as well as the role and the enormous influence of the *mestres* or *maestri*. For his part, Hastings underscores the irreplaceability of the *maestri* in Kongo Catholicism.[37]

While Mvemba and his successors, up to the end of the seventeenth century, were focused on education for church-state administration, interest in the "book" later shifted from developing the theological-religious vocabulary toward developing the vocabulary of commerce. This happened when coastal trade was deeply established, with the Dutch and the English becoming dominant trading partners, along with the Flemish and the French. Unfortunately, the dominant commodity exchanged or confiscated was human chattel.

Reviewing the interest in literacy, one is forced to pause at Randles's critique of the educational system. Up to the eighteenth century, schools were found in Mbanza Kongo and the provincial capitals. But the passion for education kept diminishing. The Kongo royalty were giving limited support to education, perhaps because they were fearful of creating "une *intelligentsia* rebelle." Consequently, once students acquired sufficient familiarity with grammar and Portuguese, they graduated and were posted to the provinces. Randles concludes with a lament that one cannot ignore: It is significant (and unfortunate) that the Kongolese never deployed literacy for the efficient functioning of state bureaucracy. Its uses were limited to Christianization and acquiring knowledge of European ways.[38]

With Mvemba's focus on literacy in the service of evangelization, the reason for training in grammar, Portuguese, Latin, and even Italian was to expand the Christian religion. The choice of literacy and education at the time would not be to create rebels or incite rebellion. I agree with Meno Kikokula, rather than with Randles, that Mvemba's educational project was to spread Christianity and to bequeath the nation an "intellectual elite." Education was the means par excellence for spreading Christianity in the kingdom.[39]

Following this ideology of Christianization through education, the image of this church as lay-driven is unmistakable. "A careful reading of the original sources," says Thornton, "shows that missionaries played a relatively small role in defining Christianity, and that from very early on in its history, Kongo Christianity was shaped by educated Kongo laypeople."[40] The evangelization of the villages, of the interior of the provinces, was totally the business of the catechists. The priests rarely visited the interior. Kabwita's lament about the absence of a clerically administered church could be responsible for his undervaluing the evangelistic work of the catechists. How else should one understand the claim that "in reality and in a global manner, the sacraments were administered without any preparation and without adequate initiation"?[41] Thornton contradicts Kabwita, serenading the catechists as leading lights of this Church: "It was, in fact, the catechists, interpreters and masters who preserved the religion and kept Kongo a Catholic country."[42]

Up to the seventeenth century and beyond, these educated laypeople, catechists, translator-interpreters, and *maestri* (still recognized in the nineteenth century by their staff of office) were indispensable for sacramental administration. Since missionaries and foreign priests depended on interpreters as a rule (though this diminished with Italian Capuchins who learned and communicated in Kikongo),[43] the Kongo church became dominantly lay-led. The Capuchin manual *Missione in Pratica* captured the overwhelming need for interpreters in the administration of the sacraments. Fromont reports that "the author of the 'Missione in Pratica' even warned that, no matter his proficiency in the language, 'the missionary should not risk hearing confession in this country, without the help of the interpreter.' Mestres not only structured the religious experience of the Kongo in the absence of European clerics; they formed the backbone of the organization of Christianity in the country within which foreign missionaries had to inscribe their apostolate."[44]

What remains inexplicable and surprising, as Randles notes, is that the Kongo never used reading and writing to develop a state bureaucracy. In this sense, Balandier is right that "the Kongo missed its opportunity to enter the modern age." Or did the disintegration of the kingdom and its depopulation through the slave trade help undermine the position of the elite and erode the impact of literacy? Or is Randles to be believed that the kings—and the Kongo kingdom itself—were refractory to a rebellious intelligentia?[45]

What remains inescapable is that the cohort of interpreters, this body of laypeople, and the body of believers radically demonstrated a Kongo and Catholic way of translating the Gospel in Kongo soil.

Translating the Message: The Genius of Catholicism Advancing Kongo Civilization

Kongo Catholicism was profoundly contextualized—or, to use a term that will dominate this section, *translated*. The story could certainly have been different were the challenges vis-à-vis southern Europe focused less on pillage and plunder and more on the exchange of goods and manners. What was happening, or what happened, in the Kongo was a Catholicism transmitted from southern Europe, received within west central Africa, and read and expressed in African (Kongo) idioms. This was translation that Andrew Walls calls "the art of the impossible."[46]

The narrative about literacy indicates the frustrations and politics of translation, despite the overall impact of translators and interpreters from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. The frustrations provide insight into the challenges of the transmission of the Gospel message, the complexity of conversion, and the theological imagination deployed and revealed in the reception of the faith. This demonstrates how translation is made possible by collaboration, a *mimesis* of the Incarnation, the "divine act of translation" (John 1:14) on which "Christian faith rests."[47]

Between the fifteenth century and the eighteenth, in noncolonial west central African contexts and in the developing fury of the northern European Reformation, Counter-Reformation, or Catholic reformation, interpretations of the Kongo translation of Christianity differed depending on missiological assumptions—inclusivist or exclusivist. However, in the colonial nineteenth and twentieth centuries, under the prejudicial, hardened gaze, exclusivist assumptions predominated. Noting the "syncretic nature of Christianity in Kongo," Thornton observes that "most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century observers, even those who were priests . . . seem to have considered the Kongo form of Christianity, with its religious terminology borrowed from Kongo cosmology, as perfectly acceptable and normal."[48] (The discussion of "syncretism" below will argue, following Gray, that "the direction and dynamic of syncretism was very different from that assumed" by Reformers and sociologists such as Balandier.)[49]

Grappling with the dynamics of translation, or the translatability of the Gospel in the Kongo, began with the struggle to make sense of conversion. The story of the conversion of the first Catholic Kongo king, Nguzu a Nkuwu (João I), in 1491 displays the struggle to articulate the sense of transformed identity. Even though Nkuwu went back to the Kongo's ancestral religion two years after his baptism, the novel event of his conversion and the conversion of the Kongo elite was interpreted as of divine origin. The narrative is suffused with dreams and visions, familiar means of receiving communication from the spiritual world in Catholic southern Europe and the Kongo. In the Kongo, however, a theological culture of understanding revelation as ongoing was dominant.

Generally, in the African Indigenous religious world, the theological insight of ongoing revelation assumes stronger valence. Communication with the spiritual world is fluid, making the borders of the divine and the human porous. Understandably, the narrative of the initial conversion to Catholicism in the Kongo was presented as outstanding. There was a *miraculous* confluence of two worlds, facilitated by the fusion of two revelatory economies. The Indigenous Kongo ancestral tradition effortlessly intermeshed with the received Christian tradition, Portuguese Catholicism. Preceding, leading to, and following the conversion of Nguzu a Nkuwu, the popular theological voice related that there had been a miraculous "appearance of the Virgin Mary to two court officials in dreams." The two nobles dreamed simultaneously of "a beautiful woman who beseeched the Kongo to follow Christianity."[50] Both nobles were baptized with Nkuwu. (Their baptismal names were recorded as Dom Jorge and Dom Diego.) Both were of the influential Kongo priestly Nsaku ne-Vunda clan. In the Kongo revelatory economy, the Nsaku ne-Vunda served as the interpreters of visions and communications from territorial (ancestral) deities that presided over matters of the fertility of the land or of the womb, success in hunting, and the like. It is therefore remarkable—providential—that it was revealed to these priestly officials that conversion to Christianity would make the Kongo invincible.[51]

The story of the miraculous conversion received further embellishment in the form of a spectacular discovery. After their baptism, one of the nobles, Dom Diego, discovered near his house a stone shaped like the cross carried by the Franciscan priests, "black and unlike any others in the country."[52] Anne Hilton notes that the man who discovered the "black stone which looked like a cross" and "who had been baptised with the king . . . was probably the *mani Vunda* (identifiable, again from later sources as the

paramount *kitome*, or priestly chief)." He was the "'*Summo Pontifice*' of the indigenous religious structures." This accords with Cuvelier's identification of the nobleman, Dom Diego, as of the Nsaku ne-Vunda clan. However, Hilton concludes derisively: "This [i.e., the discovery of the cross-shaped stone] was taken by the Europeans to be a miracle."[53] Cuvelier adds the important historical vignette that the stone-cross not only was carried in procession and placed in the king's chapel as a relic but also found a place within the new church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin on July 1, 1491. Later, during the attacks on and the vandalization of Mbanza Kongo and its church by the Jaga, the fleeing king, Álvaro I (Ndo Luvwalu I), did not forget to carry the stone-cross as a relic, along with other sacred objects, into Pemba. When the Jaga were driven out with the help of the Portuguese, the stone-cross was returned to the church. That eventually there developed little care for the stone-cross was the fault of the priests, not of the faithful, who still considered it a priceless relic.[54]

One should not underestimate the power of these miraculous events as co-revelations, the optimistic fusion of horizons in the story of the true conversion of the Kongo to Catholicism. The reification of Kongo Indigenous culture and religion as unchangeable interprets the narratives as providing a partial window onto the misunderstandings that underlaid communication between the Kongolese and Christian Europeans. On the contrary, I argue that the narratives open a theological window to appreciate conversion as translation or transformation. The "discovery of a cross-shaped stone" that happened "in a stream near Mbanza Kongo" prompted questions by the king, Nguzu a Nkuwu, and reveals the local exegesis of conversion.[55] The ready at hand Portuguese Franciscans, Fathers João and Antonio, interpreted the dreams and visions as revelatory: the "black stone-cross" was a miraculous object. Taken together, the "beautiful woman," interpreted as the Virgin Mary, and the "cross-shaped stone" generated a concatenation of "signs of grace and salvation." These "miracles and revelations" show that the Kongo was receiving a call from God to conversion. No surprise, then, that the stone-cross was "placed as a relic in Kongo's first church" dedicated to the Virgin Mary.[56]

Much later, in the seventeenth century, under the regime of Italian Capuchin Franciscans led by Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, a ferocious theological controversy arose around the cross. The Kongo cruciform cosmogram that was the key symbol of the *kimpasi* congregational initiation ceremony was pitted against the Catholic cross. Inexplicably—or predictably, following the purist logic of exclusivism—Cavazzi declared the cross

of *kimpasi* diabolical in origin: "The devil taught [the *kimpasi* initiates] that to entice new Christians . . . they should paint on their idols the venerable sign of the cross . . . so as to hide their pernicious sentiments and their sacrilegious impiety."[57]

From the intermeshing of worlds, Kongo and southern European, and their religious concepts or symbols, the narrative of the late fifteenth-century conversion of Nguzu a Nkuwu, members of the Kongo nobility, and the populace proves that Kongo Catholic Christians preferred an optimistic interpretation of their encounter with the other. From the perspective of the "hermeneutics of globality," current today in missiological investigations, one could claim that Kongo Catholics were ahead of their time. They were open to and aware of the dynamics of paradox and resilience, the mark of catholicity.[58] They were boldly giving a new account of themselves and their world in idioms that were Kongo and Catholic.

Kongo Conversion to Catholicism as Transformation: Turning the Already Existing to New Account

When one approaches the experience of conversion as the labor of translation, one cannot but applaud the interpretive ingenuity of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Kongo Catholics. Conversion, couched in the language of "dreams and visions" and described as the miraculous discovery of a cross-shaped stone, does not suggest the "substitution" or "replacement of something old by something new." Rather, it denotes "transformation." Kongo Catholics were turning "the already existing to new account."[59] This was facilitated by the Kongo religious interpretation of revelation as fluid and ongoing—a situation that is not limited to Africa but appears to thrive where Indigenous or folk religions flourish (as among the seventh-century Angli; see below). In the interpretation of revelation as fluid, the creative intermeshing of human-divine encounter could arise at the crossroads of new or unusual events in the life of the community. I adopt Thornton's proposal of the concept of co-revelation to appreciate the normalization of fluidity in revelation. This serves as an interpretive tool to evaluate the reception of Catholicism in the Kongo and Mbundu regions of west central Africa from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.[60]

West African poetic, anthropological, and philosophical reflection delights in relational fluidity dominated by twinness, duality, and multiplicity. Twinness is the organizational logic for thinking through the universe of human habitation and interrelationships. Life is fundamentally relational.

Peoples, traditions, and cultures, rather than being reified and immobile, are experienced as dynamic and open to change. Indeed, the encounter between peoples and traditions is the theater of "creative exchange."[61] The Igbo (Nigerian) wisdom tradition proclaims, "Ife kwulu ife akwudebe ya" (When something stands, something else will stand beside it). Change is the rule; absolutism is heresy.[62] Nigerian literary critic Charles Nnolim considers the study of the dynamics of change as Chinua Achebe's greatest contribution to the African novel. Achebe presents the Igbo universe as structurally flexible and relational. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu (shrine-priest of the deity Ulu), wedded to a moment, an isolated value, of Igbo tradition, misinterpreted the tradition. His clan/society rejected his exclusivism. They abandoned the deity Ulu and embraced the Christian church. Nnolim concludes, "The forces of change are the modern Fates, the Nemesis that must forcefully tame the stubborn individual."[63]

In fifteenth-century Kongo and after, the king, the elite, and the people responded creatively to the "forces of change." They surveyed the challenges and opportunities of the encounter with the Portuguese, evaluating it as a call to creative exchange. They embraced not only commerce, the exchange of new goods, but also Catholicism and literacy for the integral advancement of the Kongo. In processing the complex dynamics of their changing world, they were experiencing revelations received through dreams and visions, and, through ritual performance (conversion), the old was held to new account.

Kongo experienced co-revelations—the fluid intermeshing of the Indigenous Kongo and the Western Christian. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Kongo Catholicism was not "partially Christian." Only a blinkered view could lead one to interpret Kongo Catholicism as nothing short of tragicomic performance. To control "other worldly powers" that legitimated kingship and provincial leadership, supervised by the *kitome*, Hilton claims that "the *mani Kongo* and the ruling élite" embraced "the Christian cult in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries." Indeed, this anthropologist asserts that Kongo Catholics understood neither Christianity nor their Kongo traditions. Christianity and Kongo religion made an "imperfect fit." Therefore, only through the "fostering of misunderstandings of the two traditions [could] African parishioners . . . really communicate with Christian priests." Hilton (like Balandier) is a prisoner of her "anthropological" assumptions and her fixed cosmology.[64]

On the contrary, true conversion was operational in the Kongo. The new transformational event has "a beginning," but "we cannot presume to

posit an end."[65] Nguzu a Nkuwu, two years after baptism, returned to his ancestral religion. That was only the beginning! The eventual development, enmeshed within commerce, politics, and the struggle for succession to the Kongo throne, remained difficult to imagine. The seed sown, nevertheless, grew into three hundred years of Kongo Catholicism.

Skeptics, like Hilton, help us survey critically the trajectory of a dawn of modernity interwoven with Christianity and intimately connected with the experience of conversion. How does one understand the dynamics or interplay of religious conflict and conflicting ideas that lead to choices called conversion? How does one evaluate the struggle of antagonistic groups for political and economic dominance, enabled by Catholic fervor? Hilton's preferred "anthropological model whose relation to her material she is clearly not sure about" leaves her unconvinced of the reality of conversion.[66] To make sense of the narrative of the miraculous discovery of the stone-shaped cross, the "anthropological model" interprets its discovery through dreams from a fixed and immobile framework. Consequently, "the finding of the black stone located the baptisms and the white men within a spiritual dimension which was concerned with fertility and life and of which the *mani Vunda* was the principal representative." Her dependence on nineteenth- and twentieth-century schemes of anthropological interpretation frees Hilton from a Eurocentric view dependent on a Christian priestly reading of the events as miraculous or a case of divine intervention. As a result, Kongo was not really a Christian country. Rather, Hilton writes, "the finding of the stone thus confirmed the baptisms in terms of concepts that the Kongo already held, and also claimed the events for the *mani Vunda*, whose position was potentially threatened by the new developments."[67]

The conversation on conversion as change of affiliation—that is, becoming Catholic Christian, but with no change in beliefs—covers the wider area of west central Africa. But the conversion experience can be interpreted, in incarnational terms, with the fluid idiom of revelation or co-revelation, with no antagonism between two revelatory economies.

Other narratives from west central Africa strongly suggest the popularity of auguries preceding conversion and initiation (baptism). In the Ndongo kingdom, the uneasy neighbors of the Kongo, the narrative of the conversion of the ruling class was interwoven with auguries, dreams, and visions. First, Ndongo was a vassal of the Kongo.[68] The vassalage was ruptured through conflicts from 1556. (The title name of the Ndongo king, Ndongo a Ngola a Kiliwagu kia Samba, abbreviated as Ngola, later gave the name to the territory as Angola.) Ngola had a restive relationship with the

Mani Kongo. The Portuguese interest in using Ndongo as a colonial center made Portugal support rebellion against the Kongo while working to weaken Ndongo. At times Ndongo fought the Portuguese, at other times negotiating terms for peace.[69] From this background, one appreciates the story of the conversion of Queen Njinga (or Nzinga) of Ndongo, presaged by dreams, visions, and communication from the netherworld.

The intrepid Queen Njinga (1583–1663) displayed the complex dynamics of the elite choice of Catholicism, perhaps as a political maneuver. Joseph Miller claims that Njinga was the usurper of the Ndongo throne. However, Thornton, following Adriano Parreira and other historians, argues in favor of the controversial queen's legitimacy in the fluid but highly decentralized state of Ndongo. Njinga was so named because, according to Capuchin missionary Antonio Cavazzi, she was "born with the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck." She was born to rule! She was foreordained from birth "to have a proud and haughty character."[70] Njinga led Ndongo to numerous victories against the Portuguese. When Ndongo was weakened, perhaps by internal division and Portuguese aggression, Njinga sued for "peace." Through co-revelations, auguries, and divination by mediums, she received a convincing message to adopt Christianity. Each one of the three mediums approached by Njinga was possessed by a "different one of her ancestors." Each ancestor "urged her to accept Christianity, even though it meant that she would no longer follow the cult of the ancestors."[71] It is significant that one of those ancestors that spoke with her was her dead brother. This defiant, politically astute, and remarkable queen decided to return to Catholicism. She took a fancy to the Capuchin habit and adopted it as part of the symbols of royalty: "She was a striking figure." She "often wore the habit of a Capuchin monk in a show of piety—in fact she had received a special dispensation from the order permitting her to do this."[72]

In an interesting footnote, Hilton refers to the discovery of a cross presaging Njinga's conversion: "In the mid-seventeenth century Queen Nzinga was converted to Christianity after one of her nobles discovered a cross in Wandu."[73] Did Ndongo become a vassal of Portugal and then, in turn, become a Catholic kingdom? Beatrix Heintze argues that vassalage, as applied to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ndongo-Mbundu region, is a misnomer. Nevertheless, she admits that as the "treaties" between Portugal and the kingdoms "were dictated by the Portuguese," the "solemn conclusion of the treaty" was often "celebrated with the baptism of the vassal." This does not "seem to have been the rule," but "it was generally expected—and this became an obligation in the course of the seventeenth

century—, that the vassal accepted the Christian faith."[74] Was this "partial Christianity" (Hilton), Catholicism for political ends, or a process of conversion of which one cannot figure out the end (Walls)? What makes the Kongo different from Ndongo?

The Kongo theological interpretation of the event of their conversion, idealized in Mvemba a Nzinga, the apostle of the Kongo, argues for an incarnational Catholicism, a "transformation" that turned the old tradition to "new account." Dismissing over three centuries of consistent Christian life as mere syncretism or partial Christianity is succumbing to the blinkered Enlightenment representation of the *nègres* (Africans) as infrahuman, unfit for Christianization or civilization.

King Mvemba would dispute that his Catholicism was a pure "coating" of Portuguese practices onto an unchanging Kongo cosmology. Theologically, the dreams and the cross-shaped stone, connected with his father's decision to embrace Catholicism, were miracles. His deep evangelistic fervor led him to construct a church within the precincts of the Kongo ancestral tombs and to spread the Gospel message through literacy. Mvemba's evangelism was legendary. Cuvelier, writing in the colonial era, opened *L'ancien royaume de Congo* (1946) with a quote from Van Wing celebrating the undying fame of Mvemba ("Affonso"): "The memory of this chief, whose character equaled genius, remained alive within clans, no matter how distant from the ancient kingdom of the Congo."[75] The legend affected the narratives about the location of Jesus's birth and baptism and about Jesus's genealogy. In sum, his position as the beacon for the reinvention of Kongo Catholicism is incontestable. Regardless of whether he is acknowledged as a theologian, Mvemba stood at the crossroads of the novel and creative cultural, political, and religious relocation of the Kongo within the Catholic world. He "brought together and transformed local and foreign thought, materials, and images into the new worldview of Kongo Christianity."[76]

The prophetic fame of Mvemba, the one appointed "over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10), is constructed on three interconnected pillars that reinvented the Kongo kingdom—uprooting Indigenous religious practices, promoting Portuguese-style education, and constructing churches.[77] His unrestrained zealotry included a proverbial countercultural abomination: burying his own mother alive "for refusing to remove a small idol from her neck." This improves the mythical image of a king whose Christian zeal brooked no weakness—he did not bend to family allegiances. The mythological clan motto read: "Dom Afonso Mvemba Nzinga buried his

mother alive for the sake of the Savior King."[78] It functioned as part of the new foundation narrative of the kingdom. In Kongo, Portugal, and Rome, Mvemba was Defensor Fidei (the defender of the faith). Pope Paul III stated in his letter of May 5, 1535, that Afonso was "not only a good king, but a pastor of souls." He guided his people and neighboring kingdoms to conversion "by continuous exhortations" and "preachings." Paul III continued, "You are continually on guard [like a sentinel] to ensure the propagation of our holy religion in these regions through exhortation and warning; and where necessary using force on the other heathen kings [to change their religion]."[79] Mvemba was the typical medieval Catholic monarch, the quintessential embodiment of Kongo conversion, Kongo evangelicalism, and Kongo defense of the faith.

One can argue, following the evangelical theologian Kwame Bediako, that Kongo conversion is translation, not the replacement of the old by the new. It is turning the "already existing" to "new account." To maintain the "integrity of conversion," there must be the continuity of the "I" implicated in the conversion process "before" and "after" the experience of the original encounter.[80] Kongo Christian identity, theologically described as evolving through dreams and visions and presented as expanding the Christian perception of eschatology, as well as translating or developing new theological idioms, displays a wholesomeness that is caused neither by replacement nor by substitution of the old by something completely new. Rather, it involved the *transformation* of the converted. The converted Kongolese are not alienated but are radically connected to their Kongo ancestral past or historical tradition thanks to the genius of the Gospel.

The Kongo ancestral or historical past drawn into the Gospel is not understood in the limited sense of chronological history but in the deeper sense of ontological history, that is, the past that is deeply rooted or embedded in the very being of the Kongolese. In nonevangelical style, Bediako affirms the perduring value of Africa's past. The converted and transformed Kongolese, the embodiment of living tradition in a challenging and ever-changing history, are Kongo and Christian, a fusion of the old and the new, transforming both the old and the new. Converts, deeply connected to the ancestral tradition, have become other in the struggle to receive and proclaim the Gospel. This incarnate Word (John 1:14), the God translated, is no stranger to the Kongo heritage. The experience of faith endows Africans with an "adoptive" past in the incarnate Jesus, the savior of all people. Translated and proclaimed, the Word is ever transforming the context. This incarnational interpretation follows in the footsteps of Justin Martyr, Tatian,

Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Like the Patristic predecessors, we "make the biblical assumption that Jesus Christ is not a stranger to our heritage, starting from the universality of Jesus Christ rather than from his particularity as a Jew, and affirming that the Incarnation was the incarnation of the Saviour of all people, of all nations and of all times."[81]

In the fluid Kongo world of religious thought, open to the experience of ongoing revelation at the crossroads of life, under no restrictive supervision of clerical orthodoxy, revealed traditions are periodically required to prove their relevance. The local reception, interpretation, or translation of the Word-Gospel confirms the truth and universality of Christianity.[82]

The most visible theater for the transformation of the Kongo space, bringing the already existing to new account, was the location of the place of gathering "in unanimity" (*epi to auto*; *ekklesia*; 1 Cor. 11:18, 14:23). What happened at the place of gathering in unanimity is doubly significant for theological-ecclesiological reflection because the site, the place of gathering, was the usual location of ancestral tombs, the epicenter of the performance of the cult of the ancestors. The radical assimilation, integration, translation, or transformation of the tomb-*ekklesia* through the performance of the memory of the Dead-Risen Jesus (Ancestor of Ancestors) displayed the contextualization or development of Kongo and Catholic eschatological imaginings. The liturgical drama of the celebration of the Holy Souls (All Souls' Day) would assume added significance as worship became a living symbolic eschatological drama.

Where Do You Gather? Churches and Crosses in the Legitimation of Kongo Catholicism

Kongo Christianity was, as Augustine argued in the fifth century, a creative reinvention of the faith that confirmed the prophetic words of the psalmist, "*All the nations whom you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord*" (Ps. 86:9). Kongo Catholicism confirms Augustine's definition of catholicity: "For they will not come by migrating from their own places but by believing in their own places."[83]

From the time Mvemba and the Kongo elite embraced Catholicism and adopted it as the state religion, there resulted an intimate fusion of Kongo and Western Christian horizons. As "Christianity entered into the political, social, and religious realm of the Kingdom of the Kongo at the demand of its own rulers,"[84] the elite grappled with the implications of "believing in their own places." There was a correlation of symbols of two worlds, two

civilizations. Fluid mythological assumptions were mutually and respectfully influencing one another. First and foremost, like Tatian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, or even Tertullian, Kongo Catholics had to grope through the ancestral heritage that constructed them as humans made up of body-soul-spirit, the ontological history that defined them. No surprise that a prominent church, Nossa Senhora da Vitória, was sited within the sacred ancestral enclosure, the cemetery.

First, one must note the theological argumentation of the evangelistic emperor-theologian Mvemba. In 1526, he wrote to his brother king (João III of Portugal) about where they "come together," the location of their place of gathering "in unanimity" (*epi to auto*). Their church, the Church of Our Lady of Victory, was located "in a very thick forest, where in the past the Kings were buried, according to their ancient idolatry."[85] No one should underestimate the language game. "Ancient idolatry" is the new interpretation of the old by the emperor-theologian. The location of the church in the ancient cemetery honors the ancestors in a transformed way. This singular and successful appropriation of the most sacred royal sanctuary was a performative architectonic ritual, one that illustrated the successful fusion of horizons. The Christianity embraced by Mvemba, and the Kongo, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries transformed but at the same time was declared legitimate by the past ancestral line of kings. (The dreams, the co-revelations, were indicators of evolving theological interpretations.) No other transformative symbolism could capture the challenges vis-à-vis the Indigenous religion-defined Kongo kingdom and southern European Catholicism as this performance.

Is this a change of affiliation (from Indigenous religion to Catholicism) without a change of conviction (embeddedness in unchanging Indigenous religion)? I think not. There is a transformation at play, a turning of the already existing to new account. But its future remained unpredictable.[86] I do not think it is a non-Catholic ("non-Christian" or "pagan") performance. On the contrary, it is very Catholic. Hilton's narrative supports this, despite her cynicism: "The church which Afonso built on the site of the ancient royal cemetery was, in addition to its 'Christian' name, called *mbila*, meaning tomb."[87] This is the Catholic way. From Saint Peter's shrine and basilica in Rome to Gregory the Great's and Augustine of Canterbury's transformation of tombs into churches for Anglo-Saxon Catholics in the early seventh century, one encounters the dominant Catholic theology of accommodation. Mvemba's action is comparable to the genius of Cyprian of Carthage in constructing, transmitting, and relocating the Catholic (North African)

church order within the perspective of his Romano-Carthaginian religious ideology and legal-constitutional formation. In Carthago Nova, as in Rome and the colonies obsessed with the security of the empire, says Allen Brent, "political order consisted in the exercise of legitimate authority [*imperium*] within a space that had been sacralized, and therefore under the control of the gods, who willed order and therefore peace (*pax*)." Despite Cyprian's repudiation of his Romano-African religious past, just like Mvemba's over a millennium later, this past informed Cyprian's interpretation of "the bishop's chair (*cathedra*) as a proconsul's *sella curulis* that symbolized his jurisdiction over the *prouincia*." The bishop was duly elected, duly confirmed by God/Christ through visions, and supported by the vote of the laity and the college of neighboring bishops. The province, thus sacralized, became for Cyprian "the legitimate, bounded territory of a bishop's diocese."[88]

Mvemba, for his part, ordered the transformation "of the *ambiro* into a Christian Church" in pursuit of the "Kongo Christian reorganization of the kingdom."[89] He was demonstrating the victory of Pentecost, that is, of the principle of universal openness of Christianity to cultural adaptation and transformation, what Adolphe Gesché calls the genius of Catholicism. Catholicism successfully exercises mastery over the Jonah complex, the exclusivism and the purism that generate sterility. Philippe Laburthe-Torla masterfully discusses the intimate connection between anthropology and missiology based on the Pentecost principle that, in anthropological terms, is "participant observation." Though his examples of the scientific approach to mission focus on Jean de Brébeuf (1587–1649), the seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary to the Huron Indians of Canada, and Alexandre Le Roy (1854–1936), the nineteenth-century Spiritan missionary to eastern and central Africa, the narrative of their embrace of Pentecost helps one draw conclusions on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Kongo Catholicism. Jean de Brébeuf, a martyr, was so immersed in the Huron religious and military imaginary that the Iroquois executioner treated the missionary with extraordinary honor, as any other captured Huron warrior would be treated. De Brébeuf stoically bore his tortures unto death. He continued preaching the Gospel until his tongue was cut. On the other hand, Alexandre Le Roy, an eminent preacher, botanist, entomologist, and anthropologist, immersed himself not only in the fauna and fora of eastern Africa but also in the life of the peoples he encountered to the point of concluding a blood-brotherhood ritual with the king of Kilema to explicitly convince his African interlocutor(s) of his unflinching transparency. Both de Brébeuf and Le

Roy embodied the Pentecost principle that parallels what anthropologists aspire to call "participant observation."[90]

In sixteenth-century Kongo, the initial decision to site a prominent church, Nossa Senhora da Vitória, within the precincts of the ancestral burial enclosure at the capital, Mbanza Kongo, was an inspired spatial location of the challenging "new" within the already known "old." It was a concise theological statement of a transformed Kongo Christian identity. "The elite burial ground turned Christian space," Fromont observes, "brought the ancestors within the bounds of the new religion; simultaneously it endowed the newly built church with the venerable presence of the current elite's mighty predecessors, for whom rich and elaborate tombs enhanced with precious ivories and textiles had once been constructed." The fusion is felicitous: "The presence of prestigious ancestors lent to the churches the aura of potency that burial grounds possessed in central Africa outside Christian contexts while channeling the invisible potency of the deceased into the frame of Catholic practices."[91]

This integration of a Kongo world of meaning into Catholicism, this elite ritual-theological performance, sounds too good to be true. Where are the discordant voices? Was there no "conservative" Senator Symmachus in the Kongo to contest the power of the "reformists" or "modernists" in defense of due process in the king's coronation and the legitimation of power in the kingdom?[92]

Mvemba won the throne not by the democratic process (the vote of the provincial electors, Mani Vunda, Mani Mbata, and Mani Soyo) but by the sword (leading to Kabwita's disaffection with the hero, calling him an usurper). But his victory, like the initial conversion of his father, was interpreted symbolically as of divine origin. His army of the few was ranged against the stronger army of his more legitimate brother, Mpanzu Nzinga. Mvemba's army invoked Santiago (Saint James the Major). Presto, Saint James intervened—"appearing with a cross" and "with one or more horsemen dressed in white." It was a miraculous victory. Hilton disputes the miracle: "The horsemen may have been Portuguese riding one or more of the horses that had been sent to Kongo with the 1491 mission and they may have had firearms." However, in his own handwriting, Mvemba reported that on interrogation, the defeated soldiers, fighting on the side of his brother, confirmed that "when we [Mvemba's army] called upon the Apostle Santiago, they [the enemy] all saw a white cross in the sky and a great number of armored horsemen which so frightened them that they could think of

nothing else but to flee."[93] There can be little surprise, then, that July 25, the Feast of Saint James, became a national holiday. This scales the first hurdle of theological interpretation-legitimation.

Second, the symbol of the cross loomed large in the Catholic Kongo socioreligious space. One of the pillars of Christianization, and the visible sign of Catholicism in the Kongo, was the widespread construction of churches and the ubiquitous presence of a huge cross (Santa Cruz).[94] (Though one must note that the Kikongo term *iquetequêlo,* which means "fork," was abandoned in favor of the Portuguese *cruz.*) The powerful statement of the cross as a theological symbol is captured by Adrian Hastings. If the Kongo lacked the frequent presence of priests in villages and consequently lacked frequent eucharists, "it had its Santa Cruz" as a sign of its Catholicism. Santa Cruz was "the Christian symbol standing in the middle of the village in place of the fetish which had been torn down."[95] What Hastings derogatively calls "fetishes" (*nkisi*) were sacred objects with power in Kongo Indigenous religion. These were replaced by the Christian Santa Cruz and other Catholic sacred objects, also called *nkisi* in the Kikongo Catholic theological vocabulary.

How did Mvemba overcome the opposition of Indigenous religious leaders (the conservative "traditionalists") in the appropriation, integration, and transformation of the most sacred space, the cemetery, into a church? Were the leaders also converted? One does not hear about conflicts with these *nganga* or *kitome* in the literature of the sixteenth-century Kongo, notes Hilton. However, with the arrival of the Italian (or Spanish) Capuchins in 1645, the literature was flooded with confrontations between the missionaries and the *nganga* and *kitome*. It appears that throughout the sixteenth century, Mvemba and his successors—supported by the early Franciscans (third order), other religious, diocesan clergy, and the Jesuits—adopted a gradualist, nonconfrontational approach to church-becoming. This allowed a seamless transformation in Catholic Kongo spatial and ritual design. The impact on eschatological reinvention and performance was remarkable.

However, by the seventeenth century, under Capuchin supervision, the excitement for integration appeared to have waned and had even turned into confrontation. Then, an aggressive Capuchin theology of replacement started challenging the theology of transformation. Hilton provides a summary of the storm that followed the arrival of Italian Franciscan friars sponsored directly by the Propaganda Fide. They were "Italian" (though, in the early missions, "Spanish") Capuchins. As a result of their being directly

under the supervision of the Propaganda Fide, "they were more detached than the Jesuits or the diocesan priests from the political and cultural milieu of Portuguese Angola, as well as of Kongo." It is interesting that for Hilton, their missionary notes, letters, and vignettes directed toward a European readership constituted the most reliable Kongo religious historical sources of the time.[96] From the perspective of anthropological and missiological participant observation, the Capuchins were distant from the cultures and the people, evaluating Kongo Catholicism as littered with "pagan abuses" and "corruptions." Nonetheless, the Catholic faith was not endangered. As Cavazzi insisted, "the impossibility to change some of the 'corruptions' did not overly matter since they did 'not prejudice the essence of the Religion [Catholicism].'"[97]

But how did Mvemba gain the confidence of, overcome, or convince the great men of the Kongo, the kingmakers, to endorse his political ecclesiology and expansion of eschatology?

Mvemba had anticipated strong opposition to placing Nossa Senhora da Vitoria in the *mbila* (cemetery, tomb, Holy of Holies). The cemetery was a thick forest. The clearing and construction were a communal affair: "We cut and broke it entirely, which was a difficult task, not only because of the roughness of the place, but also because We doubted that the great [men] of our kingdom would consent to it."[98] Fromont does not address the challenge of the "great [men] of our kingdom." These were not only the electors but the *nganga* and *kitome*, who presided over the shrines of territorial deities, ritually validated the coronation of kings, and confirmed the legitimacy of the provincial princes and local chiefs. They served the territorial or provincial deities, *nkisi nsi*, supervised the installation of kings and princes, and transmitted or handed on the sacred cap of office (*mpu* and/or *ngunda*) to bring the newly installed close to the divine, thus certifying them as governing with divine authority. It was the normal and required practice that "a kitome, or a specialized priest whose field of mediation included territorial deities," supervised the installation. They had far-reaching powers, says Thornton: "In seventeenth-century Kongo there were many *itome* [*sic*], and one of their functions was to sacralize the political elite. Unless the rulers and *kitome* performed a ceremony representing the conquest of the region, they [the conquering kings] could not expect to receive any tribute or obedience."[99]

The ritual legitimation of Mvemba becomes critical; it is of liturgical theological interest. Was his installation after the miraculous victory over his brother (thanks to Santiago and Santa Cruz) legitimized by the *kitome*

or by Catholic priests? And did attention shift from the *kitome* to the Catholic priests following Mvemba's installation?

In "Insignia of the Divine Authority," Zdenka Volavka states that the recognition of the Kongo king or the provincial princes was not a simple affair. In the time of Mvemba, "the kings of Mbanza Kongo (San Salvador) had to seek the approval of the *nkisi nsi* [territorial or provincial deities] to undergo, literally or symbolically, direct contact with the copper *ngunda* [sacred cap], the source of divine authority." However, with the transition from Indigenous religion to Christianity, historical indications suggest that Christian kings wanted to evade the control of the powerful priests of the territorial deities, recognized as elders before the kings; they possessed the ability to transfer royal or princely power. Starting with Mvemba (perhaps in 1514), Christian kings "tried to destroy Ngoyo where the shrine was located and seize the divine regalia." They were probably unsuccessful: "The shrine with the insignia was kept in utmost secrecy by the priests for its protection."[100]

An interesting historical note from Cuvelier helps resolve the riddle of Mvemba's legitimation. At the foundation of the Kongo kingdom, "the religious head was Nsaku ne Vunda." However, "at the battle of Mbanza Kongo [between Mvemba and Mpanzu, his brother] ne Vunda was among the adversaries of D. Affonso [Mvemba]." Then follows the most important and astonishing historical note: the same ne Vunda who opposed Mvemba during the war of succession "converted and was named Pedro"! Having taken note of the conversion of ne Vunda, Cuvelier turns to the imperative need of legitimization: "Probably, it was he [Pedro], as Nsaku ne Vunda who then accorded official recognition to D. Affonso as king. The recognition by Nsaku ne Vunda was always regarded as indispensable." Then the coup de grace—explaining the transformation, integration, assimilation, and legitimation of the "new" (Catholicism) by the "old" (ancestral religion)! It was Dom Pedro and the Nsaku family who took charge of the construction of the churches (including Nossa Senhora da Vitória). The Indigenous priests, charged with the care and worship of the land and the territorial or provincial shrines (*nganga kitome*), made common cause with Mvemba and converted to Catholicism. From the seventeenth-century historical sources, one concludes that "the descendants of Nsaku ne Vunda, the religious head during the period of paganism, played the role of ministers of the cult after the introduction of Christianity."[101]

This is an amazing religious and political coup that resulted in the complex but real integration of the country, the holy places, and the Indigenous

priestly clan within Catholicism. Of major historical interest is the fact that the noble who found the cross-shaped black stone beside his house, the stone-cross that later found a choice place in the first church of Our Lady (at the conversion of Mvemba's father), was indeed later identified as the *mani Vunda*, the paramount *kitome*, or priestly chief.[102] This intimate fusion of the priests of territorial or provincial deities with Catholicism obviates the normal hostility of *nganga* and of their conflict or competition with the missionaries in changing religious situations. J. D. Y. Peel, writing in the twentieth century from the Yoruba location, highlights how natural it is for conflict to explode between the religious leaders of Indigenous religion and Christianity. The specialty of the *nganga* (Bantu) or *babalawo* (Yoruba) "was interpretation."[103] As interpreters or theologians, as bearers of wisdom, competitors, or interlocutors, they clarify the judgment of the religion and its impact on the kingdom, on the people, and on kingship in the Kongo. Not only were they converted but they were also charged with the construction of the numerous places of gathering in "unanimity" (*epi to auto*; *ekklesia*). It is not fanciful to recall the similarities or continuities with church-becoming in Carthage: the Indigenous religious, cultural, and metaphysical foundations of Roman Carthage (Carthago Nova) informed and were transformed in the ecclesiology of Cyprian of Carthage. In the Romano-Carthaginian performance, "the political order consisted in the exercise of legitimate authority *within a space that had been sacralized*, and therefore under the control of the gods, who willed order and therefore peace."[104] The transformation of "pagan" presuppositions into a Christian understanding of authority in the state and the Church of Saint Cyprian of Carthage was replayed in the transformation of *nganga kitome* (the ne-Vunda clan) within Kongo Catholicism.

The popular theological appropriation of the new Catholic order logically developed not only through the churches constructed within the entombments, or ancestral locations, with the giant Santa Cruz testifying. It flowed into the commemoration and the cult of the dead, fusing and expanding eschatological imaginings.

The fury of the confrontation between Capuchin-style Catholicism and Kongo cosmological imagination was all over the literature of the seventeenth century. One wonders that the conflict with *nganga*, with the chiefly priestly *kitome*, was not in the literature of the fifteenth or sixteenth century but sharpened in the seventeenth century. Was the Catholic revolution of Mvemba so strong as to have suppressed the *nganga* or reduced their influence? Was the nobility hiding their "corruptions" or "pagan practices"

from the pastors and missionaries, as Hilton believes? She surprisingly admits, "Whilst the kings concealed from the Europeans the complexi-
62 ties of Kongo Christianity, they appear to have been sincere in their faith." For example, King Garcia II (Nkanga a Lukeni, r. 1641–61), reacting to the Dutch (Protestants') seizure and occupation of Portuguese Luanda, would not accept the Dutch ambassador's letter of credence. He refused audience to the Dutch ministers despite his quarrel with Portugal. His reasons were clear: "I belong to the Catholic religion and I have put myself under obedience to the Holy Father, Vicar [*stadhouder*] of God. The wickedness of the Portuguese, founded on ambition, is not sufficient to make me abandon the Catholic faith or to chase the priests from my country and from the kingdom of Angola."[105]

This separation of political and territorial ambitions from the faith, which is nevertheless politically rooted, testifies to the truth of Kongo Catholicism. King Garcia II, in rejecting the Protestants (who were friendly), displayed a controversial performance of Catholic apologetics: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15).

The confrontations with the Capuchins, frequent in the seventeenth century, were a function of ritual and popular theological interpretations of the same faith. At times the rulers, or the ubiquitous interpreters, sided with the Capuchins against the prevailing popular religion. But the "corruptions," the hard-line Cavazzi reported, did not harm the religion (Catholicism). Cavazzi's contemporary, Girolamo da Montesarchio, was more intolerant. He fought popular practices and was opposed to Christians' possessing ritual keepsakes that he theologically interpreted as "idols." On a pastoral visitation in 1648, he arrived in a certain village where he burned "idols." There was outrage. Montesarchio was assaulted. However, the devoted interpreter accompanying him "came to his defense." There was division among the people. "This provoked a large rally," wrote the keenly observant Montesarchio. "Some [of the people] took sides with the interpreter, others against him. This provoked a rowdy fight. I did not interfere and all ended with a return to normal."[106]

The confrontation around ancestral veneration, the sacred rites surrounding the dead, was more complex and controversial. It represented a limit situation that led to a new understanding or reinvention of the cult of and devotion to the dead (the princely dead, but also the generality of the dead). The ancestral resting places, the cemeteries, which were transformed into or located in immediate proximity to churches, highlighted

challenging eschatological concepts. The confrontations, disputations, and theological realignments gave a new sense to the celebration of All Souls' Day.

First, the Capuchins of the mid-seventeenth century abandoned the compromises and collaboration dominant in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the question of correct funeral rites, the conflict of interpretation and disagreement led to violent confrontations. During the mid-seventeenth century (i.e., soon after the arrival of the Capuchins), the inimitable Cavazzi was on pastoral visitation in Soyo. It was reported that the king of Soyo (i.e., the prince-governor) had to place guards over the church cemetery to prevent the removal and reburial of the dead. Though Cavazzi acknowledged that what he called "pagan abuses," or "corruptions," did not harm the Catholic faith, he was not prepared to compromise on the burial rites. The battle line was drawn between the intolerant, purist, and exclusivist Franciscan and the *nganga*, priests of Indigenous Kongo religion with supervisory power over the community. Gray writes, "The hostile nganga represented the other extreme of the religious spectrum in Soyo. When Cavazzi visited the area in 1663 he found that there was still determined resistance against the Christian ruler and his wife. A church had been burned in Soyo, a hostile charm had been placed against the ruler's wife and guards were mounted in the churches to prevent 'some superstitious Christians' from digging up and transporting corpses 'into the bush to the graves of their ancestors.'"[107]

While we do not have clarity on why people were removing corpses from the church cemetery to another ancestral burial ground in Soyo, one could surmise that the *nganga kitome*, whose specialty was "interpretation" and who supervised the cult of territorial deities that protected the land, assuring rich harvests and fruitfulness of the womb, made the people understand that inadequate honor to the ancestors was detrimental to the overall welfare of the territory. Cavazzi's theological method, purism, and ritual exclusivism failed to convince some of the Catholics.

The situation took a dramatically opposite turn twenty-five years later, when Fra Andrea da Pavia (who had replaced Cavazzi) was visiting the same province in 1688. Compromise had been reached through theological and ritual negotiations in the Soyo Catholic community, but da Pavia was more inclusivist, too. The ritual performance was the proof.

> Fra Andrea da Pavia reported how, after his arrival in Soyo in 1688, he went to bed as usual on the eve of All Souls but was roused

> almost immediately by many people singing at the top of their voices. Informed by the mission's slaves that this was merely the normal devotions for the dead, he joined the torch-lit processions which visited the churches in the town and also the cemeteries where the graves were illuminated by many candles. "Everyone was chanting prayers in their language," and Fra Andrea went on to assist them with great enthusiasm. Two hours before daybreak he sounded the church bells, sang the office, celebrated Mass and then led out another procession to the graves where he intoned the responses for the dead. The whole night passed in this manner for sleep was quite impossible. The next day, when all the ceremonies had finished, everyone came with their baskets "each offering alms for the dead," so that the mission distributed ten tons of fruit and other gifts.[108]

As popular performance, Gray calls the Soyo Catholic theology "folk rituals." Rituals, nevertheless, reveal "values at their deepest level."[109] The performance was a display of the interplay between the rule of prayer-life and the rule of faith. (The *lex orandi* is prior.) The vignette points to clear development in theological reflection in the Kongo, as is normal in narratives of the reception of Christianity. In this case, the fusion of the Kongo eschatological imagination with received Western Christian eschatology reinvented the Christian funerary ritology. Gray's comment on "alms for the dead" makes an important point: "The sacrifices for the ancestors had become alms for the church's poor; yet, it will be recalled, at the time of Cavazzi's visit only a generation earlier the ruler of Soyo had had to place guards to prevent the re-burial of Christians in ancestral cemeteries."[110]

The Soyo performance calls for further reflection to make the connection between the primacy of ritual in the development of eschatology. Bringing "food offerings and drinks to the tombs" and providing "alms for the dead" capture eschatological performances that straddle Carthage, Milan, and Soyo-Kongo.

Christian liturgical traditions, Eastern and Western, attentive to the gestural ritual encodings of particular peoples, testify to the gradual understanding of "conversion" as "transformation" rather than as the "replacement" of the old by the new. In the development of its eschatological practices, the Christian liturgical performance transformed Jewish and Greco-Roman practices. The imposition of Patristic rationality was gradual, leading to the transformed practices being normalized. For example, Augustine of Hippo, recounting the situation in North Africa and northern Italy

in the fourth and fifth centuries, shows that the transformation of ancestral funerary practices was a struggle. His narrative in *Confessions* (book 6) provides a window onto North African and Italian funerary customs, particularly the practice of bringing food offerings and drinks to the tombs. This practice appeared to have been forbidden in Milan by Ambrose. Augustine's mother, Monica, loved to listen to Ambrose of Milan: "She revered that man as an angel of God." Augustine continued, "In Africa she has been accustomed to make offerings of pottage, bread and wine at the tombs of the martyrs. When she attempted to do the same here, she was prevented by the doorkeeper; but as soon as she learned that it was the bishop who had forbidden the practice she complied in so devoted and obedient a spirit that I marveled at the attitude she had so readily adopted: criticizing her own custom rather than sitting in judgment on his prohibition."[111]

One could borrow a leaf from the bishop of Hippo to reexamine the Kongo "folk rituals" that, through a labor of theological interpretation, have gained "a new significance" apparent to observers (historians, anthropologists, and theologians). The folk rituals, and the new theological interpretation, transformed the memory of ancestors into Christian memorial: "The ancestors, for instance, were beginning to be seen as synonymous with the holy souls of Catholic tradition."[112] Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu criticizes the funerary practices of Ghanaians and modern West Africans as intolerable. These Christians uncritically accept "foreign ideas," he writes, and they add "Christian practices regarding the mourning of the dead . . . to traditional ones, thus compounding the extravagance of the funeral process where that tendency exists."[113] Was Kongo better?

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Kongo reinventions were perhaps more creative theologically, if not more extravagant, than contemporary celebrations in West Africa. The feeding of the ancestors (or the feeding of the populace through the ancestors) was lavish: the "mission distributed ten tons of fruit and other gifts." This Soyo-Kongo theological creativity rejoined Patristic North Africa in its deliberate choice of the gradual Christianization of funerary celebrations. The all-night vigil and "alms for the dead" are cousins with the North African transformation of the "funerary banquets." Not only were meals shared, as Augustine testified, but the North African banquets were transformed into charity to the poor, as happened in seventeenth-century Catholic Kongo.

Furthermore, there was the North African and Italian materialistic practice of giving communion to the corpse, the sacrament of transition en route to paradise (*viaticum*), which later transformed into the celebration

of the Eucharist during funerals.[114] Patristic wisdom and theological insight Christianized Indigenous North African and Italian eschatological performance. "Gradually," says Robin Jensen, "the tradition of eating a meal with the dead was also transformed into the practice of celebrating a eucharist at an 'ordinary' funeral. First at the tomb, then at the altar, the church family gathered to hear the tales of heroism and to eat a meal—celebrating the lives of their spiritual as well as blood ancestors." This was not limited to memorializing the martyrs; it expanded to memorializing provincial bishops and, gradually, to all Christian dead.[115] If the Kongo Catholics visited the cemetery frequently and called their church *ambiro* (tomb), they were following the Catholic way. They were memorializing their ancestors as Patristic Christianity did. They were not in error; rather, the *sensus fidelium* was in operation.

In his exploration of the complexities of medieval Catholicism and the principles of Scholastic theology, Adolphe Gesché indexes the genius of Catholicism: the power to integrate the "pagan-ness" of all cultures within the performance and interpretation of the Catholic faith. This was not only good for the Kongo kingdom and church or for world Catholicism. Their performance preserved the goodness of the ancestral practices for the good of all humanity, a convincing display of the genius of the new faith.[116]

The bold Cavazzi certainly did not consider these ritological and ecclesiological-eschatological reinventions good for Catholicism. Rather, they were considered simply a practical matter of toleration. Grumbling, the Capuchin missionary reported that accommodation was imperative, "it being impossible to reform this corruption." Therefore, it was necessary for the Catholic clergy to look the other way while ancestral tombs were honored and ancestral veneration kept alive within the same Catholic church (community, building, cemetery). By insinuating that this was allowed "so as not to prejudice the essentials of the Christian religion," Cavazzi only begs the question. What is more essential to Christianity than the "salvation" of the baptized? There is little doubt that this merging of horizons (Indigenous Kongo and received southern European Catholicism) created an eschatological symphony. Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, All Saints, All Souls, ancestral tombs, and the cult of the ancestors intertwined to display Catholicism. Thornton is on target: "the priests [and Kongo Catholics] had made attempts to integrate the Kongolese understanding of the ancestors into Christian holidays, like All Souls' Day, or to the worship of Mary on Saturdays."[117]

The compromise is not in conflict with the patterns set out by the Franciscans in *Missione in Pratica*, their rulebook for their mission in the Kongo.

Bernardino d'Asti was insistent on the "Kongo Customs that Are Indifferent and that the Missionary Must Tolerate." Though d'Asti ridiculed some of the customs, he made a clear distinction between the customs and the "ability of the people to embrace the 'Holy Faith.'" Cavazzi expressed a similar opinion: "the impossibility to change some of the 'corruptions' did not overly matter since they did 'not prejudice the essence of the Religion.'" Fromont notes the partial though positive assessment of Kongo Catholicism by the "generally pessimistic Cavazzi": "After all, Congolese Christianity even if it had not abandoned entirely the vain rites and heathenry (being impossible to reform these corruptions, that do not prejudice the essence of the Religion) merit the praise of very pious and zealous with regards to its dead."[118]

Unarguably, our sources agree—and theologians admit—the Kongo was following the Catholic way. Kongo Catholicism presents a major point of arrival in the "translation" of "the message," a theological creativity that calls to mind Justin Martyr and Gregory the Great.

Eschatological performance is the most sensitive area of religious ritual action. Collective memory, embodied in gestural ritual performances, eternalizes the performance of the performed, eternalizes the encoded bodily motions repeated in the triphase, action-loaded motions of human groups. This is described by Marcel Jousse as *l'agent agissant l'agi* (the agent acting the acted), the *mimesis* of the group's eternalized and internalized sense of the world.[119] The challenging face-to-face encounter, through forceful or violent conquest and enslavement or through peaceful incorporation, ever yields the mimetic dynamics of performance at all levels of transformation.[120] *Memory* "is the reactivation of gestures previously internalized, shaped, played in us with the cooperation of our body."[121] The Kongo Christian theology, carved in the collective memory of the Kongo body, merged the Kongo eschatological imagination with the reception of Christianity. It has a beginning; the end is not self-evident. It took centuries to mature, not without opposition.

Approaches to Developing Kongo Performative Theological Language

The participation of the rank and file, unavoidable in funerary rites, is the prime location of the confluence of faith beliefs, cosmologies, and memories. The distinctiveness of the social pecking order, scrupulously accounted for in funerals, puts a folk theological stamp on the rituals.[122] The theological stamp

assumed a larger-than-life profile because in sixteenth-century Kongo, the place of assembling in unanimity (*epi to auto*; *ekklesia*) was or could also be *mbila* (the cemetery). This not only prolongs the memory of the first Kongo Christians, who were the theological innovators and the architects molding the blocks of the cathedral of San Salvador. It also confirms the logic of ethnographic continuity. The ancestral memorial, the theological discussions within the liturgical performance (*theologia prima*), confirms the rootedness of Catholicism. The relevance of this continuity is not lost on contemporary Congo. The first legally approved post–Vatican II Catholic Eucharistic liturgy, of the Roman rite, was from the Congo: the *Roman Missal for the Use of the Dioceses of Zaire*, the Zairian Rite (1988). Memorializing the ancestors, the opening invocation calls upon Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles, Evangelists, All the Saints, and concludes with "you, our ancestors, pure of heart."[123]

This continuity of the Zairian liturgical theological innovation with sixteenth-century Kongo eschatological imaginings is not unique. It could be compared to the innovations of the fourth-century Clementine Liturgy (in the eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions), the only liturgical tradition of the Syrian type that memorializes, by name and within the eucharistic prayer, the Hebrew ancestors, from Adam to Joshua. While the liturgy of the Apostolic Constitutions was dependent on the synagogue Seder Avodah of Yom Kippur,[124] the explicit invocation of the ancestors in Zaire/Congo was dependent on Kongo eschatological memorial (of *longue durée* and therefore corporate). This memorial was already integrated within the physical design and construction of the place of gathering. Prolonged in the visits to cemeteries, it was crowned with the contextualized celebration of All Souls' Day.

Congo liturgical theologian François Kabasele Lumbala pictures his Bantu ancestors as carrying him all the time "as a tree carries its branches." He does not need to memorialize them through Christianization. Yet he highly commends their invocation in some regional versions of the *Roman Missal for the Use of the Dioceses of Zaire* that address the ancestors directly in the following or similar words: "See, Jesus, Son of God, is come to our home, and we received him! He made our life increase; the life in which you are ever present! So, be with us now that we celebrate this event [Eucharist]."[125]

I consider the theological art of bringing the already existing to new account in the liturgical performance of Kongo Christians, guided by Mvemba, more creative than the adaptations in the Zairian *Roman Missal*.

It was trailblazing for the Kongo and modern African Christianity! Cameroonian theologian Jean-Marc Ela justifiably asked, "Can we exclude the old sages of Africa from those in the world below, to whom the resurrected Jesus announced the good news of salvation (I Peter 3:19–20)?" Could the "old sages" not be counted Christians "according to the Word" (the Logos of Justin) as well as Christians "beyond the Word," saturated by the embedding Holy Spirit?[126]

Compared with the Jewish ancestral commemoration (*anamnesis*) in the Seder Avodah of Yom Kippur, the Kongo memorialization is less explicit. But corporate ancestors are impactful in the Kongo. They could transform into territorial deities that protected the land whose shrines (*nkisi nsi*) dotted the horizon. The Jewish *anamnesis*, dependent on the "Hymn in Honor of Our Ancestors" of the book of Sirach 44:1–15, begins with a panegyric of the High Priest and moves to the explicit naming of the ancestors.[127] The eucharistic prayer of the eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions copied the memorial of the synagogue service of Yom Kippur, remodeling traditional Eucharistic material "with hardly believable daring." It displayed "the most sumptuous rhetorical orchestration of the traditional themes."[128]

The performance of the sixteenth-century Kongo church, a collaboration between Mvemba, the Franciscan missionaries, and the fledgling Catholic community, was daring. The responsibility for the theological reinvention includes members of other religious congregations and the diocesan clergy. It is not clear what contribution Henrique (Mvemba's son), the first and only Kongolese bishop, made. The list of the sages and theologians must include the Indigenous religious leaders, the *kitome*, who had converted, serving the new faith and energizing the transformation of Kongo and its socioreligious construction of reality. The operation constituted a remodeling of the theological-liturgical material. The presence of the gigantic cross in front of the church, and in many village squares, proclaimed the Crucified-Risen Jesus as Savior-Ancestor of the Kongo.

This primary theological performance—through liturgical art and architecture—was successfully orchestrated even before Cardoso and his team translated the catechism into Kikongo. The Kikongo catechism formalized and normalized the choices made, regarding the theological language, that go back to Mvemba. Today, one can affirm not only for modern Congo but for the rest of Africa that by memorializing the ancestors in the Kongo primal theological performance, Mvemba (Afonso) prepared the ground for Congo theologian Bénézet Bujo to reflect on Jesus Christ as a proto-ancestor, the source and driving force of all ancestorship.[129] It is not clear that

the Kongo performance inspired Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, who, in characteristic evangelical style, dethroned, or desacralized, the
70 community or lineage ancestors. There are continuities between Bediako's ancestrology and the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Kongo Christianization of the ancestral resting place as the place for assembling in unanimity (*epi to auto*). In his exegesis of Colossians 1:15–17, Bediako turned over the Twi ancestral "thrones" (*nhengua*) to the One and Only Christ-Mediator and Savior, the Ancestor of Ancestors. The scriptures, by "using the term, *nhengua* . . . clearly declare that Jesus Christ reigns supreme over that world also, as living Ancestor there in his own right." Consequently, "Jesus Christ has something to do with what happens in the throne room of the [Twi] royal palace."[130] For Mvemba, constructing the church of Nossa Senhora da Vitória within the *mbila* (tomb) of the Kongo "ancient idolatry," fearlessly cutting through the "thick forest" despite the opposition of the "great of our kingdom," Christianity has become Kongo.

In this ancestrology, there are tones and there are limits. Bediako declares that only Jesus Christ deserves to sit on the ancestral stool (*nhengua*). He alone overcame Death, that which the "honored" (not "worshipped") lineage or community ancestors were unable to overcome. François Kabasele Lumbala, Bénézet Bujo, and Tinyiko Maluleke are more comfortable with Mvemba's performative act of locating the *ekklesia* within the *mbila*, keeping the ancestors within the new assembly, and transforming All Souls' Day into the feast of All the Ancestors.

Kongo Catechism: Mateus Cardoso and Delimiting Theological Vocabulary

The Kongo liturgical-theological performance (the primal theology) of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries foreshadowed the interesting theological-linguistic choices of the seventeenth—the making of the Kongo catechism by Mateus Cardoso and the interpreters, the first to successfully realize enculturation in west central Africa.[131] The solid foundations for enculturation were laid during the reign of Mvemba. The pioneering constructors of the place of gathering, the *maestri* and interpreter-translators, segued from performance (*lex orandi-vivendi*) to the development of an adequate theological language as the second act.[132]

The Kongo catechism displays the complexity of translating the message. Cardoso and his colleagues clarified the linguistic suitability of Kikongo, in use since Mvemba, to develop contextual theological language. They appreciated the mutual impact of Catholicism on Kongo linguistic culture and

Kikongo on evolving Catholicism. It was a collaborative work: "The Jesuit father Cardoso, who translated the Portuguese catechism into Kikongo in 1624 wrote that he 'did not feel competent enough for this enterprise.'" Therefore, he "made good use of the most notable *mestres* that are present at the court."[133]

Cardoso, fluent in Kikongo and aware of the complex linguistic turns that would confound a foreign speaker, worked very closely with the interpreters and the *mestres*. Some have questioned whether the translation of the Kongo catechism was the work of Cardoso or whether Cardoso was helping the interpreters translate the catechism. Others ask whether the translators were using an earlier, no longer extant catechism. An earlier version mentioned in the literature, but never recovered, was said to have been started by Kongo-born Portuguese Jesuit Diego Gomes in 1553 and published by Gaspar da Conceipçâo in 1556. Be that as it may, Cardoso mentioned a companion in Nsundi, Dom Felix de Espiritu Sancto (Kongolese name not given), "a very intelligent man, avid for knowledge," who was closely involved in the translation. He had extensive conversations with him on the etymology of *Cariampemba*, the term used for "Devil" in the catechism. The explanatory note from Cardoso shows that the translation of the catechism and the linguistic-theological choices were accomplished with close collaborators. In his introduction to the catechism, Cardoso noted important theologico-linguistic decisions regarding the naming of the Holy Spirit and the cross. Unlike the name for God, Nzambi a Mpungu, which had stabilized through usage by the Kongo church since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the words for "Holy Spirit" and "cross" were more challenging for the seventeenth-century translators. (Did the purported first translation by Diego Gomes experience similar difficulty?)[134] A brief discussion of the difficulties and theological import of choices made in translating "cross," "Holy Spirit," and so on will be necessary.

Why was it difficult to translate "cross" and "Holy Spirit," terms of theological salience, into Kikongo? According to Cardoso, "The inhabitants of the Congo called the Holy Spirit *Monho Auquissi* and the cross *Iquetequêlo*." These terms, already in use in the Kongo church, could not be endorsed by the catechism. The translators noted that "*Monho Auquissi* means holy soul," but it also designates "any blessed" person or spirit. *Monho Auquissi* could not capture, in Cardoso's view, the theological precision required to describe the third person of the Trinity. Similarly, "*Iquetequêlo* means fork" and is inadequate to translate the cross of the Crucified Christ raised in front of churches and village squares since the time of Mvemba. The translators

thus decided to import terms from the Portuguese Catholic theological lexicon: "Spirito Santo and Cruz."[135] It is clear from these introductory remarks

that Cardoso was the theologian driving the translation.

The Kongo catechism was not only a masterpiece of theological-catechetical collaboration but the continuation of an already contextualized Catholicism, whose structures were established by the evangelistic Mvemba. The catechism was the culmination, through agreed-on theological vocabulary, of the church's localization. This could not have happened without the massive "educational network" supervised by the trained "local nobility." The cumulative effort generated "Christian religious concepts" that became standard theological tools. Just as Mvemba financed the operations of the Kongo church and kept it "firmly under his control,"[136] the received religious concepts confirmed its localization.

The Jesuits arrived in Kongo, Luanda, and Angola in 1548, a few years after the death of Mvemba (1543). From the notes of the editors of *Le catéchisme kikongo*, the presence of the Jesuits was inspired by Diego Gomes, born of Portuguese parents in the Kongo capital. Gomes, ordained a diocesan priest in 1545 by Joâo Baptista, O.P., vicar general of São Tomé, was confessor of King Diogo (r. 1545–61) and first chaplain of the court. In 1546, the king appointed him Kongo ambassador to Lisbon. From Lisbon he organized the Jesuits for the Kongo ministry and arrived with them on May 20, 1548. This Jesuit mission failed. To realize his passion for education, Gomes joined the Jesuits. On December 23, 1552, he set out from Lisbon with his confrere Frutuoso Nogueira, who died in Kongo on October 21, 1553. The educational mission also failed. Unable to get a college going in Mbanza Kongo, Gomes decided to return to Portugal, departing from the port of Mpinda in March 1555. He was appointed director of the Jesuit formation house at Evora, where he remained until his death on August 23, 1560. The Jesuit presence and influence solidified during the second mission, which began in 1619.

The Jesuit influence on theological vocabulary was dependent on the preliminary religious concepts dominant in liturgical performance. Cardoso's catechism certainly depended on the received theological innovations from the time of Mvemba. It is remarkable, notes the catechism's editors (Marcos Jorge, François Bontinck, and D. Ndembe Nsasi), that for over a century, the prayers that Cardoso and the translators edited were transmitted unchanged throughout the Kongo kingdom and throughout the Kikongo-speaking areas of Angola. Indeed, from the pastoral ministry of the Capuchins (1645–1835) through the sporadic period in which Spiritans

served the Kongo (1865–88), to the arrival of Belgian Scheutists (1888–),[137] later joined by Belgian Jesuits (1893), and up to the present, an impressive number of Christian terms in the Catholic lexicon go back to the ancient usages captured in the 1624 catechism. The following statement, from the editors, deserves to be quoted again and again: "It is significant that the first Kikongo religious term that entered (written) history, from 1492, is that which to our day designates the God of the ancestors and of Christians [Nzambi a Mpungu]."[138]

To translate and ultimately secure the publication of the Kongo catechism, Cardoso had to confront serious political odds. The aggressive colonialist governor-general of Luanda, Joâo Correia de Sousa, who arrived in Luanda on October 12, 1621, shocked the Jesuits. He launched an unprovoked attack on the southern territory of Catholic Kongo in December 1622. Vociferous in their opposition to the war, they were expelled and embarked to Lisbon via Brazil.

The political theology that propelled the Jesuits to denounce de Sousa was laid out in their letter, dated October 20, 1623, to the apostolic collector to Cardinal Pavilicino. The Angolan governor was "marching to war, not against a few heathens but Christians who are the vassals of the King of Congo, brother in arms of Your Majesty who has a See and a bishop in his court."[139] The See of San Salvador (Mbanza Kongo), created May 20, 1596, and severed from the diocese of São Tomé, embraced the totality of the Kongo-Angola kingdom (located in Ethiopia, following sixteenth-century Vatican geographers): "in toto vastissimo et amplissimo regno *Congi* et *Angolae* in Aethiopia." Angola was under the bishop of San Salvador. (One must also note that the bull for the erection of the diocese, *Super Specula*, acknowledged that His Holiness, Pope Clement VIII, was making the decision following the request of "His Serene Highness, Philip, King of Spain and Portugal"—actually King of Spain, Portugal, and Algarve.)[140]

Having arrived in Lisbon, Mateus Cardoso devoted himself to the publication of the Kongo catechism and got it printed. His nemesis, de Sousa, left Luanda as governor in 1623, and Cardoso subsequently returned to Luanda in 1624. He reached Mbanza Kongo on August 27, 1625, and died there on October 8 of that year. Cardoso dedicated the catechism to Dom Miguel de Castro, the metropolitan archbishop of Lisbon, and to the current king of the Kongo, Pedro II (Nkanga a Mubika). The predecessor of Pedro II, Álvaro III (Nimi a Mpanzu), already with the Lord (d. April 4, 1622), had read Cardoso's manuscripts and found the catechism an excellent piece of work.[141]

The catechism was an excellent work on at least two counts. First, it created the theological vocabulary that explained the faith. Second, the language was accessible to the rank and file. The pastoral impact was impressive. The editors note that the diffusion of the collected prayers and the catechism throughout Mbanza Kongo and the provinces (such as Soyo), in simple, chanted Kongo rhythms, testifies to pastoral effectiveness. For example, students at the college in Luanda taught children the text of the "Christian doctrine," chanted in familiar and simple tones. On their part, the children rhythmically transmitted the Catholic doctrine to the adults. All over the kingdom and the provinces, Catholic prayers and Christian doctrine were transmitted in melodious chants. Cardoso was elated: "I consider it as worth the pain, the effort I invested in translating and printing the Catechism in the Congo language."[142] It was not only a display of successful reinvention of "Kikongo terms taken directly from Kongo cosmology," such as Nzambi a Mpungu (God), *nkisi* (sacred, holy), and *moyo* (spirit or soul). It was a Catholic contextual reconstruction of reality, thanks to the Jesuit theologian who, by patient analysis, showed trust in "Kongo's original religion" and declared: "The Kongo knew of the existence of the True God but had not had the opportunity to know, prior to their contact with Europe, of Jesus Christ."[143]

Adopting the Kikongo name for God, Nzambi a Mpungu ("God the most high"—a term that could also be given to a king), from the first contact with Catholicism presaged a pattern in successful Christianization all over Africa. Conversion was exponential in the "societies that preserved the indigenous name of God." Thus "Western missionaries did not introduce God to Africa—rather, it was God who brought them to Africa, as carriers of news about Jesus Christ." Another interesting technical religious term, *nkisi*, came into theological usage to translate the domain of the holy, the sacred, and holy objects. The Indigenous Kongo religious world was being *translated* into Christianity. At times, it played out in the open confrontation between the leadership (*nganga*) of the Indigenous Kongo religion and the Christian priests. In 1584, discalced Carmelite priest Diego de la Encarnación noted that he and his companion were called *nganga* by the people. *Nganga* becomes another theological term in the socioreligious reconstruction of Catholic Kongo.[144]

The lively theological debate that dominated the lay-driven church of the Kongo highlights the drama of performance as theology. When da Pavia was on pastoral visitation to Soyo, disputation arose over the understanding or interpretation of Catholic faith beliefs. A general assembly was

called with the approval of the prince of Soyo. The question, as framed by the Capuchin, was whether Soyo Catholics "wished to observe the laws of God or their superstitions." The response was firm but complex: "They firmly believed in God and in everything that was taught them." However, "they also believed in their ceremonies and vain observances." The language and confrontational style of the theological report, typical of Italian Capuchins, assume that every African Indigenized ritual was the work of the devil. Based in Luanda and lacking the political power in the Kongo (Soyo) to exile impenitent dissidents to slavery in Brazil (see chapter 3), they could only deny the sacraments to the Soyo dissidents. Some of the Catholics privately came to the Capuchins "to protest against what had been said in public," and they were "admitted to the sacraments."[145]

The above vignette about different theological opinions testifies to the freedom exercised in the Kongo to appropriate or translate the faith. It also shows the challenging narrow road Catholics walked to express their faith commitment. Awareness of the power of ancestral shrines, of territorial deities (*nkita*), over the fertility of the land and the womb remained a major challenge. The Indigenous religious symbols of the holy (*nkisi*), supervised by the *nganga* (*kitome*), were difficult to bring to new account in the conflictual clash of exclusivisms, Capuchin and *nganga* (*kitome*). The Soyo have faith in Nzambi a Mpungu, who brought Jesus Christ to them. At ease in their universe, they struggled to work out their Catholic faith in terms of theology, at the risk of being denied the sacraments. Nevertheless, they enjoyed "serenity and courage . . . , confidence and joy," enabling them "to feel at home" and "find meaning in the world" and in their "own life."[146] This included adopting expressions of beliefs disputed by their pastors, who conceded that what they called "superstitions" did not imperil the religion.

Varying degrees of stress could be laid on unacceptable "superstition," attracting different sanctions, depending on what political clout pastors or missionaries had in the seventeenth-century Kongo-Angola church. The Catholic Inquisition (with wide-ranging powers) sat in Angola in 1596. The Jesuits were in Angola, and the See (bishopric) of Mbanza Kongo, embracing the territory of Kongo-Angola, had been legally established. Despite the consummate Counter-Reformation fervor of uprooting widespread superstition in Europe, the Inquisition did not disparage Angolan Indigenous religious practices. Rather, its interest was in "rounding up New Christians (descendants of Jews who had converted to Christianity in 1529) accused of practicing Judaism in secret or denouncing the church." However, when

the Inquisition returned in 1626–32, Portuguese colonial power was firmly established in Angola. The language of the Inquisition changed: "African religious practices were denounced as witchcraft (fetishism) or idolatry." The colonial effect, Thornton notes with historical irony, dictated the more confrontational Jesuit attitude and clarifies the exclusivist position of the Inquisition.[147]

The Capuchins who arrived in Kongo-Angola in 1645, less interested in the culture and the peoples, were more exclusivist and confrontational. They had staunch allies in Kongo-Angola in the cultural-theological war—the Slaves of the Church or Slaves of the Mission, who accompanied and defended them in their conflict with the *nganga*. The slaves' rationalization of their position highlights *nkisi* as a theological idiom fully assimilated into the Catholic lexicon. In Soyo, "Fra Girolamo found that the slaves of the mission did not hesitate to lay hold of a hostile *nganga*, having no fear of his supernatural powers because they themselves wore medals 'given to them by us as preservatives against their sorcery.'"[148]

Learning the Melody of Theology from the Gradualism of Gregory the Great

In his careful research on the tense relationship between the Capuchins and the rulers of Catholic Soyo in the seventeenth century, Richard Gray thought it necessary to correct several misleading comments in the concluding chapter of Georges Balandier's *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo*, a book that has little (if any) historical value. Seventeenth-century Soyo Catholicism was neither "'weakly established'" nor practiced by "'only a slim minority.'" Balandier's characterization of Kongo Christianity as always "in constant danger" ignores the fact that sixteenth- to eighteenth-century "Christianity was then, and has ever been, 'in constant danger.'" Consequently, "whether in long-established Christian territories, seventeenth-century Italy or France, or on the distant frontiers," the same situation prevailed. Kongo Catholicism was weakened by the failure to establish the clergy, by the evils of the slave trade, and by the uneasy relations with missionaries leading to frequent excommunications. True, "the dangers to the Faith were manifold." Nevertheless, "these few decades in the late seventeenth century constituted for Soyo the deepest point of identification with Christendom." Their struggle to turn the already existing to new account proves that the "meaning and message of salvation has ever to be discovered anew."[149]

The legitimacy and contribution of Kongo Catholicism to the meaning of salvation in Christ, a renovation of the social construction of reality, should not be underestimated. Catholicism touched the social, economic, political, and religious dimensions of life. Christian reinventions are not limited to the northern hemisphere. From Patristic times, church-becoming invariably incorporated people's geographical space, language, and culture to profess the transforming faith. The gradualist approach of Gregory the Great, recorded in his instruction to Augustine of Canterbury for the careful Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons, clarifies the Catholic way adopted (inconsistently) in the Kongo. The church must "let go of its European captivity."[150]

The story of the conversion of the Angli, captured in the correspondence between Pope Gregory the Great, King Ethelbert of Kent, and the monk Mellitus for onward transmission to Augustine of Canterbury (seventh century), is relevant to reevaluate fifteenth- to nineteenth-century Kongo Catholicism. Christian presence in a new geographical space and time involves theological and liturgical reinventions. For Kent, Gregory's initial approach tilted toward a radical break with the "already existing" Angli cosmology and ritology: "Overthrow the structures of the temples." Thinking better of it, the Pope advised Augustine of Canterbury to transform the "pagan" shrines of the Angles into "Christian" churches.

In the story of Christianization, from ancient Rome through North Africa to Kent and then from late medieval Portugal to the Kongo, no symbolisms were as powerful as those connected with ancestral memory. Gregory's initial instruction represented exclusivist and intolerant purism—the Jonah complex, replayed by the Capuchins in the seventeenth century. The Pope told King Ethelbert to display his conversion in the view of all by "suppressing" the "idols" and "destroying" the "temples." This was the way the king would gain the confidence of his people and attract divine blessings in their favor![151]

Later, better counsels prevailed. As shown in the letter to Abbot Mellitus (June 22, 601 CE) Pope Gregory adopted the pastoral approach of gradualism and "acculturation"—a change from "destroy" and "replace" to "transform." "Since the departure of our congregation, which is with you, we have been in a state of great suspense from having heard nothing of the success of your journey. But when Almighty God shall have brought you [Mellitus] to our most reverend brother the bishop Augustine, tell him that I have long been considering with myself about the case of the Angli;

to wit, that the temples of idols in that nation should not be destroyed, but that the idols themselves that are in them should be."[152]

Gregory the Great, the genius of the Roman liturgical rite, counseled ritual performances that would speak to the populace, gathered in "unanimity" (*epi to auto*), to advance the rootedness of Christianity in the Angli geographical space: "Let blessed water be prepared, and sprinkled in these temples, and altars constructed, and relics deposited, since, if these same temples are well built, it is needful that they should be transferred from the worship of idols to the service of the true God; that, when the people themselves see that these temples are not destroyed, they may put away error from their heart, and, knowing and adoring the true God, may have recourse with the more familiarity to the places they have been accustomed to." Not only was the conversion of the Angli interpreted as the transformation of "space," but it was also a gradual adaptation, integration, or transformation of "ritual": "And, since they are wont to kill many oxen in sacrifice to demons, they should have also some solemnity of this kind in a changed form, so that on the day of dedication, or on the anniversaries of the holy martyrs whose relics are deposited there, they may make for themselves tents of the branches of trees around these temples that have been changed into churches, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasts." Gregory went on to clarify the theological basis of "gradualism" in pastoral liturgical performance, replicating the gradualism of the interface between Israel and Yahweh:

> For it is undoubtedly impossible to cut away everything at once from hard hearts, since one who strives to ascend to the highest place must needs rise by steps or paces, and not by leaps. Thus to the people of Israel in Egypt the Lord did indeed make Himself known; but still He reserved to them in His own worship the use of the sacrifices which they were accustomed to offer to the devil, enjoining them to immolate animals in sacrifice to Himself; to the end that, their hearts being changed, they should omit some things in the sacrifice and retain others. . . . This then it is necessary for your Love to say to our aforesaid brother, that he, being now in that country, may consider well how he should arrange all things.[153]

Perhaps George Demacopoulos has a point that rather than "contradiction," one should understand "clarification" in the letters to the king of Kent and to Mellitus for Augustine of Canterbury. What appears

consistent is Gregory's gradualist pastoral style, developed in his *Book of Pastoral Rule*, that conversion—whether of the monk or the "pagan"—must be gradual. Gregory deliberately endorsed "a strategy of religious syncretism" that "would, in the end, achieve the pastoral goal of leading souls to Christ." Demacopoulos concludes that when one appreciates the doctrine of "gradualism," one has one's finger on "Gregory's confidence in the pastoral application of *condescensio*, a temporary loosening of canonical practice for the purpose of a greater pastoral good."[154] Gregory the Great's approach differs from the seventeenth-century Capuchin strategy of exclusivism.

Shrines, temples, and cemeteries, all told, have intimate connections to ancestral memory in the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, or Kongo world. In the seventh-century Catholicism of Italy, Rome, France, and the British Isles, gradualism and loosening of the canonical practice led "souls to Christ" (as expressed in Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Rule*). In the west central African Catholic Kongo, located west of the kingdom of the Ethiopians, the kings and their theologians (Franciscans, Carmelites, Jesuits, and diocesan clergy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and, later, Cardoso and the translators of the Kikongo catechism (in the seventeenth century), applied themselves methodically to the enculturation enterprise, an undeniable and challenging "syncretic" enterprise.

Syncretism, the "syncretic process," could sound derogatory from the excessively defensive Protestant (post-Reformation) theology. For the reformers, syncretism was "a threat to orthodoxy and to the very foundations of a prophetic faith."[155] Some, like Balandier, read negative syncretic performance into Catholic Kongo's legitimate and creative theological performance of the seventeenth century. Negative syncretism declares Kongo "pagan," "superstitious," "fetishist," and non-Christian. The reformers were hugely mistaken, however. The term, in Christian usage, goes back to Erasmus of Rotterdam, who borrowed it from Plutarch. Rather than stand by and witness the breakdown of Christian communities, one adopts the "syncretic" strategy, like the Cretans (*syn-cretismos*, from Plutarch). One deploys all Christian effort to unify, make up differences, and come together like the querulous Cretans, who always found a way to unify against opposing forces.[156] This was the pastoral strategy of Gregory the Great. The same strategy was in operation in the Kongo kingdom and church up to the seventeenth century. Whether it is called "gradualism," "creative exchange," or "transformation" of the "already existing" by integrative contact with the "new," it was melodious, Catholic, and Christian.

Ignorant of Erasmus, ignorant of Gregory the Great, Balandier and his ilk evaluate Kongo Catholicism from the exclusivist Reformation definition of syncretism. In the concluding chapter of *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo*—with the telling title "One God Against Many"—Balandier demonstrates the triumph of negative syncretism, which undermined Christian orthodoxy and the prophetic faith rather than "unifying" them (as Plutarch and Erasmus might advise). First, the unchanging or unchangeable Kongo cosmology, reified in the mind of the sociologist, communicated with the God of Christianity by way of grand misunderstandings: the "combined use of the crucifix, the rosary, and 'wooden idols'" and the impossibility of knowing and worshipping the "same" God. Balandier writes, "The Bakongo did not believe that communication with God was possible; it was not only impossible, but inconceivable."[157] This purported "advance of syncretism," beclouded with the ignorance of "God in Africa," eternalizes the triumph of exotica.[158] Peel wonders in disbelief. The "superficial view" that new converts could not "forsake their former religion for a new one" is normally expected of ethnocentric missionaries, proprietors of "real Christianity." It is disconcerting and disappointing to find such views among anthropologists like Malinowski and Balandier, who "profess themselves neutral with respect to religious belief."[159]

The syncretic principle, the method of gradualism counseled by Gregory the Great, has been the dominant pattern in Christianity. In proclaiming, receiving, or translating the Gospel message, median compromises were always adopted. It was not only the Anglo-Saxon temples, shrines, and manners that were integrated within or transformed into Catholicism. The Greco-Roman linguistic turns, philosophy, and culture, as well as the Celtic, Scandinavian, and Teutonic worlds, found their tongues and manners in the Christian Pentecost. Patterns become so well integrated, become adopted and normalized via "successful syncretism,"[160] to transform into the one Catholic tradition. The result is that in the dominant zones of Christianity, Eastern and Western, the derogatory term "syncretism" was unthinkable, inapplicable to the adopted and normalized language or manners.[161]

Kongo Catholic Performance: Sampling Gradualism, or the Syncretic Process

In seventeenth-century Kongo, the syncretic process, or the pastoral method of gradualism, led to fruitful public debates. New theological terms, in addition to the easily adopted Indigenous name for God, Nzambi a Mpungu, were up for discussion, adopted, or discarded. Liturgical performances,

fusing the Indigenous with the Christian rituals, became appropriated. All Souls' Day, for instance, celebrated Indigenous and Christian ancestors.

Yet the Capuchin pastors at the time were interested neither in participant observation nor in gradualism. They were zealous propagators of the reforms of the Council of Trent—to eradicate superstitions and to impose the canon law of marriage. To apply the new rulings on marriage, they mounted pressure on the princes (periodically excommunicating recalcitrant elites) and on members of confraternities. Membership in the confraternities involved not only attendance at mass and prayers but also marriage according to canon law. In the province of Soyo, where the Capuchins had more clout and freedom of action than in Mbanza Kongo (where they were in competition with diocesan priests and other religious), the penalty of excommunication was often imposed on offending princes and members of the nobility. The way to reconciliation was predictable: normalize marriages according to the canons of the Council of Trent. In one such instance (ca. 1687), the prince "was ordered as penance to persuade three hundred of his subjects to adopt holy matrimony." The response was stunning, beyond the imaginings of the Capuchins. "In the event," Gray narrates, "four hundred were presented, and a further six hundred immediately followed their example."[162]

Soyo recaptures the typical worldwide Catholicism of the seventeenth century. According to Gray, "the evidence suggests that the principles enunciated in canon law were beginning to become as much respected in Soyo as they were in parts of contemporary Europe, where, as in Soyo, practice often failed to match principle. In the remoter parts of rural Catholic Europe in the eighteenth century, probably a majority of the villagers still lived together without being married according to canon law."[163] Catholic Soyo, like the rest of the Kongo, and like Portugal or Italy, tried to (canonically) regulate behavior affecting life at all levels of society.

While the Tridentine code of marriage could be imposed on the "Christian elite, the confraternities and the interpreters" to spread to the rest of the population, key symbols were more difficult to control. Santa Cruz, the cross, provides a window onto a comparative theological, and interreligious conversation in which Capuchins were ill-prepared to engage.

Before the Capuchins, the Jesuit priest Mateus Cardoso considered the cross such an important symbol embedding Kongo Catholicism that the Kikongo term *iquetequêlo* (fork) was inadequate to proclaim the Crucified. The symbolic role of the cross, prominent in churches and public squares, appeared to have significant echoes in Kongo Indigenous religion. After

Cardoso and the Kongo catechism, the cross generated (under the watch of Italian Capuchins) conflictual theological performances. In the Kongo Indigenous religion, the *kimpasi* congregation, committed to the reduction of communal violence, displayed a cruciform design at the entrance of its initiation enclosure. The commonality with the prized symbol of Catholicism, Santa Cruz, was declared diabolical. Outraged, Cavazzi thundered in holy fury: "The devil taught [the *kimpasi* initiates] that to entice new Christians . . . they should paint on their idols the venerable sign of the cross . . . so as to hide their pernicious sentiments and their sacrilegious impiety." Unfortunately, "one would not believe . . . how many people were seduced by this ruse."[164]

The *kimpasi* cross had a role in initiation rites. This cross (of the Kongo cosmogram) symbolized the ritual journey of initiands—counterclockwise, following the motions of the sun, from the east to the north, descending by the west to the south. The ritual initiatory life journey peaks at Kalunga, the south. Kalunga symbolizes a sea or river, the location of the ancestral world, the dwelling place of God. Kalunga is, mythologically, the point where the self is renewed, reinvented, to be reincarnated, perhaps, in one's offspring. Arguing for its originality, Robert Farris Thompson insists that "the Kongo *yowa* cross does not signify the crucifixion of Jesus for the salvation of mankind: it signifies the equally compelling vision of the circular motion of human souls about the circumference of its intersecting lines. . . . The four disks at the points of the cross stand for the four moments of the sun, and the circumference of the cross the certainty of reincarnation: the especially righteous Kongo person will never be destroyed but will come back in the name or body of progeny."[165]

The Capuchins were ill prepared for a fusion of horizons in the encounter of complex cosmological narratives. Their simplistic theological reading of the socio-religious construction of reality, the work of the "Devil,"[166] replicates Tertullian's unconvincing dismissal of the commonalities between the Christian rites (the seven sacraments) and the sacraments of the Mithraic religion as originating from the Devil, "whose business it is to pervert truth, who apes even the divine sacraments in the idol-mysteries."[167] Introducing a radical dualistic cosmology as interpretive principle, a section of reality dominated by the Good God and another by the Devil, misunderstands the socio-religious creativity of *kimpasi*. The congregation propitiated territorial deities, pleading with them for the reduction of evil so that good might abound, thereby regulating and controlling "problems related to an overabundance of hatred and its cognate witchcraft in a region." Ultimately,

the congregation intended to "create a new generation of people who had been cleansed of this and were now prepared to live better lives."[168]

In conclusion, following Cyprian of Carthage, one could distance oneself from, or denounce, the *kimpasi* (as Cyprian denounced the Romano-Carthaginian religion). Nevertheless, one could appropriate the spatial location of their cross (*yowa*) and the socio-moral transformative language of *kimpasi* for the well-being and advancement of church and country. Some believe, like Dennett and Van Wing, that *kimpasi* (like *nkimba*) were a syncretistic fusion of the Indigenous and Christian, "a degenerate conglomerate of native and Jesuitical formation."[169] Whether connected with the Jesuits or not, the power of the cross, Santa Cruz, Kongo *yowa*, and the *kimpasi* initiation journey to Kalunga replicated in the daily motion of the sun all display, through a hermeneutic of generosity, the creative Kongo social construction of reality. How could the cross symbol not be interpreted as providential? The Kongo world of the fifteenth through the nineteenth century, witnessing progressive expansion and adjusting to change, displayed the cross-shaped stone, miraculously discovered in a dream by Dom Diego of the Nsaku ne-Vunda priestly clan, presaging the conversion of Nguzu a Nkuwu. The cross in front of the church of Nossa Senhora da Vitória and other churches and public squares heralded the novel reinterpretation and ongoing reconstruction of reality. Its emblematic power (for example, carved in the typical Kongo Catholic cross with Kongolese participating in the Passion and Death of Jesus) displays the integrative power of Christianity.[170]

Gradualism or the syncretic process, through the lens of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule*—the strength rather than the weakness of Christianity—is in operation in the Kongo. While on the way in this world, where there is no "clear vision" of what the future (i.e., of God as future, described by Jürgen Moltmann) is, we live in "hope," eyes trained on this "future" as an assurance of our indissoluble "Christian identity." In the multipolar and multicultural world of Pope Gregory in the seventh century, of Mvemba and his successors from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth, the operational assimilative and regenerative power of Christianity (expressed by Wolfhart Pannenberg) in diverse contexts must be extolled. The syncretic process channeled the integrative power of the Hellenistic *Logos* toward the Christian definition of Jesus as the Christ. The same integrative and assimilative process ensured that the shrine-temples of the Angli were transformed into churches and that the ancestral tombs of Kongo became normalized as Christian churches. "Purity," understood as exclusivism, is "sterility." It takes the eye off the future (that is, God) and dissolves the Christian "identity."

To close with Carl Starkloff, quoting Pannenberg, "The fact that Christianity is syncretistic to an unusual degree thus expresses not a weakness but the unique strength of Christianity."[171] This is true of Kongo Catholicism. The great pity must be noted. Slavery and the slave trade contributed to the eclipse of the Catholic kingdom and the weakening of the church. The next chapter explores this tragic reality and the impact on church-becoming and sociality.

Chapter 3

"SLAVES OF THE CHURCH"

Capuchin Ministry, Navigating Between the Evangelical Absolute and Profiteering

The Capuchin detention of Kongo-Angola persons as slaves and profit from the slave trade are about the most heart-wrenching vitiation of evangelization and pastoral care in west central Africa.[1] Kabolo Iko Kabwita's *Royaume Kongo* captures in lament the ravages that slavery inflicted on both the kingdom and the church. Lament, the dominant trope of the African novel, presents a "general sense of loss, enough to be part of its [the African novel's] aesthetic." Appropriated as an approach to Kongo (African) historiography, lament drums up the "circumambient sense of loss." It bemoans "the loss of our heroes, the loss of our culture and values, the loss of our religion, the loss of our land, the loss of our dignity as human beings, the loss of confidence in ourselves."[2]

Central to lament in Kongo historiography is memory. Memory, in my view, moves in two directions. As indicated in chapter 1, memory exposes and rejects, beyond romanticism, the ideology of representation. One memorializes Africans' performance of their full humanity, which representation denied or lied about.[3] African competency, displayed in Kongo society prior to and during the first encounter with southern Europeans, sets aside representation. Memory laments the deleterious effect of four centuries of slavery followed by colonization, leading one to agree with Flora Shaw on the need to revise entirely the Euro-American view "of the black races."[4]

Reacting, from field experience, against the views of Africa and Africans as prostrate land and peoples, Charles Duparquet's notes contradict representation. Journeying through the west and west central African coastal lands in the mid-1800s, this Spiritan missionary left undying impressions of the flora, fauna, and peoples of present-day Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Considering the abundance of food-yielding trees like the "breadfruit tree" (seven of which could feed a person throughout his/her life) and the operational war canoes, each of which could carry 250 fighting men, hewn from tree trunks, Duparquet was left wondering over the ridiculous yet dominant opinion in the French metropole: that Africa was God's work of creation but begun only when God was tired ("Dieu . . . était fatigué de la création lorsqu'il fit l'Afrique, aussi n'a-t-il fait que l'ébaucher").[5] Two centuries before Duparquet, in the 1650s, Capuchin priest Antonio Cavazzi contradicted representation. He was outraged at the excesses in Kongo patriotism! "Kongo people were ready to praise their country" as "the most beautiful," blessed with "the best food and the most wonderful climate." They felt that the neighboring countries and their rulers were "less developed, less powerful." Turning the Enlightenment representation of Africa on its head, seventeenth-century Kongo patriots chanted, "God sent his angels to create the rest of the world 'so he could devote himself to constructing Kongo.'"[6]

This flows into the second movement of memory in contemporary Congo and west central Africa: holding the ancestors accountable. This second movement is crucial in the critical evaluation of Slaves of the Church. The descendants of fifteenth- to nineteenth-century Kongolese must hold accountable the ancestors who were sitting "on the crumbling carcasses of their states" as those states "stagnated and decayed," wasting life and resources in wars and bloodbaths that accompanied every succession to the Kongo throne. In denouncing them for their "ruinous neglect," memorializing becomes creative and transformative.[7]

This chapter will first lament the scandal of slavery in the Kongo, which was on the uptick after the disastrous battle of Ambwila in 1665, from which Portugal emerged victorious. Kongo's defeat led to the dismemberment of the kingdom, to an increase in wars, razzias, and kidnappings, to an expansion in the slave trade, and to the depopulation of west central Africa. The tragic trade could not have happened without the collusion of the greedy Kongo elite—whose greed was denounced over a century earlier, in 1526, by Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I).

The exploration of slavery in the Kongo provides a brief clarification of a natal, clan, or kin alienation practiced before Kongo's encounter with

southern Europeans. The development of trade with southern Europeans expanded the meaning of "slave," casting the pall of nonhumanity on Black humans. This chapter also clarifies the position of the celebrated Mvemba on slavery and the slave trade. Opposed, in principle, to the slave trade, never compromising on the freedom of any freeborn, he made limited concessions for political and economic ends.[8] As reverse memorial, lament drums into the ears of the descendants of ancient Kongo, and the present actors in west central Africa, the ruinous consequences of past neglect: the impossibility of building and sustaining sociopolitical and economic structures favorable to the sustenance of the Kongo kingdom, along with the greed and negligence that resulted in the practical extinction of the Kongo kingdom in the nineteenth century.

This chapter also examines the category of *slaves* called Slaves of the Church and Slaves of the Mission. This category impacted church-becoming. Hearts bleed that under the watch of Capuchin and Spiritan priests representing the highest organ for evangelization in the Catholic Church, the Propaganda Fide, dehumanization and misery prospered. Capuchin priest Lorenzo da Lucca (who figures multiple times in this narrative), aboard a slave ship to Brazil in July and August 1708, described the vessel as a hospital: "The Blacks lay like beasts in the midst of dirt and refuse."[9] What blinded the Capuchins from connecting this image of horror to their continued possession of slaves? As reverse anamnesis, the descendants of the fifteenth- to nineteenth-century actors, Kongolese and Capuchin, must hold the Capuchins accountable. They must join forces with the struggle to end the devastation and exploitation of the west central African region—and in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[10]

Memory of the involvement of the Capuchins, and later the Spiritans, in slavery and the slave trade emphasizes that this practice undermined pastoral ministry. In Kikongo mystical language, this evil deployment of power, *ndoki* (witchcraft), contradicts the expected beneficial use of spiritual and religious power (*kindoki*).[11] The slaves, however, by rejecting Capuchin and Spiritan oppression, redefine freedom and challenge the dangerous entanglement of the holy and the demonic in Catholic ministry. Their performance of Catholicism merged with the struggle against dehumanization and rejected being defined as objects unfit for honor and dignity. They became artisans of a new humanity.

This chapter will close with a celebration of the vibrant, self-supporting, and self-ministering lay-driven Kongo church. This church, in display in the performance of the Slaves of the Church, crystallized in its relentless

efforts to secure regular pastoral visitation by Capuchin priests. Spiritans on pastoral visit to Soyo in the late nineteenth century testified to the fruit of this church and continued to water the field in which God alone gave the increase (chapter 4).

Let us begin with the first question: Who were the slaves in the Kongo kingdom?

Slaves and Freeborn: Slave Caste and Slavery in the Kongo Kingdom and Society

Slaves of the Church will be better understood, sociologically, by considering the slave caste in Kongo society. Who were slaves in the Kongo? How did this affect Kongo society, Kongo Catholicism, and the transformation of the Atlantic world?

In the Kongo and in west central Africa (the Ndongo-Mbundu kingdoms), slaves were on the lowest rung of a hierarchically structured social ladder. Categorized among "objects" of "prestige" (such as ivory, camwood, guns, and gunpowder), slaves formed part and parcel of the expression of Kongo's social stratification. It is reported that in the nineteenth century and perhaps before then, slaves—kept as objects of prestige—could be buried with their masters, on whom they were totally dependent.[12] The Kongo situation is not exceptional. Orlando Patterson's study of slavery as "social death" contrasts the "honor" enjoyed by the freeborn with the "degradation" of the slave. Whether in African kingdoms or in imperial Rome, the limitation of the rights of slaves, as "prestige objects," was the same.[13]

On the other hand, to be declared freeborn in the Kongo was dependent on one's kin connections. One must have four chiefs to vouch for one's rootedness in the society. In other words, a person must provide evidence of connection with the "descent groups of his mother, father, mother's father and father's father."[14] Thus, negatively, the absence of traceable embedding in kinship structures was determinative of one's condition. One is a slave because one has failed to show evidence of landed descent—clan links or lineage links (*kanda*) in the matrilineal descent system. Hilton clarifies the point: "A free man could normally depend upon four 'chiefs' to interest themselves in his affairs. These were the lineage heads of his mother's (i.e., his own *kanda*), his father's and his paternal and maternal grandfather's *kanda* or *kanda* segment." In contrast, "a slave was a person without a *kanda* or, more precisely, without a *kanda* or *kanda*-segment chief who would claim

him and defend his interests."[15] Chiefs could also withdraw their support and reduce a person to slavery—equivalent to "eating" the person. The language of manducation, drawn from the rich Kikongo witchcraft lexicon, is most appropriate to describe the person whom such evil befell.[16] In view of the above, Wyatt MacGaffey concludes from the nineteenth-century evidence that "in the perspective of political economy, the 'matrilineal clans' of the Bakongo are best understood as a slave-holding oligarchy."[17]

The above justifies the claim that the absence of clan affiliation, natal alienation,[18] demonstrates the slave's inferior status as a "classificatory child." Lacking "the normal complement of four interested chiefs," sociologically, the slave has only his owner "as his classificatory father."[19] Narrating one's genealogy became a matter of identity. This was common not only in the Kongo but throughout the neighboring south-central African region. Among the Luapala of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), "in the way he boasts," Ian Cunnison reports, "a man may identify himself with any of the four clans of which he has a real or close membership."[20]

The privileges enjoyed by the freeborn help define the slave in the Kongo. However, historians note that as Kongo society was structurally fluid and malleable, the distinctions between "slave" and "free" were often blurred: "The term used most frequently in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to denote 'slave,' *mu-vika*, was translated in the mid-seventeenth century as 'servant' as well as 'slave.'" Consequently, Hilton writes, the blurring of distinctions in the Kikongo lexicon testifies to the blurring of social relationships. In reality, "in the absence of concentrations of power, slaves were only acquired occasionally through pawnship, exchange, sale or war, and were assimilated quite quickly into the *kanda* structures. In the early sixteenth century, *before the development of the Atlantic slave trade*, the only people who, it was considered, could be legitimately sold were newly acquired captives."[21]

Even the rule that the freeborn, in contrast to captives, had the right not to be sold into slavery was breached, as Mvemba's sixteenth-century correspondence with the king of Portugal testifies. This requires a closer review.

King Mvemba (Afonso I), the Complexity of Slavery, and the Struggle with Slavery in Sixteenth-Century Kongo

The inalienable right of the freeborn not to be enslaved was strongly expressed in sixteenth-century Kongo. King Mvemba, the evangelizer of

Kongo and neighboring regions, was outraged at the kidnapping of freeborn Kongolese who were then sold to white Portuguese traders. The nobility's insatiable lust for acquiring meretricious Portuguese goods drove them to kidnap the freeborn, including other members of the nobility. The white traders branded the purchased captives with hot irons.[22] Since the captives were freeborn, they demanded justice—as should be the case, based on the taken-for-granted-ness of their status.

Mvemba laid down very stringent rules about commerce in slaves with the white traders to ensure no freeborn person was sold. Writing to his Portuguese homologue, King João III, on October 18, 1526, he stated, "To avoid such harm we have decreed that all white people in our kingdom who buy slaves in whatever way, must first of all notify three nobles and officers of our court, to whom we have handed over the control of this affair." These officials, Dom Pedro Manipunzo, Dom Manuel Manisaba (the chief justice minister), and Gonçalo Pires (charged with the navy), would verify whether the captives were slaves or freeborn. If they were slaves, they could be taken away. But if they were freeborn, they were confiscated from the white traders and set free. Mvemba was an unwilling accomplice in the murky trade. He wrote, "We are according this favor and this facility because of the participation of your Highness in this traffic. We understand that it is in view of your service that slaves are kidnapped from our kingdoms. That not being the case, we would never have consented to it, in view of the motives stated above."[23]

Little did Mvemba realize that he was riding the tiger. The frequency of razzias and the threat of depopulation, through kidnapping and exportation across the Atlantic, kept gathering momentum. The Kongo and neighboring kingdoms (the Ndongo-Mbundu kingdoms, which later became the colony of Angola) would transform into the great suppliers of slaves to the Americas.

Mvemba's attempt to contain this pernicious virus and his struggle to restrict and control overall commerce with Europeans met with little success. Not only did he wish to secure a personal vessel to import religious objects (and firearms) and to ferry priests into the Kongo for pastoral ministry; he also wanted to allow Portuguese vessels to pass through the Kongo (Mpinda) port only once a year. The vessels would ferry missionaries to the Kongo and bring whatever was necessary for the Eucharist, such as flour (for altar bread) and wine for mass.

For his part, João III of Portugal found the conditions presented by Mvemba totally unacceptable. Trade and the free movement of goods were

the accepted custom all over the Christian world. João was unsympathetic to Mvemba's anxiety over depopulation. His own Portuguese nationals resident in the Kongo told him that the kingdom was vast and thickly populated. João was presenting the inevitable to the Kongo king: slaves were the principal products and commodities of exchange between the Kongo and the kingdom of Portugal.[24] Historians Jean Cuvelier and Louis Jadin agree. Except for shells (*nzimbu*, used as currency), cowries, ivory, and copper, the Kongo's dominant available currency for the exchange of goods was, unfortunately, slaves.[25]

In the Kongo and the west central African region, the reality of slavery was thus very complex. There were extant slave lineages and clans that also could own slaves. Individual or group connection to free lineages or clans was crucial in determining one's status.

The Kongo situation complicated to the point of reproducing the characteristics of the "ultimate slave," that is, a slave who could exercise enormous social and political power. For example, in Kongo and Ndongo-Mbundu (Angola), though "a slave would be more likely than a free man to be chosen for sacrifice or to be handed over in satisfaction of a corporate debt," the slave also could be chosen "temporarily" as "head (nkazi) of the house or clan." It is of interest that in some of the bloody contests for legitimacy, it was not uncommon that court "slave officials" intervened to help "resolve succession issues."[26] Joseph Miller's study of the Mbundu-Ndongo (the kingdom of Queen Njinga) notes that kingship moved the nobility a step away from lineage obligations to improve the standing of "slaves." As a matter of fact, "powerful nobles, and especially the kings, sought to escape the obligations they owed their relatives by collecting large numbers of lineageless dependants and clients . . . described as 'slaves' by Europeans of the time. . . . Such people had little reason to support the kinship ethic. . . . They gave their loyalty exclusively to the king instead, and thus formed the basis of whatever power the sovereign could wield independently of lineage support."[27]

Kongo royal court slaves could also exercise power as "ultimate slave." Though natally alienated, they could hold the most powerful administrative positions, as in imperial Rome, Byzantium, China, and the Turkish or Islamic empires.[28] Miller goes a step further to claim that Queen Njinga was "the daughter of a woman who had been among the lineageless 'slave' dependants at the royal court."[29] Adriano Parreira and John Thornton disagree. Noting the fluid, decentralized nature of Ndongo, they argue that the controversial queen, who struggled for legitimacy for over three decades,

was freeborn, preordained from birth "to have a proud and haughty character," in Cavazzi's words; she was "born with the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck."[30]

The Kongo region displays interesting and even unique practices. Slaves never made it to the throne in imperial Rome, Byzantium, or the Chinese and Islamic empires. But in the Kongo, where succession to the throne was elective, women could rise to power as provincial governors and even form part of the king's exclusive cabinet. There was evidence, too, that "several seventeenth-century kings were born to enslaved women." Indeed, rather than this scenario developing late in Kongo history, it could be dated to the mid-sixteenth century.[31] This complex historical and sociopolitical reality led MacGaffey to claim that "'slavery' is a form of social dependence, not of forced or dependent labor."[32] MacGaffey, in capturing the reality, is also exaggerating. True, socially, the slave is a minor, dependent only on one chief—the classificatory father. But as in the Capuchin Slaves of the Church, the violence against dissenting slaves is not the treatment of dependent labor but resembles the domination of the French Code Noir or the total subject condition of the southern United States.[33]

The complexity of the Kongo sociopolitical and economic system remains challenging. MacGaffey, in *Kongo Political Culture*, indexes "nine or twelve original clans" to which the Bakongo belong. In the "local clans (clan-sections)," they form a heterogenous composite of "houses" that subdivide into "lineages" (three lineages form a house). The conundrum of this clan-house division is that "in each house at least one lineage will be regarded by the others as of slave origin (though the 'slaves' will reject this status if they can and claim that they are free members and the others are slaves, strangers from elsewhere)." The situation becomes even more knotty: clans formed alliances through marriages, setting themselves apart. Through these free alliances, these clans differed from their clients, that is, "the descendants of refugees, war captives, or purchased slaves." These distinctions become "mobilized in the context of some active dispute over land or witchcraft accusations."[34]

Ideologically, in the absence of the four chiefs, the slave is a classificatory minor. Then, another conundrum: the four chiefs could withdraw their support, exposing the vulnerability of the freeborn in a fluid and complex society. The withdrawal of support by the four chiefs is best interpreted in the lineage-embedded idiom of witchcraft. The four chiefs have decided to "eat" the freeborn. The term *dya* means "to eat, to control, to be responsible for" another.[35]

The above notes form a background from which to probe the lives of the slaves of the Capuchins (Slaves of the Church) and of the Spiritans (Slaves of the Mission). They were classificatory minors, dependent on their classificatory fathers, the Capuchin or Spiritan priests. Still, to clear the ground, one must ask whether the Kongo kings, including the evangelistic Mvemba, laid the foundation for the eventual Capuchin entanglement in slavery and the slave trade.

Slaves of the Church: From Mvemba a Nzinga (Afonso I) to the Capuchins?

The Capuchins arrived in the Kongo in 1645—that is, 102 years after the death of Mvemba. Soon after their arrival (sheltered in Luanda, from which they made pastoral visits to the Kongo and the surrounding region), the crisis in the kingdom would worsen. The tense relationship between Kongo and Portugal, caused by the Portuguese occupation of Luanda (which the Kongo kings contested) and the increasing Portuguese inroads into southern Kongo, led to the disastrous battle of Ambwila. Supported by mercenaries, Portugal was victorious. Kongo's defeat led to the kingdom's dismemberment, exacerbating the slave trade. The Capuchins got entangled.

First, it is important to explore whether the foundation for the scandalous involvement of the Capuchins in the slave trade was laid during Mvemba's reign when the slave economy, slaves as currency, was adopted (though excluding the freeborn). Did Mvemba, who spoke of the annual shipment of between four thousand and five thousand slaves from the port of Mpinda to São Tomé and Portuguese territories,[36] not contribute to this albatross of the Kongo state and Kongo Catholicism? Was he the victim of the slave Frankenstein built into an unjust societal system, natal alienation, that became ever more pervasive and destructive after the development of the terror-riddled Atlantic slave trade, an economic dystopia that eventually destroyed the system—the kingdom and the church?

I first sketch, in some detail, Mvemba's evangelistic project and vision of church-becoming that led him to collide with a commerce-focused clergy he was unable to control. Second, I address the equivocation of Slaves of the Church. Did the Capuchins, pastors and messengers of the liberating Gospel, truly possess slaves? Or is the expression "slaves of the Capuchins" misleading? This second question is crucial for evaluating the Capuchin ministry and Kongo church-becoming. The Capuchins arrived with the words of Isaiah on their lips: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the

feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation" (Isa. 52:7). Franciscan messengers, the channel of God's peace, in collusion with and participating in the propagation of terror? The deployment of ecclesiastical political and military power by Capuchin pastors, especially in colonial Angola, to religiously cleanse the region of the Indigenous African religion is a sad commentary on Catholicism. To redeem the image of the Capuchins, I conclude this chapter by drawing attention to Epifanio de Moirans, who actively fought the terror of slavery and the slave trade. This exceptional and prophetic Capuchin would certainly indict his congregation in west central Africa for the acquisition of slaves and the criminality of profiting from the murky trade in Kongolese citizens and other persons of west central Africa.

But to return to Mvemba a Nzinga of undying fame, renowned both in the Kongo and the surrounding areas into modern times:[37] Mvemba did not create Kongo slavery. But as a key player, he continued a system that benefited European trading partners, the Kongo nobility, and the freeborn. He must be held accountable. In fairness, while Mvemba could donate slaves to facilitate pastoral ministry and use slaves as "currency" for the economic, religious, and political needs of his kingdom, he never anticipated that priests would abandon pastoral ministry, the "things of God," to engage in commerce.

Mvemba had bitterly complained to the Portuguese monarch over the unacceptable dealings by the priests (not Capuchins) he had sent. This clerical interest in commerce, fundamentally at odds with Gospel-driven church-becoming, denied Kongo Catholicism exemplary clergy. The scandal of clerical involvement in slavery, an extreme example of clerical malpractice, tragically undermined church-becoming in the Kongo.[38] The troubled evangelistic king, zealous for the advancement of Catholicism and for the security of his kingdom, appealed to his Portuguese homologue. In a letter to King Manuel I dated October 5, 1514, Mvemba denounced clerical abuses in no uncertain terms. He used the phrase "bad example" almost as a mantra to illustrate the absence of exemplary moral behavior expected of the clergy. Mbanza Kongo was bedeviled with a corrupt clergy, whose behavior not only raised eyebrows among the generality of the Kongolese but also provoked seething revolt among the nobility. Kongo Catholics, the converted nobility, were expected to uphold standards of morality that the clergy themselves flouted! Some priests, outraged at the scandalous life of their colleagues, decided to return to Portugal. Mvemba was fighting a hydra-headed monster.

The matter is not that simple, though. Mvemba, a Catholic king in late medieval and early modern Christendom, where scandals would abound (leading to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation), had shortcomings and weaknesses. Still, despite his errors of judgment, he was an exceptional king. Three years before Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the castle door at Wittenberg in late 1517 and six years before Luther's *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (1520), Mvemba was fighting for the soul of Kongo Catholicism, engaged in the struggle to keep the transformed Catholic nation on the side of the Gospel. This "good fight," this race to keep "the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6–7), was exemplified in the lengthy personal 1514 letter to Manuel I of Portugal. The letter, a veritable profession of the Catholic faith, was written, at his dictation, by one of the students of the newly established school. Mvemba could not trust any missionary or Portuguese white man to write the letter—a letter at odds with and highly critical of the clergy and the Portuguese colony or residents in the capital, Mbanza Kongo.

In the struggle with "principalities and powers" "against the cosmic *powers* of this present darkness" (Eph. 6:12), Kongo Catholicism and Mvemba prevailed.[39] They prevailed not because of the vicars sent from Portugal, not because of the members of the clergy, priests of John the Evangelist, and others, not because of the Portuguese Catholics who populated the trade post in Mbanza Kongo—but in spite of all of them.

Mvemba's repeated mantra "exemplary life," describing the shortcomings of the Portuguese Catholics and clergy in Mbanza Kongo, is comparable to the (Protestant and Catholic) Reformation rhetoric amid the lax clergy of late medieval Christendom. Some phrases from his sermon to welcome newly arrived priests (canons regular of Saint John the Evangelist) from Santo Elói, Portugal,[40] illustrate his passionate embrace of the faith. The sermon clarified the way of the church, the intricate transformational presence of Catholicism in the Kongo community, intimately connected with historical Christianity. The sermon compares with Peter's proclamation of faith at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14–36):

> Now, brothers and sisters, you must know that beside the faith in which we believe, every other thing is illusion and [pursuit of the] wind. This is because the true faith is in God our Savior, creator of heaven and earth. . . . He sent his Son to take flesh in her [Virgin Mary's] precious womb to repurchase us. This Son suffered death

> and perished to save us. Then he left twelve apostles who went about preaching throughout the world. They were teaching the holy faith that says that all who believe will be saved and gain the holy kingdom. This faith, up to this moment, we did not have the opportunity to know. Today, it opens for us the way of salvation. Let all benefit to become Christians, to know our holy faith, to follow the example of these holy servants [the new arrivals from Santo Elói] who, guarding [vowing] chastity, living a life of austerity and fasting, follow a very holy life. As to the stones and wood that you worship, our Lord and God gave them to us; the first to build houses, and the second to make fire.

At the end of the sermon, or rather the proclamation of faith, it was reported that "an infinite number of men and women were converted and became Christian."[41] One could say that, similar to Pentecost, "those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added" (Acts 2:41). Becoming a Christian, for the Kongolese and for Mvemba, was neither lip service nor political opportunism, despite its sociopolitical value. One notes his contextual theology in the sixteenth century—"we did not have the opportunity to know" this faith that "opens for us the way of salvation." This was replicated in the seventeenth century by Mateus Cardoso: "The Kongo knew of the existence of the True God but had not had the opportunity to know, prior to their contact with Europe, of Jesus Christ." It was further argued by John Mbiti in the twentieth century: "Western missionaries did not introduce God to Africa—rather, it was God who brought them to Africa, as carriers of news about Jesus Christ."[42]

The betrayal of this theology by the priests (those who preceded the new arrivals) must have been heart-wrenching for the king. In his passion for Catholic education, Mvemba's keen eyes were alert to the dangers, for Christianization, of the inappropriate behavior of some priests. They were not interested in community life that would enhance Christianization and education. They were more keen to live on their own, away from their enclosure—a palisade that functioned as a convent. They wanted to live apart to trade (in the slave trade), rather than be focused on the Christianizing educational work. Father Pedro Fernandez had taken a woman with whom he had a child. This made a mockery of the faith, of their vows, and of their instruction. The behavior of one or two who had concubines sent the wrong signals. The priests' involvement in the lucrative slave trade left Mvemba in a state of shock. They left the "things of God" for commerce.

If they chose commerce in human beings, they must follow the laws of the land and purchase only "real" slaves. But as priests (who should be concerned with the "things of God"), they must avoid the occasion for scandal, refraining from buying female slaves.[43]

The unevangelical behavior of the priests and their unsatisfactory performance in schoolwork, along with the students' preference for village or bush life rather than the secured educational palisade, informed Mvemba's request that Portugal cede the isle of São Tomé to the Kongo. On the secluded and distant isle, the truancy of the Kongo students would end and the emergence of the new Christian kingdom would be realized. However, this was not to be. The conflicting interests of the Portuguese teachers, the colonists, and the priests were undermining Christianization and impeding the kingdom's development.

The greatest thorn in Mvemba's flesh, the challenge for the Kongo kingdom and Catholicism, turned out to be Fernâo de Melo, the unscrupulous administrator of São Tomé, heir apparent, or the real proprietor of São Tomé.[44] The trusting, unsuspecting king failed to realize that de Melo was using a Father Nuno to instigate revolt in the Portuguese community in Mbanza Kongo against Alvaro Lopes, the director of the trade post, and even against the king. Persuaded by Father Nuno, Mvemba signed a decree naming Tomé Lopes court clerk or judge. Mvemba later mused on his misguided trust in Father Nuno: "Because he was a Father [priest] we believed that he could only give us advice that promoted the service of God." In spite of the public abuses suffered by Alvaro Lopes (for example, being kicked by Tomé Lopes) and even by King Mvemba (his beard being pulled by the racist Tomé Lopes, who despised doing business with Blacks or with the king), the weakened Catholic king surprisingly proclaimed his guiding kenotic spirituality in the letter of 1514: "We suffer for his [God's] service with great patience, for the love of Our God and Lord; up to this point, we have endured a lot for the love of God."[45] What a Catholic king, Mvemba! To ensure the spread of this "love of God," undeniably a consuming passion, he sent his son and nephews to Portugal to be trained in the "affairs of God"—"the things of God"—to bring this teaching back to the Kongo.

In evaluating the above narrative, one must address a great misunderstanding. The dramatis personae were operating at cross-purposes. Did Mvemba appreciate the challenges of modernity that the Kongo was experiencing? More than four centuries after Mvemba, Chinua Achebe would suggest, in a perceptive reading of modernity, that "the white man, the new

religion, the soldiers, the new road—they are all part of the same thing."[46] Mvemba would certainly agree.

The connection between Christianization and the economy, between the sociopolitical and the religious, was at play in the Kongo. Mvemba saw the "cohesion in the kingdom" as "partly established through the Christian church, education, and the spread of literacy."[47] However, Mvemba was not astute or cunning enough to uncover the wiles of the corrupt priestly class; he believed that the priests in his employ would, in the end, turn out to be allies. Their concern with the "service of God" would help fulfill his dream of the transformation and Christianization of the Kongo. His piety reveals a dimension of his profound spirituality. It points to the transformation that he personally experienced. The constant protestation of his being "Christian," of his family, the Kongo nobility, and the country itself being "Christian," formed the refrain of the 1514 letter, occurring close to ten times. His readiness to pay any price (the price of discipleship that Dietrich Bonhoeffer would mull over four centuries later), to suffer humiliations and hardships to realize his vision of a Catholic kingdom, is remarkable.

While one cannot speak here to the faith commitment of Manuel I of Portugal, a king whom Mvemba addressed as "brother," it is clear that the governor of São Tomé had little interest in Kongo Catholicism. The interest of this representative of Portugal was limited to commerce, particularly the trade in slaves. Despite the numerous trials and tribulations, Mvemba interpreted his situation, the sufferings he and his people endured, in terms of fidelity to the one faith that he would on no account abandon. In the 1514 letter, he insisted, "In spite of everything, we address a thousand thanks to Our Lord, because when we were young, when our father was still alive, we received a thousand million threats and insults for the love of God. We always believed firmly in Him and remained Christian. Then, despite wars and suffering, especially when we were burning many idols, we never stopped serving Him. Now that we are old and that we have children and small Christian children, we shall never abandon Him, because of Fernâo de Melo."[48]

Nevertheless, his involvement in slavery, the use of slaves as currency, justifies the severe judgment and criticism from African social scientists like Chinweizu and Achille Mbembe. Yet Mvemba could not have foreseen the full effects of participating in the evil affair. In the judgment of history, one must note that he was never in favor of priests abandoning the service of God for commerce, for the slave trade. But insofar as he was a player in the trade, insofar as he requested a personal vessel from Portugal (though

never engaged in building such vessels, limited only to his canoes), insofar as he was a key keeper "of the waterfront" and imported goods with slaves as currency, one must hold him and other African ancestors accountable. As Chinweizu writes, "May their souls sleep without rest in our memories to warn us away from any repetition of their ruinous neglect."[49]

Setting the bar high in memorializing Mvemba, one notes that the advancement of the holy faith for the good of the kingdom was his consuming passion. The Portuguese traders and businesspeople resident in Mbanza Kongo, the priests who should be occupied with the "things of God," must work hand in hand with the Kongo Christian community. In his theological analysis of the troubling Kongo situation in the letter of 1514, Mvemba's mind was preoccupied with being a "Christian." Being a "Christian" sharply contrasted with the deplorable "bad example" of the priests and the Catholic Portuguese settlers. Compared to his successors and other players in the Kongo and neighboring kingdoms, Mvemba represented the golden age of the Kongo kingdom and Catholicism: "The memory of this chief, whose character equaled genius, remained alive within clans, no matter how distant from the ancient kingdom of the Congo."[50]

Fast forward just over a hundred years after the death of Mvemba in 1543. With the arrival of the Capuchins in 1645, one is in a different world. The scandal of the Capuchin priests approving of slavery, owning slaves, and normalizing involvement in the lucrative slave trade would be a betrayal of "the things of God," of Christianity, and of the priestly ministry.

Capuchin Pastoral Ministry: The Ambiguity of the Slaves of the Church

Congo historian Mutanda Mukuna provides a very helpful insight into the Slaves of the Church. Addressing the thorny question of Capuchin pastoral ministry and slavery, his conclusion is clear. Despite praiseworthy evidence of humanity in the relationship between Capuchin priests and their slaves, the whole idea of possessing detainees—slaves, totally at their service, totally committed to their cause, bound to them as minors, as children to fathers—is hard to fathom.[51]

The slaves' inferior status was self-evident. They were classificatory minors, dependent only on one chief, the Capuchins, their corporate "classificatory father" (according to the Kongo-Ndongo-Mbundu sociology of slavery). Decades after the Capuchins' departure from Luanda in 1835, the Spiritans, in a pastoral visit to Soyo in 1876, confirmed what was known from Capuchin sources: the continued but very positive memory of the

Capuchins through the descendants of Slaves of the Church, the Capuchins' "children." The prince who served as Father Hippolyte Carrie's tour guide around the residential area of the People of the Church in the town of Saint Antoine expressed their social status with the phrase "vos enfants" (your children). Duparquet testified, "Ces gens d'église vivent à part des autres Noirs et s'administrent eux-mêmes. Ce sont là *vos enfants* ont dit les Noirs en conduisant le père à la ville" (These people of the church live apart from other Black people and administer their affairs separately. You have there *your children*, so said the Black people while taking the priest around the city).[52] Mukuna's study clarifies the manner in which the Capuchins acquired their slaves and the roles the slaves played in Capuchin ministry. This throws light on the privileged relationship between the slave and the Capuchin priest in the field of ministry.

First, one must clear the ambiguous phrase "slaves of the Capuchins." Capuchin priest Bernardino Ignazio d'Asti claimed that the Capuchins' slaves were not slaves in the strict sense. However, from the perspective of the definition of "slave" in the west central African region, the "slaves of the Capuchins" were, sociologically, classificatory minors dependent on their classificatory father (despite the unique roles they played in the Capuchin ministry).

Next, it is important to stress that possessing slaves is different from participating in the slave trade. This leads one to clarify the position of the Propaganda Fide (the Vatican organ that sent the Capuchins to the Kongo diocese in 1645) on not only acquiring and detaining people as slaves but also on selling or reselling people, Christian or not, as commodities, as property. The Propaganda Fide was unequivocally opposed to the involvement of missionaries in the slave trade. Any such involvement was a heinous crime, sanctioned with censure and excommunication.[53] Nevertheless, in the field of pastoral ministry, some Capuchins in leadership positions fabricated excuses to sidestep the clear instructions of the Propaganda Fide. Furthermore, the Vatican failed to exercise its powers of censure and excommunication over the kings of Spain, Portugal, and the Kongo to stop the slave trade.

The rulers of the Kongo acknowledged the power of the papacy over them as over other Catholic kingdoms. Pastoral work in the Kongo and the surrounding regions could not be called missionary work without qualification. Following the formal declaration in Clement VIII's bull *Super Specula*, the Kongo became independent of the episcopal see of São Tomé.[54] The proclamation of the good news and Christianization were tasks of the episcopal

see of San Salvador (Mbanza Kongo). But with the bad blood between Portugal and Kongo in the seventeenth century, the bishop or apostolic prefect was not resident in Mbanza Kongo but preferred to reside with white compatriots in Luanda.[55] This was the situation when Capuchin priests arrived in 1645. They made periodic pastoral visits to the Kongo from Luanda, accompanied and supported by their slaves.

Having cleared this ground, I address the social perception of slaves of the Capuchins as contained in Capuchin sources. One must dismiss the pretensions of some Capuchin priests that the expression "Slaves of the Church"—or more precisely, "slaves of the Capuchins"—is a misunderstanding, an exaggeration. For d'Asti, these so-called slaves were secure and happy, never sold (or resold).[56] Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, d'Asti insisted that their slaves were never resold. Therefore, they were free from the terrors of the Middle Passage. The absence of this threat explains the haughty and arrogant attitude of slaves toward their owners: "Some casual observers could judge that it is improper to possess slaves subject to missionaries and a betrayal of our state as Capuchins. This is a false assumption; for the slaves themselves are well aware that we cannot sell them; that we do not have the habit of drawing temporal benefits from their condition. That explains why they are often insolent, because they are sure that we do not punish [mete out punishment] with the same rigor as is the common practice in the country."[57]

The observation by d'Asti does not say that the Capuchins did not possess slaves. From the evidence of the 1703 journal entry of Giovanni Maria de Barletta, it is clear that they did.[58] Furthermore, the priests were fully aware of the fearful living and working conditions in the trade posts that dotted the west central African coastline. The threat of ending in one of those factories and dread of the Middle Passage were sufficient to impose discipline. Consequently, by the mid-eighteenth century, the fear of being resold to slave traders for onward embarkation to Brazil (the Middle Passage) was real.

To set aside d'Asti's claims, another Capuchin priest, G. da Modena, made it abundantly clear that the "slaves of the Capuchins" could be sold or resold. As apostolic prefect, Modena visited ecclesiastical censure and excommunication on anyone who stood in the way of the embarkation of any of the "boys" from the Capuchin hospice for Brazil. Furthermore, those who stole Capuchin slaves faced censure. Such nefarious actions (i.e., preventing the shipping of the slaves across "salt water" or stealing the slaves) are, for Modena, tantamount to "partially usurping what belonged as of

right to God and to the church."[59] (Note that the slaves of the Capuchins were the property of "God" and of the "Church.") Modena not only contradicts d'Asti but helps lift the equivocation over the condition of their slaves—natally alienated and dispensable property.

Given the sociology of slavery in west central Africa, Modena's decree shows that in relationship to their masters, Capuchin slaves were "natally alienated." The Capuchin slave was inferior to a freeborn, proud to "identify himself with any of the four clans of which he has a real or close membership."[60] This proves that though the Slaves of the Church might enjoy better security or expect more humane treatment compared to those of other slavers or factory owners, they still faced the threat of tasting "salt water." Their classificatory father could decide to "eat" (*dya*) them. By exercising total "control" over their slaves, the Capuchins were ultimately "responsible" for deciding to send them aboard vessels for the trip of horror to Brazil.[61]

One wonders about (and has the right to question) the evangelistic intent of the close to two centuries of Capuchin pastoral ministry in the Kongo-Angola-Mbundu region between 1645 and 1835. Had these Franciscans any interest in following their inspirational saint, the "channel of peace," who went out of his way—against the tendencies of the war-mongering, crusading medieval church leadership—to dialogue with the sultan?[62] Some Capuchins pushed the abuse to the limit by being aggressively involved in the slave trade. Congo historians Mukuna and Kabwita give an unfavorable rating to the Capuchin pastoral performance—a testament of horror and complete disregard for the slaves' humanity.[63]

Going through the sources and noting the role of the Slaves of the Church in the advancement of church-becoming, one is amazed at the inscrutable divine providence that draws good out of evil. This is the domain of the controversial theology of atonement or "redemptive suffering." Before addressing the extreme abuse of slaves by the Capuchins and their inhuman persecution of mortal opponents (the *nganga*), one must memorialize the participation of slaves in the Capuchin ministry and their unimpeachable impact on church-becoming.

Slaves of the Church Bonded with the Capuchins: Participants in Proclaiming the Gospel

If the scandal of deriving material or financial benefit from slavery and the slave trade displays the most reprehensible behavior in pastoral ministry, the pastoral impact of this story—from the perspective of the despised, the natally

alienated, slaves—illustrates how "God chose" the "low and despised" (1 Cor. 1:28–29) in the world of west central Africa as instruments to effectively proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments. The Capuchins recognized the workings of God's grace in the Kongo-Angola region. In the field of pastoral ministry, they cultivated very good relationships with their slaves.

There were two contrasting modes of communication between the Capuchins and the Slaves of the Church. On the one hand, slave life within the hospices was highly regimented. This involved attendance at prayer, compulsory exit permits, strict punishment for breaking the rules, and the threat of being (re-)sold to other slavers for stealing and the like. On the other hand, on pastoral treks, Capuchin priests went out of their way to treat their slaves rather well and with respect. Not only was this important for smooth pastoral ministry but it also assured the priests' personal security. No priest on trek would wish to be abandoned with his luggage in the middle of nowhere, as was the experience of the intrepid Girolamo da Montesarchio (who labored in the Kongo between 1645 and 1700). Montesarchio was abandoned by porters and made to suffer.

Examining the role of slaves during the pastoral trek is crucial for a full appreciation of lay-driven church-becoming in the Kongo-Angola region under the episcopal see of San Salvador (Mbanza Kongo). The complementarity of roles, priest and slave, merits special comment. The dynamics of slave participation in pastoral ministry is ordered as follows. Six slaves took turns (two at a time) to carry the Capuchin priest on a hammock. The porters were always on the run, covering a distance on foot nearly impossible to imagine today—equivalent to a day's journey on horseback. The six slaves also protected their priest from wild beasts. This role of the faithful "children" taking good care of their "classificatory father" was paramount to the priest's survival and health. Slaves bore discomfort for the priest's comfort. Rain or shine, slaves kept the fire burning all night long and slept under the stars, forming a ring around the priest's hammock as he slept. In addition, they functioned as *vigilantes* (security guards). They took sides and defended their priest from the threat of *nganga* or from other threats expected while passing through hostile territories. It is important to note that after the tragic death of Father Georges de Geel in 1652, the Mani Kongo, Garcia II, ordered that priests on pastoral visitation always be accompanied by slaves for their security.[64] Slaves were fully integrated into the pastoral (sacramental) ministry. They were not the highly regarded *maestri* (drawn from the nobility), but they facilitated, as laypeople, the building of the Body of Christ.

The positive reinforcement from the priests is understandable. As esteemed coworkers, they received gifts from the priests and were treated more humanely. This brought priest and slave close together. The priest's ministry was (dependent on) the slave's ministry; the priest's religion was the slave's religion. Their commitment to the cause of church-becoming was unflinching. Their role, a ministry of collaboration, was described in glowing terms by the Capuchin priest Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento. Beside the devoted Catholic faithful in Soyo, "another group of people who were almost totally identified with the Capuchins were the slaves of the mission, who maintained the hostel, served as medical aids in the hospital . . . and accompanied by [*sic*] the missionaries on their visitations." They were mystically fortified with the Catholic *nkisi* (holy objects, medals). They challenged the *nganga* without trembling despite the *nganga*'s reputed spiritual and religious power. They did not hesitate to "lay hold of a hostile *nganga*, having no fear of his supernatural powers because they themselves wore medals 'given to them by us [Catholic *nganga*] as preservatives against their sorcery.'"[65] The slaves were "helpers" devoted to the sacred service or ministry. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Capuchin pastoral ministry in the Kongo-Angola region would have been impossible without the unalloyed ministerial performance of the Slaves of the Church. The social services provided in the hospitals and nursing homes, with slaves trained and functioning as nurses, must be memorialized. Their ministerial "assistance" displays the indispensable charism of "helpers": "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers" (1 Cor. 12:8, RSV). As "helpers," the Slaves of the Church are named before the "administrators."

The above accords with the argument detailed in the previous chapters that Catholicism in the Kongo kingdom was a lay-driven church-becoming. In glowing terms, Mukuna eulogizes the slaves' devotion, courage, and generosity. They "facilitated the evangelization work of the Capuchins in the Kongo and in Angola. Thanks to their assistance, these [Capuchins] without doubt enjoyed the good health that enabled them to conveniently fulfil their ministry." The recognition of their "devotion and generosity constitute[s] the core of the honor due 'the slaves of the church.'"[66]

When one eulogizes the slaves of the Capuchins for their assistance and devotion to church-becoming, one is also putting one's finger on the strength and weakness of the Capuchin pastoral strategy. On the one hand, God's Spirit could use the weakest, the slave, to advance the coming of God's

kingdom: "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:27–29). On the other hand, the Capuchin ministry depended more on their slaves than on the freeborn. During the golden age of the Kongo kingdom and Kongo Catholicism, before the battle of Ambwila, the situation was totally different.

The dependence on the hospice-directed and slave-regimented community as Capuchin-style church reveals the underbelly of the Capuchin theology of ministry, guided by the rigorous ecclesiology of submission. The refusal to acquiesce—that is, to submit, slave-hospice-style—in the Angola colony, where they had politico-religious leverage, resulted in a legitimated deployment of violence to impose ecclesiastical discipline. The censure could include deportation as slaves to Brazil and the Americas.

The pastoral strategy of slave-submission weakened, without eliminating, the lay-driven church-becoming. Where ministry was not intimately connected with political-military power, Capuchin pastors searched for an alternative strategy to come to terms with the evolving local theology, as happened with Andrea da Pavia, an influential Capuchin priest in the Kongo-Angola region (discussed below). However, some bad Capuchin actors, driven by greed, got entangled in the slave trade. Two examples will suffice to evaluate this betrayal of mission and ministry.

Greed, Profiteering, and the Reign of Terror: From Capuchin Slave Traders to Uniformist Ecclesiology

The reprehensible practice of some Capuchin priests and some of their superiors in Luanda, who made a fortune from the slave trade, is certainly at odds with a concern for the "things of God," as Mvemba put it. The most ignoble duo, Pietro Paolo da Bene and Eugenio da Firenze, merits particular attention.

Da Bene returned to Luanda from a pastoral visit in the Kongo with a train of slaves. These were alms, or gifts for the ministry, from the Mani Kongo. To ensure that the community profited financially from this (as alms or gifts for the mission), the prefect or superior of Kongo-Angola, Zenobio (or Zenobi) Maria da Firenze, created a *casus conscientiae* for the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda Fide in a letter of September 26, 1820. Zenobio argued that the Capuchins in Luanda had a custom of selling hospice slaves caught stealing. And in view of the terrible conditions on the ground in the

Kongo-Angola territory—inhuman conditions for a European—would the cardinal prefect permit the Capuchins to sell some of the slaves to ameliorate their condition?

In presenting the above argument, Zenobio was not ignorant of the mission practice. His predecessor, Rosario dal Parco, had written to the Propaganda on February 4, 1757, complaining about the scandalous practice in Luanda of priests profiteering from the slave trade. They kept the returns for their own use or simply transferred the money to Italy, independently of the mission superior or the apostolic prefect. This lack of discipline made them accountable to no one. Zenobio's and dal Parco's concern was neither moral nor humanitarian. It was not a question of seeking the good of the slaves. Rather, it was a question of financial control. As apostolic prefect, Zenobio wanted to control the lucrative trade. Both men wanted to control the money.[67]

One must note that it was dal Parco who alerted the Propaganda Fide to the Capuchins' profiteering through the slave trade in the first place. In a response to dal Parco dated August 19, 1758, the Propaganda sent him a copy of the constitution, Benedict XIV's *Immensa Pastorum* of 1741. The bull forbade the enslavement of Indians in Brazil (but did not mention Kongo-Angola or Africa). The Propaganda ordered that the regulations of *Immensa Pastorum* be absolutely and formally introduced and practiced in São Tomé and Kongo-Angola. As to the case presented by Zenobio regarding the slaves offered as alms to da Bene, the Propaganda Fide appeared to have been caught off guard, unaware that such practices existed. Nonetheless, the response was firm. The Roman Curia unequivocally and totally forbids the slave trade: "Possessores Nigrorum aliorumque silvestrium nemini infensorum vi aut dolo captivorum [captorum] teneri ad eos manumittendos." The Propaganda's total refusal to allow Capuchins to possess slaves, or to make money from their sale, struck the evangelical and prophetic chord. It rejected the Capuchin superior's spurious argument based on the desire to control the money. The Propaganda ordered that the "slaves" be instructed in the faith, baptized, and manumitted. Moreover, the Propaganda would indemnify the Capuchins from whatever financial burden the hospice bore in hosting (not detaining) the "slaves of the Capuchins."[68]

The case of Father Eugenio da Firenze shows that the Capuchins did not follow the order or instruction of the Propaganda. Da Firenze was reported to have sold two slaves. Thereafter, he traveled to Brazil, where he died in 1820. Later, it was discovered that the actual number of slaves sold was thirty. In correspondence from August 26, 1826, with the nuncio

in Luanda, the Propaganda instructed that the Capuchin community not benefit from the scandalous traffic. It was an embarrassing "bad example" by priest-missionaries under the Propaganda's command; the money should be used to repurchase the slaves if they were Catholics (i.e., already baptized). (That could be done, since the original trader who bought the slaves from da Firenze still held them in Luanda.) On the other hand, if they were not baptized (non-Catholics), the nuncio should make a decision to "repair the scandal" while protecting the reputation of the Propaganda Fide.[69]

Kabwita wonders about the Propaganda's good intentions. The equivocation about the slaves, the distinction between baptized Catholics and non-Christians, is hard to ignore. Disappointed, Kabwita concludes that slavery and the slave trade in daily practice "were neither condemned nor fought against by the highest institution for the missions, except when it is a question of Catholic Christians."[70] The Propaganda Fide took a major step in righting the wrongs of slavery but failed to go all the way to abolition.

Before addressing the change that occurred in Capuchin policy regarding slavery and the slave trade, I draw attention to cases where, in the west central African pastoral field, the Capuchins brutally deported or sold not only lukewarm Catholics but also the *nganga*, their opponents in the Areopagus of meaning. In this clash of cosmologies, the Capuchins opted for the terror of enslavement, the Middle Passage.

Italian Capuchin priests arrived in Kongo-Angola in 1645. They labored in the Lord's vineyard from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, supervised by the Propaganda Fide. However, they ignored every element of dialogue of cultures, dialogue of religions, as the Jesuits did in China and India. Pastoral ministry and evangelization almost transformed into religious warfare. Capuchins ignored the very productive inclusivist policy of their Jesuit predecessors like Mateus Cardoso, which had led to the production of the 1624 Kikongo catechism. Merolla's 1692 travel notes[71] underlined every matter particular to African religious ritual that was attributable to the agency of the Devil. (In the Kikongo catechism, the term *Cariampemba*, adopted for the Devil, is an uncertain term.) The rare occasion of accommodation, as recorded in the conversation between Fra Andrea da Pavia and the Propaganda Fide (described below), only confirms the rule.

The Capuchin exclusivist missiology ("theology of religions") and their uniformist ecclesiology generally demanded the total renunciation of African religion. It also demanded the slave model of submission, impossible to apply in a noncolonialist situation. This constant refrain in the Capuchin approach to missiology led to a dangerous turn of events for dissenting

Christians, those "limping with two different opinions," as Elijah would say (1 Kings 18:21). The dissenters believed and even officiated in the Indigenous Kongo-Angola religious rituals. Merolla wrote, "If a nominal Christian continued impenitently to officiate over these rituals, they [the Capuchins] considered it perfectly just that he or she should be exiled into slavery across the Atlantic."[72] There was no question of a middle ground. Conversion was narrowly interpreted as the replacement of something old. The old Kongo religious world was considered false, erroneous, and diabolical. It had to be replaced by something totally new and true from Catholic southern Europe. This replacement theory ignores the "gradualism" of Gregory the Great.

One could legitimately argue that the comparison between the Kongo (and Capuchins) with the Angli (and Augustine of Canterbury and Pope Gregory) could be misplaced. While Christianity was new to the seventh-century Angli, in the seventeenth century, Catholicism had been well established in the Kongo for over 150 years. Nevertheless, the strategy of gradualism, for Gregory, applied as much to new converts as to monks. The aim was to reap maximum benefits for the transformation of the individual and the community. But the Capuchins had little patience with the existing religious world of Kongo-Angola. They ignored the fact that from the fifteenth through the seventeenth century, this Kongo religious universe was being turned to "new account" by devout Catholic Christians.[73] The seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Capuchin pastoral tactic was "our way or the highway." This fundamental option in missiology was partially occasioned by the Italian Capuchin life of segregation from the Kongo-Angola context. Despite profuse ethnographic notes and letters directed principally to a European readership, their "close friends in convents at home,"[74] their refusal to consider engagement in intercultural conversation and interreligious dialogue left them few choices in the pastoral field. Apart from few and rare exceptions, the dominant strategy was war or conflict between God/Christ and the Devil. How justifiable was this religious warfare?

To put in context the misunderstanding between Catholics in Kongo-Angola and their southern European Catholic pastor-missionaries over the Christian notion of the Devil, a word on demonology is appropriate. The definition of evil in west central Africa helps clarify the limits of the Capuchin "translation" of "Devil" that led to branding the Kongo religious world diabolical.

The diabolical—or, more precisely, the Devil, as a personalized cosmological force—was neither easy to articulate linguistically nor easy to locate in the Kongo cosmos. Pastors and translators had to face this aporia. The

term *Cariampemba*, used in the Kikongo catechism, appears to be a compromise term. According to Mateus Cardoso, after extensive conversations with the Kongolese collaborator Dom Felix de Espiritu Sancto on the etymology of *Cariampemba*, they adopted the term to represent "the Devil" in the catechism. This companion of Cardoso's—"a very intelligent man, avid for knowledge,"—"served as master interpreter" when Cardoso "was pastor in Nsundi." His knowledge of Kongo cosmology must have contributed in the production of the catechism, as did the knowledge of other interpreters, translators, and *maestri*. But nothing more is said with clarity about the reality of *Cariampemba* as a personalized agent of evil. It was at best a compromise term. *Cariampemba* (*Nkadi a Mpemba*), as Thornton notes, was "routinely glossed in those days as the Devil."[75]

Generally, the missionary strategy in "translating the Devil," at least in West Africa, is to diabolize African deities. The Portuguese Spiritan missionary among the Igbo of Nigeria, Alves Correia, affirmed that the localized war deity Ekwensu was "translated" by the Christian mission into the Devil: "Ekwensu (nom que les écoles chrétiennes ont adopté pour traduire démon)." Though contestable, his data on the identity of this war deity—"an evil spirit that people fear, because it was the spirit of the dead poor without family"—prove that the figure is nowhere near the cosmological purveyor of Evil.[76]

In Kikongo lexicography and the religious culture of west central Africa, as elsewhere in Africa, evil is expressed in performance. Instead of being generated by a personalized, independent, cosmological figure, evil is the misuse of *kindoki* (spiritual and religious power). For some, such as MacGaffey, evil is almost synonymous with witchcraft (*ndoki*).

It is helpful to briefly review the semantic range of *kindoki* to avoid the Euro-American prejudicial approach to African religious thought and performance as the theatre of exotica, the irrational. MacGaffey, an anthropologist and historian, notes that "in Central Africa, at all social levels the exercise of power in social relations is understood as *kindoki* (or a cognate term), conventionally but inadequately translated as 'witchcraft' or *sorcellerie*. *Kindoki* is necessary to all effective leadership and is a component of all exceptional success, though it is also an instrument of evil." Warming to the pertinence of *kindoki* in its modern usage, MacGaffey reveals the prejudicial assumptions of an otherwise scientific work: "In the 1990s, however, many Americans of differing political stripes felt uneasily that democracy . . . did not adequately describe their political experience or account for the current evolution of American society. From the District of Columbia to Montana,

Colorado, and Texas more or less paranoid political movements arose which, if they had occurred in Africa, might well be classified as religious because
110 of apparent irrationality of their belief in occult forces."[77]

One notes the sweeping linguistic usage, "Africa," to cover the idioms and symbols of multiple peoples over diverse cultural and geographical locations. One should also note the loaded terms of Euro-American prejudice: "paranoid," "irrationality." While one cannot say that *kindoki* is neutral, since it is always connected with persons, places, and things straddling the economic, political, and religious, it is false to call it witchcraft, though it can become so in its exercise. An emic approach to the beliefs and practices of peoples, with attentiveness to language and linguistic turns, would prevent contemporary anthropologists from consigning a multivalent term like *kindoki* to the sphere of the irrational.

Kindoki, as energy that could translate to evil through malevolent use, merits multidisciplinary discussion. *Ndoki*, as evil, as the negative deployment of power, is witchcraft and/or sorcery. According to Bénézet Bujo, this force lies dormant in each person and could be activated.[78]In other words, the gifted human—with every spiritual, material, religious, social, political, or economic gift understood as coming from God—must always prove that s/he is deploying the gifts for the good of the community. As an energy or force, *kindoki* can be abused (becoming *ndoki*). As a surcharge, *kindoki* is experienced as a gift by those very knowledgeable of the forces of nature (such as *nganga* who heal with herbs) and territorial deities (such as the *nganga nsimbi*). Performers of politico-religious functions are endowed with *kindoki*. Such persons, installed as political leaders, receive the "insignia" (*mpu*) of their "divine authority." They are recognized and respected as the chiefs (*mfumu*) and the priests or experts (i.e., the *kitome*) who preside over the coronation of leaders.[79] Referring to installed chiefs, the Lele of the modern Democratic Republic of the Congo interpret in mystical terms the energy or power of human performance that can be turned to witchcraft. They claim that the energy goes back to Nzambi a Mpungu (God): "It was God who made sorcery. He gave it to a Lele chief (the chiefs are all sorcerers to this day); the chief revealed the secret to his friend, and so knowledge of sorcery spread." This led Mary Douglas (who in the quote fuses *kindoki* and *ndoki*) to the felicitous conclusion that the witch is "a spoiled priest." In other words, a priest who is immoral or unethical in behavior could be a witch. The person who misuses or abuses spiritual religious power (*kindoki*) is a spoiled priest: "As power is one, and knowledge is one, the sorcerer taps into the same channels as the priest and diviner. . . . The more he is trained

in religious techniques for more ensuring [*sic*] fertility, curing sickness, and sterility, the more he has at his fingertips the techniques for striking with barrenness and killing. The difference is entirely moral."[80]

The conclusion I draw from the above discussion is defensible. *Cariampemba* (*Nkadi a Mpemba*), a term introduced into the Kikongo theological dictionary to capture the Christian cosmological personalized agent of evil, the Devil, is at best a nebulous concept or term and personality. On the other hand, the semantic range of *kindoki,* which translates power (religious, social, political, military, economic, and so on), did not lose its pertinence in Kikongo lexicography. The negative deployment of *kindoki* (spiritual and religious power) by anyone in Kongo society, including the Capuchin priests, was *ndoki* (witchcraft or sorcery), *Cariampemba* (the Devil) at work.

The matter was not lost on Catholics in Kongo-Angola in their relationship with the Capuchins. Hilton reports, "In accordance with the ambivalent nature of the nkadi mpemba dimension, the Christian priests were believed to practice as well as protect against witchcraft and to have destructive as well as protective and manipulative powers, and many Christian rites were viewed in this light."[81] Consequently, when the Capuchin priests (*nganga*) in pastoral ministry used their divinely received spiritual and religious power (*kindoki*) against the rights of people, when they used their influence with the Portuguese governor of Luanda (who exercised military and political power, *kindoki*) and weaponized this against individuals and communities, they became *ndoki* (witches or sorcerers). When they deployed the power to supervise the deportation to Brazil of people who disagreed with their theology or who were their competitors, they fully displayed their being as carved within evil, *ndoki* (witchcraft or sorcery).

The denial of religious rights to the dominated Angola-Mbundu *nganga* pushed the terror-riddled exercise of power (*ndoki*) to the extreme. On the ground and impacting the lives of people, it was the quintessential manifestation of evil-*ndoki*-witchcraft. The Capuchins turned the confrontation with the Indigenous religious leadership (*nganga* and *kitome*) into religious warfare. The result was an ethno-religious cleansing of staggering proportions within colonized west central Africa. Worship should be according to one's inclination and not by coercion, as Tertullian argued. In the Angola region of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Devil was abroad: Catholic Capuchin priests like Antonio Cavazzi personified, for the oppressed-terrorized, "the destruction that wastes at noonday" (Ps. 91:6). It was a performance that moved from the imposition of ecclesiastical censures to the ultimate terror of expulsion, tasting "salt water."

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholic Kongo-Angola, one distinguishes the censures imposed on Slaves of the Mission, who could be sold to other slavers for stealing, from those imposed on erring nominal (or lax) freeborn Catholics. One learns from Merolla's 1692 travel notes that lukewarm Catholics who continued practicing aspects of the Indigenous religious rituals, connecting with "charms" or territorial "shrines," faced sanctions.[82] However, the deportation into slavery of the leadership of the Indigenous Kongo-Angola-Mbundu religion, the missionaries' competitors, was a matter for outrage. The narratives of terror reveal the Catholic drama of brutalization within a slave economy and the violent world of west central Africa.

The application of religious-political and economic violence against lukewarm Catholics, though surprising today, accords with the intolerant Capuchin uniformist ecclesiology. The application of the regime of violence against *nganga*, within the territory under Portuguese colonial control, is outrageous and intolerable. In Soyo, the Capuchins were popular but did not have political leverage; the dominant pastoral reaction toward lukewarm Catholics was to denounce the practices while declaring that such "corruptions," such "pagan abuses," did not constitute a betrayal of the faith. The extremist Cavazzi admitted, as did da Pavia, "the impossibility to change some of the 'corruptions.'" This led to the celebration of All Souls' Day in enculturated Kongo Catholic style. The Soyo-Kongo noncolonial context forced the pastors either to tolerate or embrace practices that did "not prejudice the essence of the Religion [Catholicism]."[83]

In 1688 a theological conference was convoked by da Pavia in Soyo to address doctrinal issues. The conference ended in a stalemate. No dissenters were deported across the Atlantic. Rather, some Catholics firmly confessed their belief "in God and in everything that was taught them." Some others localized their faith by affirming belief "in their ceremonies and vain observances."[84] None of these Catholics was forced to taste salt water. Their contextual theological position did not prejudice the faith, and the Capuchin priests, the guests of the Soyo-Kongo, did not enjoy the same type of political leverage as in the Angola colony. They lacked the political and military power (*kindoki*) to impose their will. Their treatment of their competitors, the *nganga*—expelling them to slavery and populating the New World with priests of Indigenous African religion—is the worst narrative of Christian missionary terror in west central Africa.

Capuchin jealousy of, and competition with, Indigenous religious leaders led to the enslavement of *nganga* (priest-diviner-visionaries), the guardians

and interpreters of the Indigenous Kongo-Ndongo-Mbundu religious universe. *Nganga*, who were endowed with spiritual-religious power (*kindoki*), were the adversaries of the Capuchin priests, who were also endowed with *kindoki* in the form of Christian spiritual religious power. The competition with the *nganga* was the rule not only in the Kongo of the seventeenth through the nineteenth century. It was the rule all over colonial Africa following the 1884–85 scramble. As their role in society was the interpretation and transmission of meaning, *nganga* were the competitors of Christian priests, pastors, or missionaries.[85] As agents of the Devil (*Cariampemba*) and transmitters of error (with no rights), they were subject to slavery to the Americas as the theologically justified Capuchin-Catholic sentence.[86]

Capuchin priest, historian, and chronicler Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi had an iron resolve to rid Angola of troublesome *nganga*. This captures the extreme Capuchin abuse of spiritual religious power. The Capuchins' inquisitorial application of ecclesiastical censures in locations under Portuguese colonial rule brooked no limits. The number of *nganga* deported from Angola-Kongo-Mbundu to the Americas was staggering—a testament to the ruthless exercise of *kindoki* that, for the Kongo, was/is witchcraft and sorcery (*ndoki*).

The letters of a Jesuit (not a Capuchin) provide a window onto the depopulation of west central Africa and the subsequent populating of the Americas with Indigenous religious leaders. On the isle of Saint Kitts in the Caribbean, Jean Mongin—a pastorally minded Jesuit—made a detailed head count of the slave community in 1678, counting 2,400 slaves in a population of 2,500. He noted their standing with the Catholic Church—baptized or not, married in accord with canon law, communicants or not, and so on. Finally, he noted twenty-six "sorcerers" (*nganga*), who were highly respected in the community of 2,400 slaves.[87] There was thus one *nganga* for almost every 100 *nègres*.

The power and influence of the *nganga* in Saint Kitts and elsewhere in the Americas should come as no surprise. Their position and influence in west central Africa and their impact on every aspect of life set them apart and prompted their being stigmatized as agents of the Devil. *Nganga* who ended up in Saint Kitts ("sorcerers," in Jesuitical language) were guilty of the unforgivable crime of positioning themselves as opponents to the competing rituals of missionaries. The Capuchins detested these troublemakers, who paid the ultimate price—tasting "salt water."

In *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, Thornton describes how Cavazzi plotted to rid Angola-Mbundu of

troublesome *nganga*. Around 1660, Cavazzi "condemned the main priest of Matamba [name not given] to slavery in Brazil." In other words, he made his adversary "pass salt water." Then came an interesting twist, with a touch of providential humor: in Brazil, "the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Salvador de Sá, recognized the individual [the enslaved *nganga*] from his earlier term as governor of Angola. He ordered the priest returned [to Angola]." The *nganga* must have been of a higher order for Salvador de Sá to have easily recognized him. Perhaps he was a *kitome* charged with territorial deities and responsible for the coronation of chiefs and kings. Salvador de Sá also appeared respectful of the Angolan sociopolitical and religious structures and appreciative of the beneficial impact of *nganga* in the socio-religious organization of Matamba (rather than stigmatizing them as agents of the Devil). Ironically, "much to his surprise Cavazzi encountered the same priest returning to Matamba, two years after his condemnation [to enslavement and deportation to Brazil]."[88]

This narrative illustrates the precarious nature of life for everyone, great and small, in this region and illuminates the persistence of the critically important divinatory and revelatory religious function of *nganga* in the Americas. Their deportation by their competitors providentially assured the continued relevance, flourishing, and survival of African Indigenous religions in the New World. Capuchin priests' exclusivism paradoxically assured the survival, in the New World, of the religion whose origin and existence could be declared to come from no other than God, Nzambi a Mpungu. On the isle of Saint Kitts, Mongin's census did not only identify twenty-six "sorcerers" but also classified them according to their socio-ritual and therapeutic roles. Some practiced healing or divination; others cast spells. Still others were accused of poisoning people. The Jesuit superior on the island, Father Moreau, submitted a report (perhaps based on Mongin's detailed study) to the Supreme Council of the island in 1686, requesting that the *nègres* be forbidden from practicing medicine.[89] This did not reduce the popularity of *nganga*. Far from being untrustworthy in the administration of medicine, *nganga* were recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the twentieth century as Africa's "traditional medical practitioners."[90] Their presence in the Americas explains the vibrant practices that developed around *vodun*, *candomblé*, and Santería. Just as the reinvention of Catholicism in the New World—as evidenced in Brazil, Haiti, and South Carolina—is closely connected with the presence of fervent Catholics shipped from Kongo-Angola as slaves,[91] the *nganga* continued to energize Indigenous African religious life among the enslaved.

The observer (historian, theologian, missiologist) wonders how to take account of the Capuchin barbarism, the absence of sensitivity to the epistemological crisis, the challenging reinterpretation of reality. It is impossible to gloss over the invasive policy of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Capuchin pastoral ministry. In the name of the Crucified-Risen Jesus, they crucified Angola-Mbundu people rooted in their lands and times. Capuchins were oblivious of the irony of their "self-appointed capacity to restructure the worlds of others, to draw non-Europeans into the spiritual and temporal purview of Europe,"[92] while ignoring "the anguish and dilemma" of Catholics threading the narrow path of church-becoming in Kongo-Angola. The violent link between racism and the reorganization of the political order, the imposition of an outsider theological rationality (to diabolize the Kongo-Angola religious universe), the intolerance of any syncretizing endeavor: these are not Catholic.[93] Following the rhetoric of Tertullian, they enable "irreligion." The endeavor to replace the Kongo-Angola reinvented world with the spiritual-temporal world of southern Europe, despite nearly 150 years of Kongo Catholicism, spawned the most horrible narrative of pastoral and religious terrorism in west central Africa. Capuchins failed the Augustinian ecclesiological test, denying a geographical location its crucial role in the emergence of true catholicity. Peoples of all shades and colors come to the faith from east and west, north and south, not "by migrating from their own places but by believing in their own places."[94] They take the totality of their world into the confession of their faith.

The Capuchin error—the Cavazzi heresy, with terrorism as its handmaiden—must be denounced. With colonial power in place in Luanda, the daring policy of replacing the religious cultures of the land was executed through the systematic exportation of the competitors of the Capuchins, the *nganga*, as slaves to Brazil and elsewhere in the Americas. Capuchin priests, under the supervision of the papacy, could achieve this evil goal because of the consolidation of Portuguese colonial rule and the collusion with the colonial power in pastoral ministration.

Reconnecting Catholicism to the Gospel: Tertullian and Epifanio de Moirans on Religious Freedom and Human Rights

The terror-driven pastoral and missiological practice of Cavazzi and the Capuchins should not go unchallenged. Through the performance of Kongo Catholics, the Kongo religious world was bringing the "already existing" to "new account." The new converts, beginning with the emperor-theologian

Mvemba a Nzinga (despite the rhetoric about destroying fetishes), recognized the operation and presence of the "same" God, Nzambi a Mpungu, in the old and the new. The role of "dreams and visions" as mediating communication with the spiritual world in southern European and west central African Catholicism should have made the Capuchins more cautious in their judgment of Indigenous Kongo religion. The lack of sensitivity to the "human rights" of the *nègres*, the denial of people's religious liberty, and the decision to deport troublesome leaders of the competing Indigenous religion all fail when measured by the Gospel. Why should anyone be prevented from worshipping "according to one's inclination?"

The Romano-African jurist and theologian Tertullian (155–220 CE) could tag Capuchins as propagators of irreligion. The seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Kongo-Angola world could view the Capuchins as licensing *ndoki* (witchcraft or sorcery). How ironic! The pastor who tagged the Indigenous Kongo-Angola-Mbundu religious world as diabolical was himself transformed into the agent of the Devil by denying freedom of worship and distorting self-transcendence. Paul Tillich is convincing: "The demonic does not resist self-transcendence as does the profane, but it distorts self-transcendence by identifying a particular bearer of holiness with the holy itself. . . . Demonization of the holy occurs in all religions day by day, even in the religion which is based on the self-negation of the finite in the Cross of the Christ. The quest for unambiguous life is, therefore, most radically directed against the ambiguity of the holy and the demonic in the religious realm."[95] The right to approach the holy according to "one's inclination" undergirds Tertullian's defense of religious freedom (*libertatem religionis*).

In the third century, Christians constituted an insignificant minority in the Roman empire. Tertullian defended their freedom of worship. To deny this right to anyone, either in third-century Rome or seventeenth-century Kongo-Angola, is to propagate irreligion, to pretend that a particular manifestation of the holy (in Christianity) exhausts the holy. In chapter 24 of the *Apology*, Tertullian insists, "For see that you do not give a further ground for the charge of irreligion, by taking away religious liberty, and forbidding free choice of deity, so that I may no longer worship according to my inclination, but am compelled to worship against it. Not even a human being would care to have unwilling homage rendered him."[96]

The Capuchin uniformist ecclesiology of slavish submission, imposing censures on the Slaves of the Church and weakening church-becoming, reached another level in the denial of religious freedom. The autocratic

arrest and deportation into slavery of the *nganga*, guardians of Indigenous Kongo-Angola religion, amounted to a crime against humanity. Every regenerative religious experience is gauged by ethical performance, its openness to the challenging encounter. Edward Schillebeeckx, evaluating experience, revelation, and grace, insists that "a (religious) tradition which cannot cope with new experiences and therefore negates them, avoids them or brands them *per se* as 'diabolical modern temptations' forfeits moral authority, even if this refusal is based on age-old and honourable traditions."[97] Branding Indigenous Kongo-Angola religion as diabolical is a fundamental theological error, inconsistent with the mystical thematization of Christianity as the embodiment of the Gospel of liberation.

This is only part of the story. The Kongo Catholic community, respectful of the visiting clergy, struggled to retain its autonomy despite the tragic situation of slavery and the dominant Capuchin uniformist-clericalist ecclesiology. The Soyo community that frequently disputed matters related to theology and canon law is representative of lay-driven Kongo Catholicism. Though infrequently visited by ordained clergy, it did not lose its Catholic character.

Some Capuchins tell a different story about the struggle of Catholicism to reinvent itself through an adaptable missiological strategy. Andrea da Pavia tells such a story in Soyo, one that paved the way for the Roman Church's bold decisions in China. And even earlier than da Pavia, Epifanio de Moirans prophetically saved the Catholic and Capuchin conscience through his Gospel-inspired stand on slavery and the slave trade.

In the above discussions, I expressed disappointment over the behavior not only of the Capuchins but also of Propaganda Fide. If troublesome *nganga* were made to "pass salt water," if nominal Christians were humiliated and habitually "exiled into slavery across the Atlantic," if individual Capuchins saw Kongo-Angola as the privileged "site for the extraction of ore" that was "converted into financial currency" in the New World, there should have been decisive and unequivocal action by Propaganda Fide. One contrasts the equivocation of Propaganda Fide with the prophetic voice of Moirans (1644–1689), the Capuchin missionary to the Americas who radically challenged the inaction or ambiguous positions of the Capuchins and Propaganda Fide.

Moirans, though he was temporarily silenced, ultimately redeemed the Franciscan image. His voice (like that of Abbé Grégoire in the eighteenth-century French Revolution) indicted those responsible for inflicting inhumanity on Black bodies and set a correcting course for the Capuchins and

the papacy. Moirans defended the "natural freedom" of the African slaves. In *A Just Defense of the Natural Freedom of Slaves: All Slaves Should Be Free*, from 1682, he argued that since the slaves were forcibly and unlawfully held, the fruit of their labor belonged by right to them and to no other institution. Applied to the Kongo, the fruit of the labor of the Capuchin slaves belonged neither to the Capuchins nor to Propaganda Fide.

Moirans was French, but it would be unusual for the Italian Capuchins to be unaware of the rebuke he had directed against the clergy and those standing in the way of the total freedom of Black slaves in the Americas. Moirans is still celebrated in the Antilles as the intrepid Capuchin missionary-abolitionist who arrived a century earlier than the celebrated Abbé Grégoire.[98]

Five summary arguments open the remarkable *Just Defense*. They capture the convictions of the intrepid Capuchin.

1. No one may buy or sell any of the African slaves that are commonly called Blacks.
2. Everyone who owns some of them must set them free under pain of eternal damnation.
3. In setting slaves free, slave-masters must make restitution to them for their labors and pay them compensation in full.
4. Blacks living on properties in the Indies and working in the family operations called *sucreries* by the French and *ingenios* by the Spanish should, by divine natural law, run away and look for localities to take care of their own eternal salvation.
5. Because of the wrongs done to Blacks transferred from their own lands and shipped off to the Indies, Christian rulers will flee from their own lands and lose them. Bishops and clergy will migrate from their homelands and cross the seas as refugees. Christians will become captives and slaves.[99]

Moirans and his Spanish colleague, Francisco de Jaca, were excommunicated in Havana in 1681 not only for denouncing slavery but for denying the sacraments to slave owners. Their radical position ultimately reached Propaganda Fide.

In defense of the Capuchins and Propaganda Fide, Richard Gray notes that the Capuchins presented a memorandum to the Propaganda in which they proposed eleven crucial and revolutionary points that, if brought before a court of law, would render slavery indefensible. The propositions reveal

the hidden hand of Moirans and Jaca. Their memorandum condemns the violence and fraud of slavery and obligates slavers to ascertain that the enslaved are justly slaves (perhaps war captives?). They insist not only that manumission and compensation for wrong enslavement are obligatory but also that slavers must assure the safety and security of the slaves. The memorandum could have copied the five arguments of Moirans's *Just Defense*.

Furthermore, Laurenço da Silva, a mulatto of Kongo royal descent and an energetic anti-slavery activist with a leadership role in the mulatto and Black communities of Lisbon and Brazil, submitted a petition to the papacy.[100] Da Silva, Gray says, was an agent provocateur, a catalyst in the clarification of the Propaganda's position on slavery. His petition, presented March 6, 1684, and deliberated upon during the meeting of the cardinals, denounced the inhuman treatment of slaves in general and, in particular, the "heretical" enslavement of Christians and their descendants in perpetuity. Da Silva held that white Christian slavers were guilty of heinous crimes, the absolution of which should be reserved to the Pope, Innocent XI.

As if the pressures from the Capuchin memo were not enough to prompt quick ethical action by the Propaganda, da Silva again challenged the Propaganda with a more strongly worded and argued intervention, dated January 14, 1686, on behalf of "Blacks and Mulattos born of Christian parents both in Brazil and in the city of Lisbon." His prayer was clear: neither the Black Catholic Christians "nor their children, nor their children's children should remain slaves in perpetuity." The petition requested the papacy to declare that "no one who has received the water of holy baptism should remain a slave, and all those who have been born or would be born to Christian parents should remain free, under pain of excommunication . . . remembering that God sent His own Son to redeem humanity and that He was crucified."[101]

Things started to unravel. The Propaganda that referred the eleven radical propositions to the Holy Office (that is, the Inquisition) received confirmation on March 20, 1686, that the Holy Office was in total agreement with the Capuchin memorandum. However, lacking the courage to impose sanctions on the kings of Spain and Portugal through excommunication, the papacy's bark did not end in a bite. Spain and Portugal could not be forced to end slavery. Gray's conclusion is surprising: "The highest tribunal of the Roman Curia had now promulgated a set of formidable and rigorous condemnations, covering a whole range of abuses."[102] Condemnations! On the contrary, the economic benefit from those Ta-Nehisi Coates calls "Tasked" bodies,[103] who worked the mines and cultivated the

fields in the Americas, assured the failure of da Silva's petition. The Capuchin memorandum, with eleven propositions doctrinally cleared by the
120 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, collapsed.

This was the third quarter of the seventeenth century. In memorializing this sad outcome, one may justifiably wonder what would have happened not only to church-becoming but to nation building itself were the papacy not forced to kowtow to Spain and Portugal to protect the nefarious sources of their economic boom. If the outrage of the slave trade, even limited to unjust enslavement, were visited by dangerous pronouncements of excommunication against Spain and Portugal, against Kongo and Portuguese Luanda, there would have been a dramatic alteration in the demography, politics, and economy of those countries. It would have brought to center stage Epifanio de Moirans's juridical and moral argument that all slaves must be free.[104] It would have brought to center stage the liberating Catholicism of the Blacks and mulattos of Portugal, Spain, Brazil, and parent Kongo, which declared that the foundational baptismal water delegitimized enslavement. It would have given teeth to the Pauline Christological liberation formula: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). It would have rejected as heretical the doctrine of slavery in perpetuity. The Catholic fraternities formed among Blacks in Brazil, Lisbon, or Kongo, the lay-driven Catholicism of Kongo-Soyo, would have ensured a flourishing late medieval church and kingdom beyond the nineteenth century into the twentieth. It would have been a different story, a different Kongo, a different Spain and Portugal, and certainly a different Rome and a different Catholic world.

But it was not to be. Rather, corrupt Capuchins and members of other religious congregations, in particular "the Jesuits, who have a boat which, every year, goes to Brazil laden with slaves," worked against the liberating Gospel.[105] In their cupidity they betrayed the Gospel, imperiling church-becoming and Africans themselves. By the eighteenth century, the situation was totally out of control.

Again, in fairness, some Capuchins, through listening and observation, were forced to shift from rigorism to accommodation. Andrea da Pavia is our last example of the Capuchin attempt to reinvent Catholicism through attentiveness to the Gospel.

The dominant Capuchin ecclesiology (and missiology) required submission, just as slaves submitted to their classificatory father. The Capuchins imposed censures on lukewarm Catholics up to the level of enslavement. This pastoral of violence functioned with few restrictions in colonial Angola,

as with the Jesuits in 1548 through 1650. Its application in the noncolonial Kongo-Ngola context was impossible.[106] Though the Kongo kingdom was weakened from 1665 on, politico-ecclesiastical sanctions were contested. The Soyo province is a good illustration.

Capuchins could not replicate the Angolan practice in free Kongo-Soyo. In Soyo, where the Capuchin influence was very strong between the seventeenth century and the nineteenth, persistent and fractious theological debates engaged the energy of church and state. Soyo Catholics held theological positions that contradicted the Capuchin uniformist ecclesiology and pastoral of slavish submission. The debates displayed the rejection of an exclusivist missiology that diabolized any compromise with Indigenous African religion. The differing opinions led to a review of theological positions and a revision of pastoral-missionary strategy, as demonstrated by da Pavia.

The influential da Pavia took as self-evident the rigid, exclusivist Capuchin missiology. Pastoral realism, however, made him adopt the creative fusion of All Souls' Day and the memorialization of Kongo ancestors. By so doing, the ancestors were effectively transformed into Holy Souls of the Catholic tradition. Furthermore, da Pavia, impressed by the theological struggles of the Soyo Catholic community, leaned toward adaptation or accommodation. He "glimpsed," Gray suggests, "something of the anguish and dilemma of the majority of Soyo Christians." They "attempted to explore and appropriate for themselves these new religious horizons."[107] The theological struggle to reinterpret social reality, a fusion of religious horizons, was conflicted but happily ended in harmonization.

The debates in Soyo revealed differences but led to fascinating choices, displaying the syncretic process in operation. Soyo Catholics were trying to bring what was already embedded in Kongo cosmological and religious assumptions to "new account," resulting in the interpretation of their conversion (with an over-150-year history) as transformation. In this endeavor, da Pavia differed from the Capuchin purists and the rigid doctrine of conversion as replacement.

Da Pavia's development of the theology of mission, as documented in his 1693 report to Propaganda Fide, boldly addressed the "dilemma of the majority of Soyo Christians." He proposed a theological pathway that, a decade later, would assume center stage in Asia during the famous Chinese Rites controversy. First, his position on "the response of the general assembly called to debate 'superstitious ceremonies'" in Soyo (ca. 1688) was conciliatory. Rather than the normal exclusivism, he "went on to ask 'if in

some respects they [Soyo] could be excused.'" In the noncolonial context, da Pavia presented an unprejudiced or empathetic image of the Soyo Cath-

olic community: their "'ceremonies . . . do not make an explicit, or implicit, pact with the Devil, but have a simple faith, from which one tries to raise them as much as one can.'"[108] Da Pavia's pastoral was directed toward the uplift of "simple" Catholics with "simple faith." In the late medieval and early modern period, this was typical of post-Tridentine Catholicism not only in Kongo-Soyo but also in Italy or Portugal.

Da Pavia's irenic posture accords with the syncretic process, learned from Plutarch and Erasmus,[109] and the gradualism of Gregory the Great. One could say that pastoral realism pressured the exclusivist Cavazzi, the more moderate Bernardino d'Asti, and the conciliatory da Pavia to cast their lots with the "syncretic process." They arrived at a major theological conclusion. The Kongo-Soyo Catholic community, struggling to protect and project its Catholic identity, a creative fusion of the old and the new, had to be supported and encouraged. In the language of Plutarch, the "irenic" combination of differences must be adopted as the good Catholic path to knowledge. Medieval humanists, specifically Erasmus of Rotterdam and Danish theologian Georg Calixt, declared as fundamentally *bonae litterae*—a "good science"—the combination of Greek philosophy and the *philosophia Christi*. Da Pavia was pressured to affirm the operation of this process, in an elevated way, in the Catholic performance of the Soyo-Kongo.[110] The Soyo understood new faith as part and parcel of "a religious spectrum in which they continued to find relevance in many of the old beliefs and practices."[111] This acceptance of continuity between the old and the new did not undermine the Catholic religion, as Cavazzi acknowledged.

In his report to Propaganda Fide, received April 6, 1693, da Pavia implied that he "was perhaps ready to take the first vital step towards a recognition of the positive, fundamental values in Soyo religion," a major shift in Capuchin theology and missiology. Ironically, notes Gray, Cardinal Gaspare Carpegna, who presented da Pavia's report to the Propaganda, was later "appointed in 1704 to consider the momentous issue of Chinese rites." It is astounding that a decade before the explosion of the Chinese Rites controversy, Carpegna had already embraced the theology of accommodation in framing the responses to practices from diverse geographical and cultural locations—and specifically the Kongo. Insisting that "'superstitions' should be combated through the confessional," Carpegna suggested that "certain sacred rites such as Benediction could be introduced to take the place of 'superstition.'"[112] The Catholic victory of Carpegna, da Pavia,

and the Soyo-Kongo church endorsed the theology of conversion as transformation. The survival of the Soyo church was predictable, even if the "remnant" was totally made up of the Slaves of the Church in a noncolonial Soyo-Kongo.

Freedom in theological interpretation and pastoral reinvention was dominant in lay-driven Soyo-Kongo Catholicism. The situation was different where the colonial influence prevailed. There, Capuchin priests normalized the inferiorization of the slaves, replaying the ideology of representation (*nègre*-Negro-slave-subhuman). The impact of this normalization on church-becoming entrenched the ecclesiology of slavish submission, with censures or reprisals against dissidents. Despite the protestations of the papal nuncio, despite the Propaganda Fide, the priests applied the threat of being sold to other slavers not only to the Slaves of the Church but also to any other dissenters.

Instead of the irenic syncretic imperative, Capuchins opted for ecclesiastical correctness, the path of limited purity, imposing a restrictive "sacred" from the outside. They castigated challenging encounters as the false work of the Devil. Nonetheless, to celebrate the fruits of the labor of the Slaves of the Church in Soyo-Kongo is also to celebrate their "father," the Capuchins.

Celebrating the Lay-Driven Soyo-Kongo Church-Becoming: The Testament of Slaves of the Capuchins

Seventeenth-century Soyo, as vast as the seventeenth-century state of Milan,[113] was the preferred Capuchin pastoral center in the Kongo. There were neither diocesan priests nor members of other religious congregations to compete with, as would be the case in Mbanza Kongo. Fraternities, through which the Capuchins imposed control over the nobility, flourished. Through fraternities the post-Tridentine canonical requirements spread to the masses. Stefano Maria da Castelletto, the apostolic prefect resident in Luanda, observed in 1777 that the Capuchins had a strong cohort of four hundred to five hundred slaves in the Soyo mission.[114] The slaves' presence ultimately played a major role in the survival of Soyo Catholicism. Slaves ensured regular pastoral visitation by priests (Capuchin and, later, Spiritan) to their Catholic community. One example will suffice to illustrate the "anxiety for the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28) of the devout, long-suffering Soyo Catholic community that ensured Capuchin pastoral visitation.

Soyo is many days' journey from Luanda, the Capuchin base. One of the Capuchin ministry's limitations was its inability to set up permanent residence in the Kongo kingdom. When it proved impossible to secure the periodic priestly visit to Soyo, reverse treks were made—from Soyo to Luanda. The reverse trek is one of the best illustrations of the lay-driven church in action. The Slaves of the Church trekked to Luanda to persuade the priests to visit the Catholic community. This self-supporting Catholic community made thirteen "fruitless" journeys to Luanda in 1777 to plead with Father Sebastiano da Taggia, the mission superior, "Come over to Macedonia [Soyo] and help us" (Acts 16:9).

Pastoral visits energized the Soyo Catholic community. The ministry of Soyo catechist-interpreters and *maestri* did not suffice. Every church must have ordained clergy to fully function. After eighteen years of trying (Paul and the Macedonians would stare in amazement; see Acts 16:9–10), a pastoral visit to this fervent, lay-driven Catholic community was realized. The patient waiting over eighteen years, and the thirteen persistent, pressure-laden treks to Luanda, did not simply mark the high regard in which the Slaves of the Church held their Capuchin fathers, as da Castelletto testified in 1777. Though one admits with Sorrento that among the devoted Catholics of Soyo, the slaves were "totally identified with the Capuchins,"[115] one must affirm strongly that the persistent Soyo-Luanda treks demonstrated the Soyo community's passion for the faith.[116]

One hundred years later, Spiritan missionaries in Landana confirmed the presence of this heartwarming, faith-filled Catholic community. The Capuchins withdrew completely from the Kongo-Angola region in 1835.[117] Spiritans on pastoral visit in 1876–77 witnessed the dynamic and active church community dominated by the Slaves of the Church. Hippolyte Carrie was overwhelmed by their faith, the fruit of Capuchin ministry, and the Kongo-style display of lay-driven Catholicism.

Father Carrie, who was based in Landana in the Kacongo kingdom (present-day Cabinda, then not a Portuguese territory), visited the neighboring coastal towns, villages, and cities around the Kongo kingdom. In a sixteen-page letter written by his friend and superior Charles Duparquet, Carrie provides a narrative of the trip from Landana through Banana to Boma. In Boma, Carrie ministered to European settlers. He was receptive to requests from the local Boma for baptism, which was the visiting priest's key ministry in the lay-led church of the Kongo. However, Carrie could not administer baptism because the Boma were not instructed in the faith. Perhaps Kongo-Soyo Catholicism, which depended on catechist-interpreters

(*maestri*), did not extend to Boma. Nevertheless, Carrie celebrated mass, baptized children (of Europeans—perhaps settlers or traders?), blessed cemeteries, and the like.

After this visit to Boma and back to the isle of Banana, a Mr. Conquy, company supervisor of Daumas & Co., made a steamer available for Carrie to visit Saint Antoine, the ancient capital city of Soyo (Sogno), where Capuchins had resided in the past. There, the population, including the king (prince-governor), welcomed the Catholic priest with extraordinary warmth. Carrie, in admiration, testified that the Soyo community had preserved the Catholic faith for over a century despite the absence of regular priestly visits. These were the descendants of the "slaves of the Capuchins," Slaves of the Church or People of the Church. They lived apart from the other Black people in a town of two thousand to three thousand persons. The Catholic performance of the Soyo community made an unforgettable impression on the visiting Spiritan priest. He declared, "Il y a plus d'un siècle que ces pauvres gens n'ont plus de missionnaire, et cependant ils ont conservés la foi et bien des pratiques de la religion" (It is more than a century since these poor [unfortunate?] people had a missionary, yet they preserved the faith and most practices of the religion).[118]

This unimpeachable evidence of a thriving faith community in the lay-driven church celebrates the people and their indomitable pastors. Capuchins of two-centuries-long memory could cry out with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Carrie's ministry in Soyo—three days of touring the principal villages—followed the pastoral rule in any Catholic community in the Kongo-Angola region. In Soyo, unlike in Boma, there was no need to instruct the neophytes before baptizing them, as the baptized were from Catholic families. The instruction was normally supervised by the *maestri* (*mestres*)—catechists, interpreter-translators, and local church leaders. The *maestri*, as the backbone of the lay-driven church, were described by a Kongo king in 1814 as "the fire under the cinders, preserving 'the Holy Faith ever alive in this kingdom.'"[119] The Catholics of Saint Antoine wanted Father Carrie to take up permanent residence among them. This was not part of the Spiritan mission plan, but the Spiritans committed themselves to annual visitation and ministry.

The lay-driven, self-ministering, and self-governing church was sustained by its liturgical celebrations and devotional prayers. These were

probably directed by the *maestri* who dominated Christian ministry in the Kongo. Fluent in Portuguese and able to read Latin,[120] they presided over liturgical and devotional prayers.

Duparquet's enthusiastic account of Carrie's trip to Saint Antoine mentions not only the ruins of convents and the garden but also the church bell. The account of the liturgical practices reveals the depth of lay-driven Soyo Catholicism and the way the Soyo kept their faith alive: "They maintained their church with care and preserved with respect sacred objects. One of them [probably the *maestro*, functioning as leader] said the prayers and presided over the chanting of the hymns. These descendants of the slaves of the Capuchin fathers constituted a little city, of two or three thousand inhabitants, that is called the city of people of the church. These people of the church live apart from other Black people and administer their affairs separately. You have there your children, so said the Black people while taking the priest around the city."[121]

The above account debunks the stories of Charles Thomas and James Tuckey. The "Christian objects and practices coined in the preceding centuries continued to function in west central Africa at the dawn of the colonial period," Fromont concludes, expanding on Duparquet. "On the day of Carrie's visit in 1877, the gente da igreja [People of the Church] gathered for communal prayers in the chapel, under the direction of the mestre and his attendants, women to the left of the altar and men to the right. They all knelt behind the religious leader, and, following his cues, made the sign of the cross, recited prayers, and sang responsorial chants in praise of God and the saints in a mix of Kikongo, Italian, and Portuguese. Scented smoke and the sprinkling of holy water that the old mestre had blessed completed the ceremony."[122]

The above description of Catholic ritual performance in Soyo confirms the lay-driven church missing from nineteenth-century missionary reports and travelogues.[123] The Spiritan analysis of the Soyo lay-driven liturgical performance in 1876–77 did not disclose any "combined use of the crucifix, the rosary, and 'wooden idols.'" Rather, beside the ruined convent, garden, and church bell stood "practices coined in the preceding centuries" that continued into "the colonial period." There was no evidence, in the Soyo Catholic community, of the reified, eternally unchangeable Kongo worldview where Nzambi a Mpungu was unrecognizable and where it was impossible to communicate with the God of Jesus Christ.[124] Rather, the "same" God was praised and the saints commemorated in Kikongo, Latin,

Italian, and Portuguese in the liturgy directed by the *maestri*. This lay-driven church, without ordained ministers, was practicing the Catholic faith.

The above comments take us into the next chapter, which reviews the slaves' response to the unprecedented under their new Spiritan benefactor-masters. Soyo Catholicism and Spiritan reportage of the slave descendants' liturgical performance might surprise a clerically inclined and racially prejudiced observer. However, I applaud the Catholic agency of the descendants of the Slaves of the Church, who were free, functioning adults, not social minors. I also applaud the fruitful ministry of the Capuchins and, later, the Spiritans, whose inclusivist ecclesiology and missiology allow us to appreciate the agency of the descendants of Slaves of the Church. That inclusivist missiology clarifies the disagreement between Charles Duparquet and his confrere Father Jean Joseph Poussot. The latter's denigration of the Kongolese people and their Catholicism was contradicted by the on-the-ground testimony of Hippolyte Carrie. Poussot gave a false, baseless report about Kongo Catholicism. He neither spoke nor understood Kikongo or Portuguese. He was in no position to "understand nor be understood by anyone."[125]

The above remarks enable one to open a conversation, in the next chapter, on the performance and interpretation of freedom by the slaves and the Spiritans. The performance of freedom in Soyo by the People of the Church, descendants of the slaves of the Capuchins, displayed a Catholicism that was integrated into daily life. Their religion, their Catholicism, moved them to reject the slave condition, the condition of being minors. In rejecting the unprecedented condition of slavery, the slaves and the liberated introduce a new interpretation of the meaning of the Gospel, a fundamental option for freedom beyond the comprehension of their benefactors.

Chapter 4

THE SLAVE RESPONSE TO THE UNPRECEDENTED

Spiritans, the Slaves, and Reclaiming or Redefining "Freedom"

No local or regional historical experience in sub-Saharan Africa between the fifteenth century and the nineteenth compares with the experience and representation of slavery. In Kikongo or the west central African lexicon, the experience was unprecedented.

The preliminary imaging of the west central African encounter with modernity, through contact with Europeans (the Portuguese, French, Dutch, British, and Belgians), displays colors of horror. The African elite and middlemen aided and abetted slavery, the dehumanizing monster. Kabolo Iko Kabwita captures the persistent and ineradicable entrenchment of this experience in the unhappy memory of Kongo in the language of "bitter taste"—"nkondo nkadi" (or the arrival of the white man). Kongo ate the bitter fruit that left the sour taste. Since then, they groan, "nsi ifwidi" (the country is dying/finished).

The dehumanization generated by slavery, in the Americas and in west central Africa, beggars the imagination. It cheapened Black life. The trade could have ended with the 1815 treaty of Vienna. However, negotiations between Portugal and Britain (which protected the Portuguese throne from French incursions) faltered. The Portuguese sugar and cotton plantations and the gold mines in Brazil needed "Tasked" bodies. The traducements around the transatlantic business, described in extractive terms, ensured that the "extraction of ore" was from Africa, the casting was in the New World, while the "financial currency" belonged to Europe.[1]

Any wonder? Britain agreed to defend Portuguese interests while Portugal supported limited abolition. At Vienna, "the Prince Regent of Portugal was prevailed upon to prohibit the slave trade *north of the equator*, and to work toward its eventual and total abolition."[2] Black bodies continued to be extracted south of the equator to service the plantations and mines in Brazil. The result was uninterrupted wealth for Portugal and depopulation for Kongo-Angola (the Atlantic) and Tanganyika-Zanzibar (the Indian Ocean), assuring Africa's impoverishment. Flora Shaw makes the connection: "The industrial development of ancient civilisations was largely based on slavery, and from the earliest periods of which history has any record, countries lying within the tropics—always prolific of population—were raided to supply the slave-markets of the world."[3]

The brutality and brutishness of the "extraction of ore" (kidnappings, wars, Middle Passage) normalized fear and hatred as the reaction of the Kongolese to the white man. They ate "sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). The Kongo imagination retained the shock of the unprecedented in the saying, "Bu bukala bambuta, ka bwa tumwene ko! Si nkondo nkadi" (What since the time of our ancestors has never been experienced [has never been seen] is here with us, the bitter fruit, the arrival of the white man).[4] The language of Jewish apocalypticism captures Kongo experience, the "abomination of desolation." Contrasted with the Jewish imagination, as in the projected Fall of Jerusalem (dangerously memorializing either Nebuchadnezzar's atrocities [586 BCE] or those of Titus [70 CE] or even Antiochus Epiphanes [168–167 BCE]),[5] the devastation by slavery casts an even deeper, nightmarish shadow on memory. The kingdom and its people were brought to their knees—and their new modernizing religion, Catholicism, was undermined.

To memorialize the unsung, this chapter takes up the slave response to the unprecedented. First, the chapter keeps an eye trained on the pastors, the Spiritan missionaries, enablers (though limited) of the slaves' recovery of their humanity. The chapter then examines the slaves' Catholic performance, their rejection of the social condition of slavery by claiming and redefining freedom, beyond official Catholicism and beyond religion.

To critically evaluate missionary performance, one must separate church historiography from hagiography. The Catholic missionaries discussed in this chapter, the Spiritans, ministered among slaves in eastern and west central Africa, Bagamoyo-Zanzibar and Landana (Kacongo kingdom, neighbors of Kongo-Angola). The slaves were purchased or repurchased with funds donated by Holy Childhood (Sainte Enfance) and the Lyon-based

Propaganda Fide. Others were recaptured from slavers and entrusted to the missionaries by the British or German navy.

The chapter begins by exploring the Spiritans' founding in 1703 and their mission. In 1848, they merged with and were energized by the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary led by François Libermann. Their identity and self-definition destined them to undertake a mission in west central and eastern Africa in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Exploring briefly their historical origin throws light on their passion for the welfare of the slaves and situates their overriding interest in the evangelization of Black people.

Next, the chapter clarifies *les oeuvres des Noirs* (the work of/for/with Blacks) emblematic of the Spiritans. This propelled Spiritans to adopt, as strategy and nickname, "nègres avec les nègres" (being *nègre*-Negro-slave-subhuman with the *nègre*-Negro-slave-subhuman). The nickname captures their mission absolute. The complete identification with the *nègres* became the operational, guiding principle, the driving force of their missionary spirituality. This absolute constitutes the basis for the critical evaluation of their ministry.

Finally, the chapter reviews the clash in the interpretation of freedom by the Spiritans and their liberated slaves, revealing disparate epistemic assumptions. Drawing Saint Paul (Gal. 5:1) into the conversation ("For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery"), I argue that the slaves responded to their unprecedented life condition by proclaiming the Gospel as freedom. Their option for freedom (that is, flight from Spiritan supervision) is not only consistent with the Gospel but reinvents the Spiritan absolute.

Spiritans: From Mission Among Slaves in French Colonies to Evangelization of Black People

The Soyo pastoral location is crucial to situating the conversation on the dynamic Catholicism of the Slaves of the Church. Catholic slaves were always agents, no matter how diminished. The narrative of their community is an illustration of a lay-driven church. Spiritans in 1876 encountered the vineyard "watered" by Capuchin priests, to which God alone "gave the growth" (1 Cor. 3:6). Soyo is also vital for the connection between Capuchin ministry in west central Africa between 1645 and 1835 and Spiritan ministry

in the same region (1865–88; restricted to French Congo and French Equatorial Africa after 1888).

Perhaps the first documented evidence of the Capuchin possession of Kongo persons as slaves (including Ndongo or Mbundu nationals) could be attested from the 1703 journal entry of Giovanni Maria de Barletta: "On Saturday evening Father Philippe called me. I went in front of the church to discuss a matter that arose a few hours earlier between our slaves and those of the count [of Soyo]."[6] This is proof that by 1703 Capuchins had a thriving corps of slaves comparable to the slaves of the prince-governor of Soyo. The Capuchin priest Lorenzo da Lucca, on board the vessel to Baya, Brazil (July–August 1708), described slaves in the Middle Passage as lying "like beasts in the midst of dirt and refuse."[7] He did not say that his community in Soyo had persons reduced to slavery. The Spiritans who visited Soyo in 1876 had slaves of a different provenance, purchased or repurchased.

The particular year (1703) when the Capuchin priest de Barletta made the Soyo journal entry is memorable for Spiritans. Their foundation day—May 27, 1703—providentially helps explain their involvement in ministry among slaves and ex-slaves in French colonies. It explains their eventual commitment to the evangelization of Black people in the nineteenth century.

On the Feast of Pentecost, May 27, 1703, Claude François Poullart des Places, aspirant to the clerical state, founded the community of the Seminary of the Holy Ghost (Spiritans) under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin. Des Places, profoundly transformed by serving the poorest in Paris—the Savoyard chimney sweeps—and helping poor seminarians from his allowance, ruled that admission to the Seminary of the Holy Ghost was open only to those "who cannot pay the board." Those admitted must have "true zeal for the service of God and the church" and be willing to accept, and even prefer, "the most humble and difficult functions in the Church, for which it is difficult to find laborers."[8]

It came as no surprise that when Louis XV decided in 1763 to replace the religious orders with secular priests, the chaplain general of the colonies, Father Pierre de la Rue (1688–1779, known as Abbot of Isle Dieu), sent a pro-Spiritan memo to the king's court urging that Spiritans be charged with the pastoral ministry in the French colonies. He reasoned, "Only the Holy Ghost Seminary is capable of furnishing as many subjects as will be necessary, both in number and quality, because of the kind of training that is given in their house."[9]

Resident in Paris, the chaplain general of Nova Francia (the French possessions in North America) represented the interests of the bishop of Quebec not only before the state but also before the Holy See. In his letter to Bishop Pontbriand of Quebec, he insisted, "All who come from this institution are very good men. The education they get there is fairly hard. . . . The best priests in your colonies and in the Far East missions have come from this institution." In contrast to the positive appraisal of Spiritans, one notes the negative remarks of a frustrated and angry colonial official from Cayenne: "If [government] had wanted to give preference to the biggest fools, it could not have done better."[10]

The mid-eighteenth-century pastoral arrangement, thanks to the chaplain general, explains the expansion of the Spiritan ministry. While still engaged in pastoral ministry among the poor in Paris and surrounding regions, they supervised the Catholic mission in French colonies, with all its challenges and controversies.

Controversy over the Spiritan Attitude to Abolition: The Regime of the Code Noir Challenged by Monnet's *Missions des Noirs*

In the colonies, slavery was the rule. After the French Revolution, despite the declaration of abolition in 1794 followed by an official declaration in 1817 and effective application in 1830, slavery remained the rule. The agriculturally based colonial economy was a slave economy. The transfer of the control of mission from the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris to the Spiritans exposed the latter to sharp criticism. They must take responsibility for the behavior of the colonial clergy (even those not trained in their seminary).

There were guardrails circumscribing priestly ministry under the supervision of the minister of the colonies. The 1685 Code Noir, the fundamental law in the American possessions of Catholic France, embodied the worst in the denial of humanity to Blacks. It programmatically normalized the deprivation of freedom, branding slaves as property: "We declare slaves to be charges, and as such enter into community property."[11] It canonized the legitimate use of excessive brutality. Fugitives, immobilized and branded, were executed at the third attempt to escape. Article 38 declared, "The fugitive slave who has been on the run for one month from the day his master reported him to the police, shall have his ears cut off and shall be branded with a *fleur de lys*[12] on one shoulder. If he commits the same infraction for another month, again counting from the day he is reported, he shall have

his hamstring cut and be branded with a *fleur de lys* on the other shoulder. The third time, he shall be put to death."[13]

The Code Noir provided the not-to-be-challenged authority and closely-to-be-followed system of justice throughout the French possessions for the economic security, comfort, and pleasure of the white French. For Louis XIV, the decree was Christendom-driven. It was a response to the need for "our authority and our justice in order to maintain the discipline of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith in the islands." Mohamed Kamara justifiably notes that through the Code Noir, "virtually from the beginning of its colonialist enterprise France had instituted the most intricate official policy on race ever devised by a European nation."[14] The Code remained in force until the 1789 Revolution. It remained unchallenged by French Catholicism before and after the Revolution. The regret expressed by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray of France over the Catholic Church's complicity in slavery could be an understatement. This Church, never "in the forefront of the opposition to slavery," was more concerned "about its humanisation than its abolition."[15] The ecclesiastical collusion with the legalistic devices of the French state was reversed only in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Catholic hierarchy entered the antislavery struggle, endorsing the campaign of Cyrille-Charles-Auguste Bissette, an activist-abolitionist mulatto from Martinique.

From the above, one understands the severe criticism of the colonial clergy in the Chamber of Peers. These were priests trained in the Holy Ghost Seminary and/or working in the colonies under Spiritan supervision. They were accused of lacking piety and virtue, favoring the colonists, and obstructing the movement toward the emancipation of Black slaves and the abolition of slavery. Abolitionists were outraged. Why did priests working among the slaves have no interest in the freedom of the *nègres*? The scathing attack in the Chamber of Peers on April 7, 1845, by the comte de Montalembert and the sustained vitriol by the inveterate abolitionist Victor Schoelcher (who became minister of the colonies after the 1848 revolution) shook the Spiritan administration.

In a rapid reaction, Nicolas Warnet, the superior of the Holy Ghost Seminary (and the eighth superior general of the Spiritans), stated in strong terms the commitment of the priests trained in the seminary to their pastoral work among the slaves. In a letter dated April 7, 1845, published by *L'ami de la religion*, he objected to the comparison made between the priests and the Protestant ministers. Protestant missionaries were better funded and less concerned about the moral life of the baptized slaves. In addition, the

Spiritan-trained priests were devoted to administering sacramental confession that did not form part of Protestant ritual practice. The Spiritans were pained by the accusation of favoring the perpetuation of slavery. Welcoming Montalembert's suggestions on the reform of the colonial clergy, Warnet clarified that Spiritans had submitted proposals to that effect. They were awaiting approval through a parliamentary bill.[16]

The divisive subject of abolition and the timid attitude of the colonial clergy—including Jesuits fearful of the slaveholding colonists—put the Spiritan mission on trial.[17] Redemption came through the clearly thought-through pastoral strategy of Alexandre Monnet in Bourbon (Réunion), later the ninth Spiritan superior general (who formalized the merger with the Libermann-led Congregation). His strategy contrasts sharply with the neutrality and complicity of the colonial clergy. His principled antislavery stance provoked official scorn and led to his disgrace and expulsion from Bourbon by the governor-general in 1847. Monnet was not only dominated by abolitionist fervor. He was consumed with passion for the evangelization of the Black slaves that preoccupied Libermann and his colleagues.[18] This exceptional Spiritan invites further comment.

Alexandre Monnet believed that the success of pastoral ministry absolutely depended on abolition, even if it were to occur over the long term. In Bourbon, Monnet established and effectively operated *missions des Noirs* (missions of the Blacks) located within the residential area of the slaves (the district of Rivière-des-Pluies), away from the hostile, prying "gaze" of the colonists.

Next, Monnet promoted a foundational structural reform—a pastoral-missionary strategy solidly rooted in emancipation, the key to "civism" and pastoral effectiveness. In his letter to the superior of the Holy Ghost Seminary dated December 10, 1840, Monnet laid out three guiding pastoral-missionary principles emerging from his six-month *mission des Noirs*, embedded among the slaves. These principles were imperative for successful, humane pastoral work: (a) slaves can become excellent subjects (a fundamental affirmation of their full humanity); (b) the abolition of slavery will not explode into revolution (calming the slave owners haunted by fears of a repetition of events in Saint-Domingue, Haiti); and (c) no effective pastoral results should be expected without emancipation, guaranteeing freed slaves the practice of the faith in freedom.[19]

The last point—emancipation as the anchor of pastoral effectiveness—needs to be emphasized. For Monnet, there is an unbreakable link between emancipation, catechesis, and preaching. Remove this link, and "we build

with one hand and the [slave] masters destroy with the other." Over a hundred years later, Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* (1963) similarly stressed the mutuality of rights, declaring, "to claim one's rights and ignore one's duties, or only half fulfill them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other."[20] Sure, Monnet continued, there are a few good slave masters. However, if one knew the horrors of slavery in Bourbon, the Chambers in Paris would not take a fortnight to vote for abolition (though indemnifying slave masters, as in British Mauritius).[21] Monnet's three principles remind one of the five principles enunciated by Epifanio de Moirans in the seventeenth century.

Monnet's position—a radical departure from the indifference, the "wait and see" attitude, of the Catholic hierarchy—is very close to those of Moirans and Laurenço da Silva, who stressed the ethical impossibility of being Catholic and enslaving Black Catholic Christians in perpetuity. The Capuchin administration in Rome that sent the eleven radical propositions to the Propaganda and eventually to the Holy Office would applaud Monnet.[22]

The dominant ecclesiastical "wait and see" attitude ("la politique d'attentisme") and the lack of passion for, or commitment to, the abolitionist project by French Catholicism could be linked to the fear of another bloody revolution, as in Haiti.[23] That revolution led to the massacre of French colonists, including religious men and women (such as Dominicans, Capuchins, and Daughters of Notre Dame). Some priests were accused of working with the insurgents for money. However, evidence suggests that the insurgent *nègres* were neither anticlerical nor irreligious, like the white colonists. Rather, the leadership of the Haitian revolution was conservative and faithful to the Catholic religion. Some ecclesiastics saw the benefits of closeness to those insurgents who supported the Catholic religion and the rights of the Church.[24]

From his pastoral experience in Bourbon, Monnet was quick to disabuse the skeptical colonists of the idea that emancipation would ignite a violent revolution. He was also quick to reassure his flock, the slaves and freed Blacks, of their full humanity. No wonder, then, that slaves and freed persons reacted with anguish to Monnet's shabby treatment on his return to Bourbon on September 12, 1847. These Blacks lacked the political and military power to stop the violent and unjust treatment of Monnet, who was almost lynched by the colonists and Europeans. They were powerless to prevent his expulsion from Bourbon on September 28 by the governor-general. Not even the Jesuits (or any other members of the clergy, except Frederick Le Vavasseur) supported him, though the papal representative stood by

him.[25] Nonetheless, Monnet had credibility with the highest organ of the French state (accorded the distinction of Knight of the Legion of Honor in 1845) and the Catholic Church (received in audience by Pope Pius IX). His performance stood in sharp contrast to the attitude of the French Catholic hierarchy and the theology professors in French seminaries. In this he was different from Libermann, in whose correspondence emancipation or abolition was totally absent.[26]

The declaration of total abolition and emancipation of slaves in all French colonies, after the revolution of February 1848, put the Spiritan Congregation in peril. Led by Alexandre Leguay (ninth Superior General), Spiritans were viewed as anti-abolitionist. Leguay was forced to resign to avert the Congregation's suppression. Monnet, who joined the Spiritans on June 2, 1847, came to the rescue. Popular in Rome and in Paris (and having a good relationship with Victor Schoelcher), he was elected tenth superior general on March 2, 1848. The Spiritans were saved, though their government subsidy was halved.

Monnet's first action as superior general was to send a letter to the clergy of the colonies and another to the bishops of France, pleading that they support the total abolition of slavery in French colonies about to be decreed by the provisional government. Abolition became the law on April 27, 1848. In his letter to the colonial clergy under his jurisdiction, Monnet did not mince words: the clergy must "immediately free the slaves dependent on them" ("affranchissez immédiatement les esclaves sous votre dépendance"). France sees all inhabitants in its possessions, whatever their "color," as "brothers" (*frères*) who enjoy the same freedom (*liberté*). The clergy must "preach by example their devotion to the cause of humanity," acting on the instructions required by the "interest of Religion": "It was after mature deliberation before God that we demand of you this act of generosity that will bring you honor before the Church and before humanity. It will bring you the applause of the whole of France, and the touching gratitude of all the slaves." In conclusion, Monnet stated, "this will be a powerful means to win them to God and to virtue, to make them happy, transforming them into fervent Christians, good citizens filled with social and domestic qualities."[27]

It is on record that as superior general, Monnet not only supported the position of the revolutionary government but lucidly argued that the government's position was aligned with the evangelical interests of the Catholic Church. The merger with the Libermann-led Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, which he negotiated, energized the Spiritans.

Libermann's Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary Becomes Spiritan: Mission to the Blacks and Black Freedom

The successful realization of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary's fusion with the Spiritans introduced a new twist to Spiritan involvement in pastoral ministry among slaves and freed persons in the French colonies.

It is impossible not to discern the hidden hand of providence in a new Congregation (formed in 1841), seeking approval from the Vatican, being advised to merge with the long-established Spiritans, with similar mission priorities. Their union was formalized in 1848. The confluence of the pastoral-missionary orientations of the Spiritans and the choices of the standard-bearers of the new congregation, Frederick Le Vavasseur, Eugene Tisserant, and François Libermann (the coordinator/superior), made the merger seamless. Le Vavasseur and Tisserant had a passion for ministry among dehumanized *nègres* in their native lands, the French colonies of Bourbon and Saint-Domingue, respectively. There was strong opposition from the Spiritan establishment, especially from the superior, Alexandre Leguay, who later resigned. Monnet successfully supervised the fusion.

The Spiritan Congregation that emerged after the merger had Libermann, a Jewish convert, as its inspirational leader, its eleventh superior general. Libermann strategically expanded the Spiritan engagement beyond Bourbon (Réunion) and Haiti, beyond the French colonies, to *les Noirs*—inscribed with pride in Spiritan ministry as *les oeuvres des Noirs* (work with/for the Blacks).[28] The radical connection with the Blacks assumed the mystical quality of empathetic identification—"nègres avec les nègres" (Negro-slave-subhuman with the *nègres*), assuming their despicable condition. Identifying with them and serving them became self-defining, the absolute, the directing spirituality to renew and revitalize the Congregation.

After almost a century and a half of the existence of the Slaves of the Church in Kongo-Soyo and the surrounding regions, Spiritans, dedicated to *les oeuvres des Noirs* and mystically self-defined by their nickname, *nègres*, arrived on a pastoral visit to the Soyo community.

Mission in the complex nineteenth-century African world embodied the representation of Blacks, Africans, as *nègres*-subhuman. The ideology of commerce/Christianity, colonization/civilization—propagated by explorers and missionaries such as Henry Morton Stanley and David Livingstone—did not eliminate prejudice. The generous and humanitarian work of Spiritans, while advancing evangelization and church-becoming, also

formed a constituent part of four interlinked "activities," as I. N. Kimambo writes, that in the years 1845 to 1884 enabled "European pressures" in Africa. The missionary investment in "the abolition of the slave trade" (where this was the case) and the "propagation of Christianity" facilitated the "geographical exploration and the establishment of 'legitimate commerce.'" These four interlinked activities, Kimambo observes, "were a product of the European capitalist expansion coming out of the Industrial Revolution."[29] They facilitated the occupation of African lands and helped normalize African inferiorization. Does the Spiritan option and spirituality set them apart from other missionaries?

No Catholic congregation before (or even after) the Spiritans took *nègres* as a nickname or adopted *les oeuvres des Noirs* as a pastoral focus. One notes the conjuncture of the aims of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny (founded by Anne-Marie Javouhey) with the Spiritan work with/for the Blacks. Javouhey opened educational and social institutions in French colonies (in Gorée and Saint-Louis, Senegal) and sent young Africans to train for the priesthood in the Holy Ghost Seminary. Javouhey was a great friend of Libermann's and there was an important collaboration between their congregations in the West African mission field.[30]

Les oeuvres des Noirs challenged the dehumanization of the *nègres*. The weakest link in the Spiritan option, shared by the Sisters of Cluny, was taking an eye off abolition. The language of abolition was totally absent from the writings of Libermann and his colleagues. A chance remark, regarding the "love affair" of his close collaborator de la Brunière with the *nègres*, uttered in jest or seriousness, speaks volumes: "Le bon M. de la Brunière est tout nègre" (Good old Mr. de la Brunière has turned out and out *nègre*).[31] It is likely that the violent Haitian revolution that exposed "the transformative power of revolutionary violence"[32] was too disturbing for the French Catholic hierarchy, theologians, and Libermann himself. Indeed, the participation of the French clergy in emancipation, says Seymour Drescher, was late.

> In France, both the theological curriculum and the training of colonial clergy [supervised by Spiritans] encouraged consideration of slavery as secondary to pastoral duties. When urged by British abolitionists to use its influence in favor of emancipation in 1842, the archdiocese of Paris responded by reiterating the need for preparing slaves for freedom through religious instruction [the Spiritan stance]. A dramatic change occurred during the 1846–1847 campaign. Bissette took the emancipation petition to a large clerical

retreat meeting in Paris. Hundreds of the Catholic clergy, including three bishops, signed up. A few months later, the archbishop of Paris seemed to remove impediments on further clerical participation.[33]

The change in the position of official French Catholicism, though encouraging, had limited impact on emancipation.

The Spiritan focus on the *Noirs* was strictly guided by evangelization and moralization. The lone Spiritan to lead an open assault on slavery in Bourbon, Alexandre Monnet, was hated by the slave owners and not supported by the Spiritan-trained priests and other colleagues (except Le Vavasseur). As noted above, he was expelled from Bourbon. Libermann, though sympathetic to Monnet, trained his eyes on the evangelization of the slaves, of the *Noirs*, and of the country of the Blacks. His model is Jesus the *Doulos*, the Slave or Servant (Phil. 2). He was nonabolitionist.[34]

Spiritans failed to confront institutional slavery or to guide the colonial clergy to embrace emancipation. True, Libermann was critical of the behavior of a colonial clergy that responded to an extraordinary situation with ordinary means. However, excessively cautious, he did not commit to emancipation and abolition. The Capuchins' reversal in the seventeenth century, thanks to Moirans, was far ahead of the Spiritan wait-and-see attitude. Who knows what would have happened had Libermann followed the "hundreds of the Catholic clergy, including three bishops," to sign in support of Bissette's tract?[35] Libermann sympathized with and even distributed the tracts of the politically astute Martinican activist, but he refused to sign. In the situation of the denial of humanity to the slave, sympathy is not enough.[36] Direct action was imperative. This fundamental error would display Spiritans in the mission field equivocating on the humanity and freedom of slaves, of Black bodies.

Nevertheless, *les oeuvres des Noirs* were consummate for Spiritans. Their empathetic identification with the *nègres*, the golden rule of imitating *Christos-Doulos*, set them apart. The saying of Paul applied as the foundation of their spirituality: "To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. *I have become all things to all people*, so that I might by any means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22; my emphasis).

The overriding Spiritan spirituality was laid out in Libermann's solemn instruction, in the letter of November 19, 1847, to the communities of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary in Dakar (Senegal), Gabon, and Amiens (France). The instruction declares, "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" (be Negro with the Negro).[37]

> Do not listen easily to the stories of those travelers around the coast when they speak to you about the small tribes they had visited. . . . I am sure that you would be able to judge quite differently our poor blacks than those who speak to you about them.
>
> Do not judge at first sight, nor according to what you have seen in Europe. . . . Strip yourself of Europe, its customs and its mentality. *Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres* [be Negro with the Negro] in order to form them as they ought to be, not in the European manner, but leave to them what is their own. Treat them as servants ought to treat their masters, according to the customs, manners and habits of their masters. All that you will do in order to perfect, sanctify, uplift them from their baseness, and make them little by little, in the long run, a people of God. It is what Saint Paul calls becoming all things to all people in order to win them to Jesus Christ.[38]

This letter provides the sharp cutting edge of the missiology of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary and of the Spiritans after 1848. It constituted their new lungs—the absolute, directing field performance. It poses the canons for the evaluation of their mission. Its adoption as guiding principle or controlling motif for prayer and pastoral performance set the Spiritans apart from the rest of the cohort of nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionaries. It molded minds and structured the commitment of those, like Léopold Sédar Senghor, who were educated in Spiritan schools.

Senghor, late president of Senegal, recalled the Libermann principle as proverbial for his personal transformation, enabling him to structure his approach to the *métissage* (mixing) of Africa and Europe. Senghor's preface to *Libermann (1802–1852): Une pensée et une mystique missionnaires* enthuses about *métissage*[39] and underlines the impact on himself of "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" to reevaluate Négritude (sharply criticized by Wole Soyinka). Négritude—chanted by the poet-theologian Senghor, like "Truth and Reconciliation" supervised by Bishop Desmond Tutu—imposes a different world order, an extraordinary spirituality of accommodation that anticipates the statesman's vision of Africa's bottomless reserves of humanity. Senghor, Soyinka argues, "serves as a bridge for the impulse that separates the memory-driven poet and the would-be transcendentalist over history. *To err is human, to atone, humane*, declares one: *to err is human, to forgive, African*, responds the other. . . . The poets have confronted, in advance of the event, the great humanistic dilemma of South Africa, and

it would appear, in the main, that the poet sometimes anticipates or vindicates the vision of the statesman."[40]

The Senegalese poet-cum-theologian and statesman was guided by the Spiritan absolute that, for Senghor, should not be interpreted in any derogatory sense (like Négritude). The absolute highlights the evangelical insight of *Paul's Letter to the Philippians, its performative miracle, the pathway to enfleshing métissage. Mestizaje* as the way to the future of renewed humankind is totally in accord with Virgilio Elizondo's insight, Pope John Paul II's focus on enculturation, and the Spiritan absolute.[41]

Spiritans and those they touched, becoming *nègres* with the *nègres*, are people alive for the integral liberation of the dehumanized and oppressed—the "Tasked," the slave-subhuman. Unlike the Anglican Church in England, French Catholicism, shackled by the Code Noir, never championed the abolition of slavery and was concerned only about its humanization. Yet the Spiritans (and Libermann) never wavered from being self-defined by the call to "be *nègres* with the *nègres*."

Perhaps Libermann knew that "slavery was doomed," as Paule Brasseur suggests. For political reasons, to ensure the security and life of his missionaries, he adopted a wait-and-see attitude. In pursuit of evangelistic effectiveness, he did not close ranks with the abolitionists, though privately he sympathized with the cause. Libermann's tactic became the directive in the pastoral-missionary field. Sympathize with the slaves, buy back the slaves with donations from the Holy Childhood, and yet shy away from uprooting the criminal performance of dehumanization from its source. Some believe that the Spiritan commitment went beyond the abolitionist struggle. Impossible! The failure to join abolition, championed by the Anglo-Protestants or Alexandre Monnet, left the Spiritan mission in the lurch. They defended the slaves but did not fight for their emancipation. They witnessed, as bystanders, to the slaves' dehumanization. They put all their money into "the evangelization of former slaves" and to the "important opening to the Black continent."[42] A fundamental equivocation dogged their strategy. Perhaps Spiritans helped normalize the Enlightenment representation of the *nègre*-Negro-slave as subhuman and the inferiorization of Blacks or Africans evident in nineteenth-century travelogues and missionary notes. The rhetoric of Christianization, civilization (colonization), and commerce—the three Cs—by Livingstone and Stanley was indifferently performed by Spiritans: all were insensitive to the connection of the three-C regime with the subjugation of Black Africans. The equivocation

becomes collusion, as manifested in the relationship between the Spiritans and their slaves in the mission field.

Spiritans and Their Slaves: From Child-Slaves to Slaves of the Mission

In west central Africa (Landana, in the Kacongo kingdom) and eastern Africa (Bagamoyo-Zanzibar), purchased or repurchased and "recaptive" slaves,[43] catechized, civilized, and baptized, received the faith. The Slaves of the Mission were the ancestors of Catholicism in modern Africa. By the inscrutable mercies of God, they presented their "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1). These Catholic communities are often ignored by church historiography that hovers around clerical and missionary hagiography.

In *Royaume Kongo*, Kabwita wondered whether the so-called Slaves of the Church—slaves of the missionaries, property of the Capuchins—really belonged to the Church. With the Spiritans the matter is clear. When they arrived at Landana and at Loango (in the Ngoyi kingdom) about forty years after the departure of the Capuchins, Spiritans directed their educational-civilizational and Christianizing mission toward four interconnected social, political, and religious segments of the population. The first and second groups were not slaves. But the third and fourth, the prime targets of *les oeuvres des Noirs*, were. These were carefully described by Charles Duparquet in his letter of 1873 to the key donor agency, Holy Childhood (Sainte Enfance, in Lyon), and in his letter of April 6, 1875, to the superior general, Ignatius Schwindenhammer.

Writing from Landana in 1873 and in 1875, Duparquet paid close attention to detail to keep the generous donors fully informed and secure the comments and advice of the superior general. He clarified the Spiritan mission strategy. The narrative, which detailed Spiritan pastoral-educational work, also contains (Portuguese and French) colonial intrigues: the French frigate berthed in nearby Gabon was on hand to protect the Spiritans either from the Portuguese or from the kings and princes governing the region. Since the region was the hub of the slave trade in west central Africa, the letters clarified the stand of the missionaries regarding slavery.

The Spiritan educational work was popular in west central Africa. The first category of children recruited were the freeborn, mainly from the nobility. Parents were interested in their children's education, not in sponsoring the Spiritan evangelistic project. The inconvenience was that none

of the educated children of the nobility was available for ministerial training or church-related works. Parents took their children away as soon as they acquired knowledge of European ways.

In his first letter to the director of Holy Childhood, dated October 6, 1873, Duparquet noted that most of the children entrusted to the Spiritans for initiation into "European civilization" were children of the freeborn, from the leading people (nobility) of the region. In another letter to the superior general, from 1875, he dropped the following vignette: the "Mafouque," governor, of Loango (named Domingos or Dominique), in addition to bringing four slaves for sale to the Spiritans (one woman and three men), had brought two of his sons for the purpose of receiving Spiritan or European education. Spiritan education necessarily involved catechizing and evangelizing to meet the mission objective. In the 1873 letter to Holy Childhood, Duparquet provided another vignette. There was an 18-year-old youth, passionate for education, who presented himself at their door, begging to become the slave of the Spiritans provided that he was admitted into the Spiritan house to acquire knowledge. (The quest for education was popular, not simply the preserve of the nobility.) Spiritans welcomed the unnamed youth. He continued to serve faithfully in the house. But the Spiritan policy regarding self-enslavement was clear: "He remains always free and is considered not a slave but a child of the house over whom we have right of paternal authority."[44] The phrase "child of the house," or "paternal authority," would make the youth a classificatory minor, with the Spiritans as classificatory father, in the fluid Kongo slave lexicon.

The quest for education was intense and reminds one of Mvemba a Nzinga three centuries earlier. Mvemba's educational project and the intimate connection between education and evangelization-Christianization constituted the core of his Catholic and modernizing ideology. Spiritans were in good company. Their educational ministry was following a pattern very popular in the encounter between west central Africans and southern Europeans.

The next category of children were the mulattos. These were born out of marriage or liaisons between African women and Europeans. (The liaison ended when the male European left or returned to Europe.) The practice of "customary marriage" was highly developed in Saint-Louis and Gorée in Senegal, before and after the French Revolution. For example, the Sisters of Cluny opened a girls' school in Gorée (1817) and Saint-Louis (1822) that admitted French girls and *signares* (mulattos), realizing both the missionary intent of evangelization and the French colonial policy of assimilation.

When in 1826 Javouhey opened a school for Black girls' education, the Black students were segregated from the whites (French) and *signares*, though orphaned *signares* were admitted to the Black school.[45]

Spiritan education in Landana followed the post–French Revolution assimilationist policy, though evangelization remained the top priority. Like the Sisters of Cluny, the Spiritans were preoccupied with the education and Christianization of mulattos. Since Christian blood ran in the children's veins (being fathered by white Portuguese or other Europeans), they needed to be instructed. Spiritans lacked the manpower to spread the educational-evangelistic work along the trade posts or factories that dotted the coastline where European-African mixed families, and mulatto children, were found. Consequently, to achieve this educational-evangelizing objective, Duparquet insisted that parents bring their children to the mission enclosure, the Spiritan boarding house. Educating them might lead to their being baptized for their salvation. They might even become part of the Indigenous clergy or, alternatively, assume other social responsibilities in their communities.[46]

It is remarkable that the objectives of the Spiritan mission to the Blacks and the mission of the Sisters of Cluny converged. The difference is that perhaps the Spiritans did not segregate the classrooms of the mulattos from freeborn Blacks or the purchased or repurchased child (Black) slaves. They were lodged in different hostels: Holy Heart of Mary (mulattos), Saint James (freeborn, under the supervision of Father Carrie), and Saint Joseph (repurchased child-slaves). Perhaps Javouhey, in Muslim-dominated Senegal, may have had stronger convictions about the overarching impact of the boarding school in separating the children from their parents and their country, removing them from Islamic socialization, and assimilating them into French civilization. For Javouhey, the boarding school was "a great good for religion if we succeed in this establishment." Without the boarding school, "we will never be able to make [our] religion known to blacks." Consequently, cultural alienation was imperative for effective assimilation: "We must distance them from the marabouts, separate them from the crowd in order to enlighten them and give them a taste of religion and the advantages that it brings."[47] There were no marabouts or Muslim clerics in Landana. In eastern Africa, the Muslim community was not receptive to Christianization. Duparquet's focus on education and evangelization for the mulattos, in Landana, was to save souls and to raise the elite that would impact church and society. Without in any way undervaluing the liberative power of Spiritan-European education, the critical remarks about

missionary education policy by Australian-Nigerian historian Elizabeth Isichei have merit: "There was an obvious benefit to be gained from education." However, "the missionaries succeeded in maintaining their virtual monopoly of education, and obtained adherents, not through dialogue with adults, but by cutting children off from their traditional culture and placing them in the artificially unanimous environment of the school."[48]

The third category introduced into the Spiritan boardinghouse in Landana were the purchased children, *jeunes esclaves* (young slaves), purchased from the thriving slave markets. These were plentiful in the Boma market. ("On peut en acheter facilement surtout à Boma," said Duparquet.)

The purchased child-slaves in Landana in 1875–76 were perhaps similar to the repurchased child-slaves in Bagamoyo. Earlier in Bagamoyo-Zanzibar, Duparquet confirmed in a letter to Schwindenhammer dated April 9, 1872, that repurchasing slaves was central to *les oeuvres*. "All that the mission can do is repurchase the children to make them Christians," he wrote. "And, God willing, prepare the future of the formation of an indigenous clergy. This work is our central occupation."[49]

Hippolyte Carrie, in the financial report submitted to the superior general from Landana on January 5, 1876, distinguished between repurchasing children and purchasing slaves. Purchasing slaves (*achat des esclaves*) meant purchasing adults who were lodged in Saint Benedict the Moor hostel. Repurchasing child-slaves (*rachat des enfants*) involved children only. These were lodged in the Saint Joseph hostel. However, in the 1875 annual report, the "income" section indicated money received for repurchasing (*rachat*) children, while the "expenditure" column noted that money was spent to purchase (*achat*) children. "Purchase" (*achat*; *acheter*), "repurchase" (*rachat*; *racheter*), and "sell" (*vendre*) appear to be interchangeable.[50] It is troubling, from the correspondence, that Spiritan involvement in slave traffic was key to *les oeuvres des Noirs*.

The educational work, directed toward building the local church, was top priority. The plan was elaborated in 1870 in East Africa (Bagamoyo-Zanzibar). Bagamoyo served as the training ground (providing the orphanages and the schools). During the first vice-provincial chapter (assembly) of the Spiritan community, held in Zanzibar in 1870, the locations of schools, orphanages, workshops, the scholasticate, and training facilities for prospective seminarians and nuns were extensively discussed. The language of instruction from primary school (French) and the curriculum preoccupied the assembly. The chapter discussed the need for the initial settlement of the "children" in Bagamoyo and then the expansion to agricultural settlements

in the interior. The use of Bagamoyo as a training ground for the not-yet-married "children" (*les enfants*)[51] in agriculture was fully discussed in the thirteenth session of the district assembly. Mhonda and Mandera were each chosen as a prime location for a "Christian village"—the experimental and peasant-trending transitional cell (*noyau*) for the evangelization of the deep interior.[52]

In west central Africa (Landana), the Spiritans homed in on purchasing child-slaves as *les oeuvres des Noirs*, pure and simple. Children, preferred to adult slaves, were inexpensive, at thirty-five to forty francs a slave. The returns were good. They repaid their price through very profitable agricultural work. They formed the nucleus of evangelization. They would be educated, and from them could come Christians who would train other Black people in the region; God willing, vocations to the priesthood would come from them. The language is similar to Javouhey's: these children, educated and civilized, would become the flaming "lights of the Faith and civilization."[53] A good example is the first priest of Landana—the repurchased slave Charles Maondé, who was ordained on December 17, 1892. (He later became ill, underwent a procedure in Paris, and died on June 20, 1907. He was buried in the Spiritan cemetery at Chevilly-Larue.) It is ironic that the educational plan developed in Bagamoyo-Zanzibar (1870), with Duparquet participating, failed to produce ordained priests while its application in Landana, led by Duparquet, yielded fruit.

The final group, Slaves of the Mission, mentioned in the 1875–76 correspondence, were adults purchased (*achat*) with allocations from the Propagation of the Faith. The donors' wishes were not specific—only with the general indication "les oeuvres des noirs." Since this fourth category did not figure in the 1873 report to Holy Childhood, Duparquet provided details in a letter from April 6, 1875, to keep the superior general fully informed. They were not part of the mission target in eastern Africa or other centers of Spiritan mission in the two Guineas. Their inclusion in *les oeuvres* and the financial source of their purchase reveal a voluntary, planned participation by Spiritans in slavery and the slave trade. These slaves were regarded as property, resident in a colony within the mission enclosure. They were restricted, denied freedom. Escapees were severely sanctioned (put in stocks or iron chains—*libambou* or *libambo* in Portuguese). Alternatively, they could be sold or exchanged with other slaves, preferably child-slaves, of other white colonist-slavers located in the numerous trade posts on the west central African coastline. The patron saint of their colony was Benedict the Moor. They were supervised in farm

work by Brother Fortunatus. The fruit of their labor within their assigned colony belonged entirely to them. When they worked outside their own restricted property, the mission paid them the wages of ordinary laborers. This arrangement was very helpful to the "poor people" (*pauvres gens*; unfortunates) to enable them to be self-sufficient. (The fruit of their labor was therefore for their maintenance, to not be a burden on the mission.) They worked for their upkeep, for the upkeep of their families (if married), and for the mission. They also functioned as police, *vigilantes*, or armed guards. They protected missionaries from the threats of the Black population or anyone who endangered the missionaries' security. This was a common service rendered by the slave to the master; the same obtained with the slaves of other white settlers.[54] Duparquet wondered where the slaves learned this practice—visiting vengeance on anyone who attacked the white slave master. The practice could go back to the structure of slavery in west central Africa, since the slave, as minor, was dependent on, defended, and was defended by the classificatory father (whether governors, missionaries, or members of the nobility). Like other slave masters, Spiritans denied freedom to their slaves.

Spiritan Denial of Freedom to the "Liberated" Slaves: Betrayal of Their Mission Absolute

The above summary of the categories of persons connected with the Spiritan educational-evangelistic ministry, and the clarification of the Spiritans' attitude toward their slaves, puts in context the predictable interpretive conflict that eventually emerged—the radically differing perceptions of freedom by the Black slaves and the white Spiritan missionaries. It raises a conflict of interpretation for students of the history of Christian mission in Africa—Afrocentric, Eurocentric, colonial, or postcolonial—with predictably differing interpretive frameworks. The interpretive exercise could reveal either attentiveness to the voice of the *unsung* (my option) or preoccupation with missionary hagiography.

To introduce the challenging interpretation of *les oeuvres des Noirs* and its execution in the mission field, decoupling *les oeuvres* from Black freedom and Black humanity, one continues with reading and commenting on Duparquet's letters from Landana. The formation of an Indigenous clergy, carefully argued in 1872 in Bagamoyo-Zanzibar, was the overriding concern of the Spiritan mission in East Africa. However, in Landana in 1875, there was a shift in focus. Donations for *les oeuvres* were used to purchase

adult slaves, "les hommes et les femmes dans la force de l'âge" (healthy men and women; adults in their prime).

The donations from Holy Childhood (Sainte Enfance) were explicitly for the repurchase or purchase of child-slaves. The intent of the donors was clearly defined. Donors were encouraged to adopt the children, "enfants esclaves," as their own. However, the decision to use the nondescript funds for *les oeuvres des Noirs* to buy adult slaves is baffling. They were under the patronage of the Black Saint, Benedict the Moor. Excited slave traders on the supply end of the market brought many adults to the Spiritans. The market was saturated. The Spiritan community was cautious, however, imposing restrictions on purchases to evaluate how they would work out in their overall plan (that is, farming for the mission).

The origin of these adults was not specified. Were they kidnapped, war captives, pawns, or tricked into becoming Spiritan property? Without scruple, Spiritans participated in the slave trade. By the time Duparquet was writing his letter of April 6, 1875, there were sixteen adult slaves in the Benedict the Moor colony—five women and eleven men. Some were bought for as little as twenty francs (those within the age range of fifty to fifty-five). Some were worth the price of three sheep (or forty-five francs—inexpensive, mused Duparquet, referring to Father Carrie's purchase of a pretty eighteen-to-twenty-year-old girl). The difference between these *esclaves adultes* (adult slaves) and the *enfants esclaves* (child-slaves) is that the fruit of their labor belonged to them; the mission received and paid for whatever they produced. Despite this distinction, the slave condition was unequivocal: "Ils restent cependant esclaves de la mission." "Slaves of the Mission" is their designation.[55]

Kabwita could have doubts about the Capuchin equivocation on possessing slaves. Duparquet was unequivocal: Spiritans chose the slippery slope into the slave trade, moving away from the Propaganda Fide–approved purchase or repurchase of child-slaves. They chose the labor-supplying and mission-supporting Slaves of the Mission. Years later, in 1896, Cardinal Ledochowski, the prefect of Propaganda Fide, enjoined Hippolyte Carrie, apostolic vicar of the French Congo (and cherished colleague of Duparquet) to ensure that purchasing child-slaves did not give the impression of involvement in the slave trade.[56]

Capuchins repurchased or purchased Christians from Protestant heretics. But by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, at the sunset of the slave trade (abolished by Brazil in 1888), the Spiritans were part of the despicable traffic in slaves. Spiritans could even be compared with the

Capuchins in gaming the trade, though there is no evidence of Spiritans in west central Africa exporting slaves (like the Capuchins) to the Americas. Nevertheless, the custom of seizing debtors and people accused of stealing, putting them in stocks or iron chains (*libambou*), and forcing them to do slave labor was part of the Spiritan practice.[57]

Stealing was a capital sin. One thief who was caught paid for all that was recorded as stolen or became the proprietor's slave. The Spiritan cook in Landana was accused of, or was caught, stealing a fowl. Spiritans had lost ten of the precious birds. The culprit was threatened by Father Carrie with slavery if he did not pay for the ten fowls. Duparquet reported the conversation between their cook and Father Carrie with a touch of satisfaction: "Someone recently stole 10 fowls from us; you must pay for them. Oh, that is too much, cried the thief. That is your business, replied the Father; pay for the 10 fowls or become my slave. The poor fellow reflected for a moment, preferred his freedom, and agreed to pay for the fowls."[58] This telling vignette decouples *les oeuvres des Noirs* from the freedom and humanity of the *Noirs*. Slavery and the slave trade diminished the people of Kacongo and surrounding regions. The Spiritan absolute of being *nègres* with the *nègres* appeared to be totally drowned out of the Spiritan consciousness. The sympathetic study of Spiritans and their slaves in eastern Africa by Johannes Henschel fails to address the lack of freedom that led to frequent flights from the Christian village.[59] To claim that Spiritans were champions of freedom in west central and eastern Africa requires evidence.

Duparquet's careful description of *les oeuvres des Noirs* in eastern Africa in his 1872 letter to Schwindenhammer captures the normalized Spiritan insensitivity to the freedom of Black bodies. Duparquet emphasized evangelization-Christianization through purchasing child-slaves. Passionate for *les oeuvres*, Duparquet was distressed that British abolitionist policy was undermining the grand Spiritan design. The British warships' policing of the waters caused the unit price of the slaves to rise, causing inflation. The British policy was threatening to end the slave trade, slavery, and Spiritan work.[60] In Duparquet's own words:

> However, Very Rev. Father, the existence of this work appears now to be threatened by its own development; development that is not in accord with the energy and the resources of the mission.
>
> In fact, on the one hand, slaves have become much more expensive and rarer to find than in the past. In the past, the cost of one

> child slave was 25 francs. Today to buy a child of between 12 to 14 years one must pay more than 75 francs. On the other hand, day by day, the slave trade continues to diminish. The English are so persevering and tenacious in the war against it that one already foresees the day it will cease to exist. Nevertheless, it will not be the end of slavery. And one could always purchase here and there child slaves, but no longer in large numbers as it was before in the Zanzibar market.[61]

Duparquet's letter displays insensitivity to the humanity, freedom, rights, and dignity of the Black children. It is hard to believe.

The letter was an argument in defense of the Spiritan community's devotion to *les oeuvres des Noirs*. From the sources of Spiritan history, no Spiritan pioneer missionary understood Libermann as well as Duparquet.[62] It is therefore hard to believe that the above letter emanated from the flaming light (*bilenge ya mwinda*, "Youth of Light")[63] of Spiritan missiology, anchored in the evangelization of the Blacks and the establishment of the local church through the formation of a local clergy. Despite Libermann's disinclination to join forces with abolitionists, in word and in deed, Paule Brasseur claims that Libermann was persuaded that slavery was "doomed."[64] Perhaps! Nonetheless, Duparquet's outrageous position proves that on the matter of the slave trade and slavery there can be no half measures. The wait-and-see attitude ("la politique d'attentisme") adopted by the Spiritans, following the French Catholic ecclesiastical policy tethered to the 1685 Code Noir, was perilous for Black bodies. It was a misunderstanding, a betrayal, of the Spiritan absolute, "Be *nègres* with the *nègres*."

Duparquet's position sums up the epistemic narrowness of the Spiritan interpretation of *les oeuvres des Noirs*. To appreciate the full effect of the debacle, one must underline Duparquet's exemplarity in following the Libermann evangelistic ethos. His letters provide a trove of information enabling the Spiritan and non-Spiritan analyst to scrutinize or evaluate the controversy, in the pastoral field, over the Spiritan (Libermann's) missiology and ecclesiology.

Despite the epistemic narrowness of Duparquet's interpretation of freedom, his devotion to *les oeuvres* was legendary. On his way to Gabon in west central Africa, he observed the peoples and noted spots with healthy European settlements (e.g., the Accra hills in present-day Ghana). Learning that the Society of African Missions (SMA, founded by Melchior de Marion Brésillac) was embarking for Ouidah (the Dahomey kingdom that he

was visiting in 1856), he provided useful information on the wonderful people, the three European settlements (Portuguese, French, and English), and the king/emperor (highly agreeable and well disposed toward the French, assuring security for the missionaries). There was even a priest from Brazil (later corrected as coming from São Tomé) ministering in Ouidah.[65] Duparquet fulfils the requirements of "participant observation" very dear to anthropologists.[66]

On evangelization, Duparquet followed Libermann's theology of the local church. The Church must have a local clergy and, as in the Baltimore ecclesiastical province in the United States, the Church must have residential bishops, not apostolic vicars. The truth must be told: Libermann, to secure approval for his 1846 *Memoir* to Propaganda Fide, pressured by the secretary to the Propaganda, requested apostolic vicars.[67] Libermann's ideas on the local church, developed under the influence of Msgr. Jean Luquet (consultant to Propaganda Fide), and on residential bishops, were also embraced by Marion Brésillac .[68] Duparquet adopted as a guide the missiology and ecclesiology of Luquet–Libermann–Marion Brésillac, expressed with clarity in Libermann's *Memoir*. In sum, Libermann stated, "Having a true clergy is the sign of a church; it is a church with a bishop acting freely and fully by virtue of the grace reserved to the episcopal consecration. . . . The Episcopacy, an indigenous Episcopacy, is therefore the true foundation of those churches that our Lord reserves to be enduring."[69]

While Duparquet was exceptional in following the Luquet-Libermann ecclesiology, this was unacceptable to some Spiritans in west central and eastern Africa. His abrasive and even quarrelsome insistence on the application of the Libermann ethos created conflict and shortened his stay in mission locations. He did not last long during his first assignment to Gabon. Recalled to France and retained in the formation house at Langonnet, he was later reassigned to East Africa. At Bagamoyo-Zanzibar he stayed with the local superior, Father Antoine Horner, for two fruitful and tempestuous years.

The reasons for the recall from Gabon were ecclesiological and missiological. In his letter to Schwindenhammer dated September 28, 1857, Duparquet noted the disagreements within the Spiritan community over Libermann's position on the formation of an Indigenous clergy to lead the local church. The community disagreed on the establishment of schools from which those with signs of a maturing vocation would be selected and admitted for further education, eventually undergoing priestly formation in France. The sharp discord, or controversy, over Libermann's legacy is

revelatory. "One evening," Duparquet reports, "I took the liberty to say a few words on the plan of the Venerable Father on the question of the possibility of an Indigenous clergy. Immediately everyone turned against me as if I was uttering heresy. They claimed it was an impossible idea. And that the Venerable Father was greatly mistaken (on the matter)."[70]

Relationships in the community deteriorated. There were threats that Duparquet would be recalled to France and eventually denied profession, as a permanent member, in the Congregation. But he did not waver. His love for west central Africa was legendary, as he was convinced of God's call to work there. He could leave the Spiritans, go to Portugal, fall on his knees before the Patriarch of Lisbon and return, by way of Portugal, to minister in the Congo or in any Portuguese colony in the region.[71] The passion for the work of the Blacks (*les oeuvres des Noirs*), instead of diminishing, increased with opposition. Duparquet was persistent, tenacious, and (annoyingly) the flagbearer of the Libermann ethos. Yet Duparquet decoupled the freedom of Black bodies from *les oeuvres*.

Contrast Duparquet with the more dominant (and even racist) Spiritan performance in west central Africa, best illustrated by the larger-than-life Prosper Augouard, the apostolic vicar of Ubangi. Augouard, an expert geographer, had a passion for *les oeuvres des Noirs*. He carefully mapped the Congo and Ubangi-Chari Rivers, making navigation secure in central Africa. He was the quintessential Frenchman—persuading central African rulers to accept French rather than Belgian patronage. He was passionately Catholic and ultramontane, radically opposed to Gallicanism and to the Italians who took over the Papal States from Pius IX. But Augouard ignored the Libermann-Duparquet focus on the local church, one built on the local clergy. Unmoved by the teachings of the popes on the local clergy, such as Gregory XVI's *Neminem Profecto* (1845) and Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud* (1919), Augouard's racialist Catholicism was on display. The superiority of the white man and the religion (Catholicism) supervised by the white clergy was the incontestable path to evangelization. Expect vocations from the jungle—the "quagmire of paganism," as Augouard puts it? Impossible! "Nevertheless," he notes, "one should not ignore the fact that it is difficult to grow vocations within the quagmire [*bourbier*] of paganism. Besides, contrary to what is generally believed, the *Noirs* have more confidence in European priests than in their own kind."[72]

By contrast, Duparquet, following Libermann, was in accord with the teachings of the popes. Here lies the aporia: uncompromisingly dedicated to education and to the Indigenous clergy, Duparquet was still at ease with

denying "freedom" to the Slaves of the Mission. (Were they socially dead?) The ease with which the humanity of Black bodies (most of them mere children) was decoupled from evangelization transformed the Gospel into an instrument of oppression. This blasphemy, this tragedy supervised by Spiritan luminaries like Duparquet, was pervasive. Was it normalized, perhaps, through the foundational pathology of French Catholicism, held captive by the 1685 Code Noir?

French Catholicism, the Basis of the Missionaries' Indifference to the Humanity and Freedom of Black Bodies

The question that beggars the imagination is how Duparquet, a flaming torch of Spiritan mission, could be so insensitive to the intimate connection between *les oeuvres des Noirs* (the work for/with Blacks) and the freedom of Black bodies. Was the dominant culture of French Catholicism, which accepted the legality of the Code Noir and colluded with the French state in ensuring its application, to blame? Spiritan priest Arsène Aubert summarizes Church-state relations in regard to the denial of freedom to slaves: "Slavery in the French colonies was regulated by the 'Black Code,' written in 1685, revised in 1724, and implemented up until 1848. It gives the masters total power over the slaves, including branding, mutilation and using the lash. The Church in the colonies was run by Apostolic Prefects . . . appointed by the civil authorities . . . subject to the slave masters. . . . Many priests were shipped back to France because the masters felt they were getting too close to the slaves."[73]

The representation of Blacks as *nègres*, sustained by Church-state collusion and encoded in theological manuals (used in seminaries and clerical formation houses), transmitted centuries-old ideas that justified slavery. Slaves were legitimate property. The most influential theological manuals were those of Carrière and Bouvier, used by Sulpicians and in over sixty seminaries. Msgr. Benoit Truffet, the first Spiritan apostolic vicar of the two Guineas (resident in Senegal), asked Bouvier to revise his manual, to change the definition of slaves as property, and to repudiate the legitimation of the slave trade. Bouvier, bishop of Mans, preferred to quibble over "licit and illicit" and failed to modify his views in a new edition of the manual.[74] These ideas had a hold on clerical students. It left Spiritans benumbed to the point of betraying their absolute. French Catholicism, never "in the forefront of the opposition to slavery," preferred to quibble about humanization rather than abolition.[75]

Duparquet, perhaps operating under the weight of the above assumptions, could discuss (without feeling) the adults, Slaves of the Mission, whom Spiritans bought and traded. Catechizing this category of persons, who were set in their ways and "thick-headed" ("la tête passablement dure"), would take more time. They would work the farms and would gradually be catechized, led into civilization, and Christianized through baptism. Though the "fruit of their labor" belonged to them, the typical French colonizing/civilizing policy of indentured and forced labor (*engagement à temps*) kept them unfree Slaves of the Mission: "We do not accord them freedom until they are well settled, converted and civilized. Or else, it would become a totally useless enterprise."[76] In other words, effective evangelization, establishing the Christian village with these Slaves of the Mission, was unrealizable without violence.

The hope of an enduring Christianization hung on the Christian village, the mission enclosure where the villagers constituted the reliable cohort who, whether the missionaries remained or departed (as happened with the descendants of the slaves of the Capuchins in Soyo, deprived of the presence of the clergy for over a century), would keep the faith through ongoing catechetical transmission and prayers. In eastern Africa, liberated Black bodies radically contested this inhuman Spiritan ideology.

The Duparquet-Spiritan experiment in Landana in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had been played out fifty years earlier by the Sisters of Cluny in Senegal (West Africa). Javouhey, a friend of Libermann's, was a flaming light of the French Catholic civilizing mission. There is a homology between her Christianizing-civilizing convictions and those of the Spiritans. Though nonabolitionist, she was not entangled in the slave trade. She had major insight into church-becoming, crossing the difficult "gender line in the French church" to intervene directly "in the sacerdotal terrain,"[77] and she spearhead the priestly formation of Africans from Saint Louis and Senegal. The Africans were received into the Seminary of the Holy Ghost in 1840. The superior, Father Aimable Fourdinier, enthused, "If these Africans reach the priesthood . . . they can be used in an attempt to bring the Faith to the interior of Africa. . . . Whatever comes of it, it is always a great advantage to have learned from experience that, just like white people, negroes can acquire a knowledge of theology and reach the priesthood."[78]

In the effort to re-create a type of French peasantry in Senegal, Javouhey secured, through her friend Jean-François Roger (governor in Saint-Louis),

land concessions comprising nine hundred acres for a farm project in Dagana, along the Senegal River. The peasants would constitute the core of the "Christian village." The project failed not because of the Frenchwoman's heart but because of the paternalistic and colonizing ideology of European dominance—the white man (*Le Blanc*) knows what is best for the Black (*Le Noir*)! In *Civilizing Habits*, Sarah Ann Curtis sums up Javouhey's evangelizing doctrine, revealing her heart and soul, directed by her close-to-the-ground African experience. Writing to her sister, Rosalie, Javouhey said, "The time that I spent in Africa [two fruitful years] strengthened me in the resolution to consecrate my existence to the care of an abused and unhappy people. . . . Only religion can give solid principles without danger, because its laws, its dogmas attack not only the crude exterior vices, but change the heart, destroy evil at its root. Do you want to civilize Africa? Start by establishing religion there. . . . The youth seem to me to merit all your solicitude."[79]

Anne-Marie Javouhey, François Libermann, and Charles Duparquet shared the same view on religion (Catholicism) and its power to transform the racially discriminated against and enslaved Blacks. Unfortunately, their blinkered eyes were never trained on freeing white slaveholders from the crime of considering Black bodies as property. It is not even clear that they read or were affected by the writings or tracts of the abolitionists! Brasseur, a sympathetic reviewer of Libermann and the Spiritans, notes that it is unclear which books or tracts Libermann's early and close associates Frederick Le Vavasseur and Eugene Tisserant read. What is clear is that "the idea of combat for the abolition of slavery never figured in their writings, nor in that of Libermann" ("l'idée d'un combat pour l'abolition de l'esclavage n'apparaît jamais sous leur plume, ni sous celle de Libermann").[80] Surprisingly, Paul Kollman, in *The Evangelization of Slaves and Catholic Origins in Eastern Africa*, claims that "Libermann was a committed abolitionist." Contradicting himself, he notes that Spiritans "were not abolitionists." He later claims that "Spiritans embraced abolition, joining Cardinal Lavigerie's vigorous and widely known antislavery campaign."[81]

Libermann and his friend Javouhey were kindred souls—passionate for the evangelization of Black people. These two influential Catholic figures, deeply unhappy about the evil effects of slavery, refused to directly confront whites enslaving Blacks. Libermann, followed by the Spiritans, was content to indirectly challenge the hostile white colonists. In a letter from September 22, 1842 to Monsieur Galos, the director of the colonies,

he clarifies the limits of the Spiritan missiological interest, adopting a pacifist attitude to reassure the slave owners.[82] Next, the evangelistic drive—to change or convert the slaves—was lucidly described to satisfy Monsieur Galos: "The core (focus) of our work consists of devoting ourselves to the instruction of the Blacks, to bring them out [redeem/save them] from the brutishness [*abrutissement*, mindless state] and the vices into which they have succumbed [*croupissent*, stagnated] for so long."

Spiritan evangelistic fervor was winning on both fronts—using Catholicism (religion) to transform the Blacks (not *nègres*). (Note, though, that *abrutissement* [mindless state] and *croupissent* [stagnated] are descriptive of the *nègre* [slave-Negro-subhuman].) Religion was therefore advancing the French colonial-civilizational project, justifying the government's funding of the mission.[83] Libermann had a word on evangelizing the whites: "We do not abandon entirely, for that matter, the care of the Whites; but we do not concern ourselves with them except where the spiritual good of the Blacks is in question. . . . In all the places where we find Black slaves we insist on [we educate or train them on] the submission and obedience to their masters, and we try to convince the masters [*d'obtenir des maîtres*] to treat them according to the rules of Christian charity."[84]

The proclamation of the Gospel, for the salvation of the souls of the *Noirs*, occupies center stage. Consequently, the Spiritans' noninvolvement in freeing Black bodies through abolition was an anthropological-evangelistic political choice. In his 1846 *Memoir* to the Propaganda, Libermann commended the abolitionist movement (without naming it) in Europe, but he cautioned that it could be "damning and disastrous for their [Black] souls."[85] The deliberate Spiritan policy to not focus on abolition and the freedom of the *Noirs*, to not affirm their full humanity, normalized Black inferiority in the consciousness of Spiritans in the mission field—with terrible consequences.

Brasseur notes that Javouhey shared similar operational assumptions, unwilling to be associated with the abolitionist trope of Abbé Grégoire.[86] Javouhey and the Sisters of Cluny, like the Spiritans, reduced the lasting effect of their work by ignoring abolition. This great French woman religious who sparred with bishops and colonial administrators may be remembered more for advancing French colonialism than advancing the humanity of Africans. The discriminatory policy against Black girls in her schools in Saint-Louis, Senegal, and the endorsement of segregation[87] radically limited the touted impact of religion (Catholicism) and civilization on the "inferior" Black Africans.

Spiritan Mission Entangled with Slavery and Colonization: Betrayal of the Absolute

The equivocation in the Libermann legacy, the decision to neither commit to abolition nor embrace the full humanity and freedom of the *Noirs*, was bound to spawn monsters. The prophet Hosea was right: "For they [Spiritans] sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7). Montesquieu's cynical musings also apply: "It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians."[88] To profess Christianity, or specifically Catholicism, is to affirm that anyone who "received the water of holy baptism" should never "remain a slave, and all those who have been born or would be born to Christian parents should remain free,"[89] in the words of Laurenço da Silva.

In the Spiritan mission field, the shackles imposed on evangelism, or religion, by its intimate connection with civilization in the form of French colonization, were exposed in Charles Duparquet. The Spiritan luminary supervised the casual implementation of the violent conversion to Catholicism of the Slaves of the Mission. Tertullian would scream from his third-century North African tomb. This denial of religious freedom spawns irreligion. Alexandre Monnet, the ninth Spiritan superior general, would disagree with Duparquet. In Bourbon (Réunion), he noted the intimate link between emancipation, civism, and Catholicism. Freedom ensured civism as well as the development of mature faith. The Capuchin priest Epifanio de Moirans defined freedom as the highest gift, protected by natural and divine law and never to be denied anyone. This led twentieth-century Spiritan scholar Michel Legrain to celebrate Moirans's extraordinary antislavery and abolitionist stance.[90]

Spiritan slaves in west central Africa were easy to identify. They could not produce four clan chiefs to testify to their being freeborn. Escapees, according to Duparquet, were recaptured with the help of the highly cooperative *indigènes*, who were handsomely paid seventeen francs for returning a runaway slave (some originally purchased for twenty-five francs). Spelling out the high penalties awaiting escapees, Duparquet provides insight into the Spiritan disregard for the humanity of Blacks, contradicting the humanitarian intentionality of *les oeuvres*. The escapee was chained (i.e., put in *libambo*—iron chains). A recidivist would be sold to any of the slave owners in the numerous coastal trading posts or exchanged with another slave, preferably a child-slave.[91]

The Spiritan resistance to the slaves' search for alternative zones of freedom through flight or escape is disappointing. Moirans's legal and theological arguments in favor of maroons, of freedom as an overriding value, radically contradicts Spiritan performance in Landana and Bagamoyo-Zanzibar. Against Spiritan thinking, for the enslaved, flight or escape was not only a right but also a moral obligation. The Blacks must escape so as "to take care of their own eternal salvation."[92] Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, the colonial administrator of French Congo (north of the Spiritan center in Landana, ecclesiastically under Prosper Augouard), had deep doubts about the Spiritan grasp of *la liberté*. To clarify his opposition to Augouard's request of a steamer, on January 19, 1895, he drew the attention of the French minister of the colonies to the fact that the missionary practice of repurchasing child-slaves created a fundamental misunderstanding. The African population, the child-slaves, and their buyers and sellers understood the "humanitarian" missionary work as nothing but "un changement de maître et non pas un changement de condition" (change of masters rather than change of the condition of slavery). The missionaries were impeding French civilizational ideology. They refused to allow "the people we encounter to understand the fruitful idea of human freedom that is our duty to bring to them as seed of their upcoming recovery."[93]

Slavery was not a condition one would wish upon anyone in fifteenth- to nineteenth-century eastern or west central Africa or in the Americas. The stiff penalties visited on maroons in the Americas were like those visited on escapees ("ceux qui se sauvent") in Spiritan Landana or Bagamoyo-Zanzibar. The persistence of flights and escapes reveals the slaves' irresistible struggle against their unfreedom, whoever might be their master. Freedom throbbed in the heart of the slaves.

Maroons in the Americas have attracted interesting studies, displaying not only the agency of enslaved Africans but also the complex role of religion (Catholicism, Protestantism, and Indigenous African religions) in slave revolts and their efforts to reinvent their world. David Daniels's study of Kongolese Christianity captures the efforts of Kongo-Angola Catholic slaves in the "evangelization" of other "non-Christian" Africans, engaging in the Spiritan *les oeuvres des Noirs*. The agency and organizational competence of escapees, along with the confederated "settlements" they fashioned in Palmares, Brazil, resulted in "the first major African state in the Americas." The flexible combination of Kongo-Angola Catholicism with the struggle for freedom testifies to the role of religion at the service of freedom: "In various towns of Palmares, they erected Catholic churches, 'complete with

statues of saints.' . . . The churches they built served the 20,000 to 30,000 citizens residing in ten areas."[94]

From the example of Palmares, established around 1612 and existing for nearly eighty-three years, it would be blasphemous to claim that the eternal salvation of the souls of *les Noirs*, through evangelization, was inextricably bound to violent retention in enslavement. Rather, freedom itself is inextricably bound to the truth of the Gospel. The plantation slaves in the southern United States developed a political-liberation hermeneutics that connected the Gospel of Jesus Christ with their freedom, providing a postcolonial narrative of evangelization. Escaping maroons reinvented *les oeuvres des Noirs* and set a correcting course for the Christian mission, reprimanding Libermann, Javouhey, Duparquet, and the Spiritans by declaring *les oeuvres des Noirs* as "liberational."

In a worshipping slave congregation on a southern US plantation, the concern was the Gospel of God/Jesus and human freedom—a "humanocentric" theism that prioritized Black people's humanity.[95] This hermeneutic sets aside the sermonizing on Black bodies' submission to white masters for the otherworldly salvation of the "souls of Black folk." Charles Colcock Jones, a white Presbyterian pastor forced into a challenging disputation in 1845 with the slaves on his father's plantation in Georgia, highlights the conflict of interpretation between the slave and the master on the maroons and captures the slaves' interpretation of their social reality. In a provocative sermon on Paul's Letter to Philemon, Jones "insisted upon fidelity and obedience as Christian virtues in servants, and . . . condemned the *practice of running away.*" He relates that "one-half of my audience deliberately walked off with themselves. . . . After dismission, . . . some solemnly declared 'that there was no such epistle in the Bible,' others, 'that it was not the gospel,' others, 'that I preached to please masters,' others, 'that they did not care if they ever heard me preach again.'"[96]

The slave performance was insistent that God-talk and human talk go hand in hand, never one without the other. To decouple human freedom from the Gospel is to move Christianity away from its self-definition, divine incarnation (John 1:14). The slave insight into reality displayed a radical affirmation of Black humanity, removing the veil cast over Blackness and overcoming the peculiar sensation of "double-consciousness." For, as W. E. B. Du Bois writes, it is possible for one "to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."[97]

The struggle to structurally solidify this interpretive agency prompts William Jones to link the ideals of "secular humanism" with "humanocentric theism" to ensure that Black humanity would dominate Black liberation theodicy. Libermann, Duparquet, and the Spiritans, devoted to "the instruction of the Blacks," must testify that the God proposed to and encountered by the Blacks would not be "a white racist."[98]

Libermann's 1842 letter to the minister of the colonies, Monsieur Galos, connected Christianization, civilization, and colonization, displaying the complexity and entanglements in the nineteenth-century missionary endeavor. The socioeconomic and political impact of the European missionary presence in coastal and mainland Africa inevitably advanced the colonization of African lands along with the subjugation and inferiorization of Blacks. This is not an exaggeration.

Msgr. Prosper-Philippe Augouard proudly celebrated his role as the advance guard of French colonialism. Passionate for Catholicism and geography, Augouard was the quintessential French colonialist. Spiritan missiologist Tony Gittins insists that Augouard, in central Africa, "explored and claimed territory three times the size of France, 'with crucifix and national flag,' persuading local rulers to accept French patronage."[99] Beside Augouard, many highly respected missionaries—such as Javouhey, Duparquet, Le Roy, and Livingstone—left an indelible mark on intermeshed evangelization-colonization. What baffles the postcolonial analyst is the missionaries' inability to discern the connection between freedom for Black bodies and the truth of the Gospel. Their colonialist evangelicalism, strengthened by their adoption of the regime of the three Cs (commerce, Christianization, and civilization), confirmed representation of the *nègres* as infrahuman. Bad news for the Gospel, for Black bodies, and for the Spiritan absolute!

Kimambo is not wide of the mark when he insists that by their presence, "the mission stations were increasing the weakness of those societies already weakened by the economic pressures of the time and thus reducing their ability to oppose the imposition of colonial rule." Generally, in eastern Africa, "missionary societies were also the pioneers for colonial rule." This comes as no surprise. "Most of the 300 Europeans who had lived on the mainland before 1884 were connected with missionary activities."[100]

The situation in the eastern African coastlands and mainland compares with the situation that prevailed along the west central African coastlands. Duparquet made contacts with the French navy commander in Gabon, Mr. Panon de Hazier, to ensure the presence of a French warship close to Kacongo and Ngoyi (i.e., the Kongo-Angola coastline). This reassured the

French missionaries, put the Portuguese on notice, and sent warning signals to unfriendly African kings and governors. That the warship *Loiret* was nowhere near Gabon was, for Duparquet, "deplorable."[101]

The mission preceded the colony. Before one had ever heard of Henry Morton Stanley in the Congo, before Savorgnan de Brazza had started exploring the central African interior from Gabon, French Spiritans were exploring, mapping, and ministering around the coastlands and the hinterland. The erection of the Apostolic Prefecture of the Congo, decreed December 9, 1865, at the insistence of the Spiritan superior general Ignatius Schwindenhammer (thanks to Duparquet's ingenuity), assured that the evangelization of the Congo region was ecclesiastically in the hands of French Spiritans. From this prefecture, there emerged the apostolic vicariate of the Congo (May 28, 1886), with Hippolyte Carrie as vicar, and the apostolic vicariate of French Congo (Congo-Ubangi, October 14, 1890), with Augouard as apostolic vicar.[102]

With missionaries preceding the explorers and colonizers or closely following them, the analyst is challenged to evaluate very complex and interwoven relationships. The social and the political, the economic and the religious, the humanitarian-liberational, and the abrasive-colonial are difficult to untangle. The advancement of the colonial-political project is impossible to decouple from the Spiritan mission. Making public his views from Brazzaville, the vicariate of French Congo, Augouard captures the melodious harmony from the interconnected lungs of mission, Catholicism, and colonization/civilization. In *La dépêche coloniale illustrée* of November 15, 1905, Augouard addresses the metropole, clarifying for the Paris political administration and the French public the intimate connection between "Christian civilization" embodied in evangelization (*les oeuvres des Noirs*) and the missionary colonial-political mediation. "*The missionary is necessary* to make men out of these savages, and to teach them different skills that will be very useful for commerce and industry. . . . [The missionary] . . . devotes himself, at no cost [to colonizing France], to the civilization of these degraded beings, and to teach them French."[103]

To ensure he has his audience on his side, sympathetic to his civilizing/colonizing strategy, Augouard insists that in the French Congo "it is particularly in our Christian centers that taxes are easily collected without pressure." He concludes with a flourish: "Missionaries even mediated a compromise agreement to win over Pagan Chiefs who would have preferred to engage in warfare [against France] rather than pay the taxes demanded of them."[104] Augouard could then legitimately request, from the French

minister of the colonies (in Paris) as well as from the Propaganda Fide (in Rome), funds to purchase steamers for his mission. Steamers were the heartbeat of mission. The famous boat in use for his mission was named *Leo XIII*—a veritable *mission flottante* (floating mission).[105]

The above illustrates the interweaving of French Catholicism, French colonial politics, and the French Spiritan *oeuvres des Noirs*. Nineteenth-century statistics show that France—not Spain, not Portugal—dominated the Catholic missionary endeavor. France contributed most to the funds of Propaganda Fide (based in Lyon). Two out of three missionary priests in the nineteenth century were French. Four out of five nuns and religious brothers were French. Most of the funds for repurchasing child-slaves and for evangelization came from France, and the French church controlled the funds. Spiritan missionaries in Bagamoyo-Zanzibar and in Landana, Loango, or Brazzaville presented financial reports to the donor agencies and clarified the use of funds.[106] The dominance of French nationals (Spiritans) in the Catholic mission makes Kimambo's conclusion convincing: even in those kingdoms "effectively controlled by a local ruler," such as Kacongo or Ngoyi (west central Africa), "the existence of a European mission station with its cultural impact opened the way for a colonial claim during the partition period."[107] Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, and Central African Republic formed part of French Equatorial Africa.

Should there be any surprise at the invasive French civilizational politics of the missionaries from Javouhey (Saint-Louis, Senegal), through Duparquet/Carrie (Kacongo; Kongo-Angola), to Augouard (Congo Brazzaville and the like)? This world of the nineteenth-century missionary movement was totally different from Kongo Catholicism of the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth century through to the eighteenth, under the control of the Mani Kongo or powerful governors like the governor of Soyo. The nineteenth-century evangelist/missionary was the carrier of "Religion" (that is, Truth and Catholicism). The evangelist/missionary felt that s/he had "the self-appointed capacity to restructure the worlds of others" and effortlessly "draw non-Europeans into the spiritual and temporal purview of Europe."[108] Establishing the Christian villages from the peasantry and the "boarding schools" that separated girls from family and country (Javouhey), or the colony/village of the Slaves of the Mission (Duparquet), the colonialist missionary effectively denied freedom to African bodies to allow the implantation of Catholicism. The separation of people from their world (through the girls' boarding school in Senegal) was complacently judged as imperative for Catholicism. Without this separation, "we will never be

able to make [our] religion known to blacks," says Javouhey. If freedom were granted to Slaves of the Mission before civilization/Christianization, Duparquet claims, the mission project "would become a totally useless enterprise."

Of course, one must distinguish the style prescribed by Libermann and Javouhey, adopted by Duparquet, from the abrasive colonialism of Augouard. Nevertheless, they all shared the same fundamental common ground. Religion (Catholicism) was the instrument, the motor for spreading "civilization." Their performance of "civilizing" Black people through spreading Catholicism was in lockstep with the "ideology of European dominance,"[109] which celebrated the representation of the *Noirs* as inferior.

While they (Spiritans) must be held accountable, the postcolonial analyst, vigilant and critical, struggles to be fair. Fairness to the frontline actors, the missionaries, demands that one never ignore, ridicule, or underestimate their humanitarian intentionality, undeniably entangled with the colonialist interest of their nations of origin. To analyze or critically evaluate their struggle to minister in African communities and societies, their performance of *les oeuvres des Noirs*, the analyst must be aware of being inserted within "a spiraling, many-layered conversation" rather than "a straightforward process of conversion or colonial domination." To understand the slave, the community, and the missionary/colonial officials in their complicated, intermeshed interests is indeed a journey through a maze of "ever more entangled worlds."[110] This is the challenge of *Memorializing the Unsung*.

Dangerous Remembering: The Imperative of Historical Judgment

Revisiting the Spiritan mission absolute, "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" (be Negro-slave-subhuman with the Negro-slave-subhuman), one grapples with bringing the Spiritans to account. It does not suffice to claim, following the interpretations of Coulon, Brasseur, or Senghor, that this phrase evokes the empathetic spirituality of the imitation of Jesus, the Slave/Servant (Phil. 2). From the review of Charles Duparquet, exemplary Spiritan and flagbearer of the Libermann ethos, Spiritan performance was clearly distant from the instruction: "Treat them as servants ought to treat their masters, according to the customs, manners and habits of their masters." The underbelly of the Spiritan "crusading" mission was exposed in the entanglement in the quagmire of the ambiguity of religion. Ambiguity and equivocation have dogged Christianity all through history, even though it is founded "on the self-negation of the finite in the Cross of the Christ,"[111]

who "humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

Imitating "death on a cross" is extremely challenging! Kosuke Koyama warns that there is "no handle to the cross." Unlike a briefcase, the "cross" can only be carried by the "crucified" (missionary), dominated by the spirituality of the "crucified mind." Nothing reveals the problematic challenge of the cross in Spiritan missionary history as much as the dangerous compromises with slavery. Alexandre Monnet, expelled from Bourbon by the governor-general, testified corporeally that with slavery, carrying the cross admits of no half measures. Only the "crucified mind" could fulfill the prophetic ideal, "Be Negro-slave-subhuman with the Negro-slave-subhuman." Replacing the "crucified mind" with the "crusading," colonizing mind would assuredly make the "absolute" unrealizable.[112]

The intrusion of the "demonic" into the core of the Spiritan mission contested the sacred, the holy, the cross that liberated. Spiritan missionaries at the intersection of complex and entangled worlds—the worlds of slave economy, colonialism, and Christianization—were faced with the challenge of transmitting the Gospel. Duparquet and the Spiritan community, while prosecuting their profoundly humanitarian and evangelistic task, brushed listlessly against the thriving slave economy that dehumanized Black bodies. Their performance defaced the holy and betrayed their absolute. They participated in the slave trade. The guiding spirituality, the emblematic "be Negro with the Negro," was transformed into the abomination of exploitation. Their brutal performative action transformed the Libermann injunction "faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" into a criminal "faites-vous Négriers sur/contre les Noirs" (be slave traders over/against the Blacks). Holding them accountable as ancestors, their souls should "sleep without rest in our memories to warn us away from any repetition of their ruinous neglect."[113]

Dangerous remembering is imperative as practical, political, theological action. Theology, as a search for and interpretation of the flashes or traces of the passage of God in human history, the signs of the times, will fail in its Christian or Catholic task if it does not "take seriously the negativity of history in its interruptive and catastrophic character," in the words of Johann Baptist Metz. Memorializing the slaves—the unsung—and the catastrophic consequences of their reduction to subhuman by their Spiritan benefactors is a privileged site of theology. Borrowing from Metz's personal approach to theology after the Holocaust, one affirms, "The catastrophes must be remembered with a practical-political intention so

that this historical experience does not turn to tragedy and thus bid the history of freedom farewell." Since this crime was performed by the bearers of the Word of liberation in pursuit of *les oeuvres des Noirs*, such discordances with the foundational, practical *memoria Jesu Christi* must be remembered "so that they might never be repeated."[114]

The above judgment could be considered harsh. It appears inevitable. (A more conciliatory approach has been suggested by the International Theological Commission.)[115] The liberated slaves, the testament of the fruits of the Spiritan *oeuvres*, left a legacy, a trail, or a footprint toward the discovery, or rediscovery, of the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20) showing the dawn of the kingdom, the new Catholicism in Africa. Their performance, through flight or escape, was a beacon for embarking on another political theological action.

To understand, appreciate, and fully value their flight or escape from the Christian villages in search of zones of freedom, one must affirm that as humans, the slaves were rejecting their unfree condition under and against Spiritan and missionary dogmatism. Recalling their performance opens a window to better appreciation of the Spiritan *oeuvres des Noirs*. Flight or escape, judged from the perspective of the Spiritan absolute, is the rejection of the perversion of the same absolute. Flight, as a search for freedom, is the recovery and the reinvention of the Spiritan absolute, the performance of the full humanity of the *nègres* beyond ecclesiastical, Spiritan, control.

Creative Slave Response to the Unprecedented: Recovering and Reinventing the Spiritan Absolute

The review of and comments on the Spiritan performance in the mission field, of *les oeuvres des Noirs*, focused more on west central than on eastern Africa. The Spiritans' intensive presence in west central Africa was formalized by the erection of the Apostolic Prefecture of the Congo in 1865. Our key interlocutor has been Charles Duparquet. His prolific correspondence with the superior general and with donor agencies—the Holy Childhood and the Propaganda Fide—provides a privileged mine of information. Though constricted by the Spiritan perspective, his correspondence provides a window onto the actual, and virtual, slave response to the unprecedented, their response to their racialized condition of unfreedom.

In their restrictive interpretation of *les oeuvres des Noirs*, the Spiritans provide indirect access to the performance of the slaves: their children were

taking deliberate political theological action. True, one does not have the *vox clara* of the slaves. One does not feel the timbre of the liberated African, like Laurenço da Silva, who moved the Capuchins, the Propaganda, and the Holy Office to rethink slavery, arguing passionately against the coexistence of baptism and perpetual enslavement. Yet one hears their voices through the narrative of frustrated Spiritans.

In daring to save themselves through escape from the Spiritan enclosure, the slaves also allow the observer to evaluate their agency. Their opposition to the Spiritan strictures displays their attempt to reclaim their humanity, their freedom. The brutal sanctions imposed on escapees—exchange with child-slaves, resale to other slave owners, and the possibility of facing "salt water" (the Middle Passage)—not only speak to the dangers of flight. They provide clear evidence of the criminal Spiritan participation in slavery and the slave trade. Yet despite the excessive restriction on their movement, despite the threat of incarceration or being resold to other slavers, slaves continued to flee, searching for alternative zones of freedom.

Eastern Africa provides abundant evidence of liberated slaves searching for such zones. In Bagamoyo, Mhonda, and the hinterland, accounts of flight testify to the slaves' deliberate choice to directly challenge the unprecedented—that is, their inhuman slave condition. First, the miscued Spiritan reading of *les oeuvres des Noirs* explains their misinterpretation of the slaves' revolt, "theologically," as "ingratitude."[116] Second, scrutinizing the face of the liberated slave, their response was to further the profound humanitarian-evangelistic intentionality of *les oeuvres*.

It must be repeated that the conceptualization of *les oeuvres des Noirs* was prophetic and innovative. For its time, the Libermann-directed program was exceptional, a sign of the times. However, it was flawed in its execution. Evaluating the *Noirs*' vociferous response to the unprecedented through revolt, flight, or escape, one concludes that they were setting a correcting course to *les oeuvres*. To the bewilderment of the Spiritans, the *Noirs* were in the driver's seat of a novel liberational, practical, and political theological reinterpretation of *les oeuvres des Noirs*. It is work for/of/by/with the Blacks. The following provisional conclusion is defensible. The liberated slaves' insight into freedom transformed them into teachers, leaders, and masters. Did Libermann not anticipate their revolt and the conflict of interpretation?

The instruction in Libermann's letter of November 19, 1847 to the communities in Dakar, Gabon, Amiens, and elsewhere encapsulates the mystical dimension of the symbol, greater than any limited field realization: "Treat

them as servants ought to treat their masters, according to the customs, manners and habits of their masters."[117] Rather than referencing the slave idiom of Philippians 2, or the empathetic being "all things to all people" (1 Cor. 9:22), Libermann's dream provokes the Spiritan to wonder at God's incomprehensible providence in transforming repurchased slaves into new persons. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:26–31).

The repurchased slaves, molded as new persons, lived freedom within the very marrow. In conflict with the restrictive and racist Spiritan representation of the *Noir*s, unfit for the freedom that was reserved to Europeans, they set the correcting course, dependent on the Spiritan ethos. Ironically, their evangelical reinterpretation of freedom, deeply in conflict with and frustrating to the Spiritans—the performance of their humanity, their "somebodyness"—was appropriated with or without their benefactors' blessing.[118]

But what is freedom if not shared? The *Noirs* generously turned toward their bewildered benefactors, to transform them (screaming!) into unbelieving or unwilling students of Christian freedom—thereby freeing their benefactors from the Babylonian captivity of the "ambiguity of religion." This reconstruction or reinvention of Spiritan missionary spirituality calls for further elaboration, with examples from East Africa.

Kollman's careful study of the slave response to evangelization in eastern Africa provides abundant evidence that could lead one to conclude that flight or escape by liberated slaves was, in ritual terms, performative action at the liminal juncture—betwixt and between—transforming them into *new persons*. Flight or escape embodied the statement of *new being* created in their newfound God-given agency. This novelty, founded on religion (Catholicism), is key to memorializing the unsung. They chant Isaiah's liberation song: "Do not remember the former things [slavery and unfreedom], or consider the things of old." "I am about to do a new thing [freedom]; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" "I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (43: 18–19). Thanks to the evangelizing Spiritan ministry, thanks to the Libermann-directed prophetic insight, the extremely stretched "Tasked" Blacks were throbbing with freedom, learned only through experience!

In the mission field, in eastern (and west central) Africa, Libermann's empathetic injunction, "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres," inspired by Paul

(Phil. 2), proved too radical for the Spiritans. The East African mission field, polluted by the terror of racialized slavery, normalizing the dehumanization of the *Noir*, numbed the complacent and listless Spiritan community. Their insensitivity to the intolerable slave condition and incomprehension of the slaves' prophetic reading of freedom made Spiritans reject the reverse evangelization by the *Noirs*.

Kollman notes that the generalized situation of frequent unrests, the ever-recurring demand for "land and liberty," and the flights and escapes were interpreted by Spiritans theologically as "ingratitude" or "ungrateful disloyalty."[119] Reading the face of the no-longer-slaves, God's children, it is possible to theologically interpret their "cry for freedom," the allegedly baneful "love of liberty," as the performance of the practical political and theological labor of reinventing Catholicism. They are renewing the assembly of the children of God: "So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Gal. 4:7).

The no-longer-enslaved, God's children, embarked on the evangelistic payback (that is, reverse evangelization) to reroute their liberators to the Gospel of liberation. The no-longer-slave Thibault, who destabilized the Christian village with his cry of freedom, was expelled. But he never abandoned their shared (though differently interpreted) Catholic worldview. Spiritans interpreted freedom from their paternalistic high horse. Thibault interpreted freedom from the underside of history. Expelled, he secured a better position with German colonists. He regularly "came back" and "visited the Spiritans." In one such visit, in June 1885, "he went to confession." Zeal for the Catholic faith still consumed Thibault ("zeal for your house . . . has consumed me" [Ps. 69:9]). The Spiritan journal recorded that "six months later he and three Germans [Thibault's employers] came to Sunday mass." Kollman's insight highlights the differing interpretive framework: "Thibault was not alone among those once prominent who rebelled, for many of those who most frustrated the Spiritans were the most deeply influenced by their evangelization." There is a conflict of interpretation of the Gospel and differing approaches to Spiritan spirituality: "By spiritualizing and even demonizing African refusals to go along with their evangelizing program, the Spiritans ignored the complexities of the African Catholic identities their practices had helped engender."[120] Furthermore, Spiritans have problems grappling with the complex fundamentals of missiology. While not using the expression of Henry Venn, the "euthanasia of a mission,"[121] Kollman points in that direction. He emphasizes that "the

Spiritans did not understand the nature of the changes they had effected and resented the lack of cooperation shown by these new Catholics. Regardless of the missionaries' views, however, former slaves constituted the bulk of the church that was being born."[122]

The Libermann-Duparquet missiological insight was attentive to raising the local clergy. Venn was insistent on perceiving the right time to hand over pastoral work to them. From the conversation on mission in Victorian England, Venn suggested that this could lead to the "euthanasia of a mission," enabling the missionary to move to another location: "It should be borne in mind that the progress of a mission mainly depends upon the training up and the location of native pastors; and that, as it has been happily expressed, 'the euthanasia of a mission' takes place when a missionary, surrounded by well-trained native congregations, under native pastors, is able to resign all pastoral work into their hands."[123]

Spiritans in eastern Africa were unable to raise native pastors. Their reaction to the new Catholics of East Africa, their inability to celebrate the new Pentecost caused by the local reception of the Gospel, manifested corporeally in the freedom-performance of the no-longer-slaves, is the failure to appreciate the "immensity of the Word" that they are bearing. This Word, too large for the mouth of the missionary, is the Word/Gospel that builds and belongs to humanity.[124]

On their part, the liberated, in navigating liminality,[125] transformed evangelization. They were servants on whom "obligation is laid" to "proclaim the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16), inspirational for the Spiritan mission absolute. These adult Black Catholics of eastern Africa rejected the paternalistic belittling as mere "children," as infrahuman. Through their performance of freedom, they reinvented *les oeuvres des Spiritains* (work of/for/with the Spiritans), reclaiming the absolute for the good of the Spiritans, the Catholic community, and the entire human family. Their lay-driven Catholicism must be celebrated. "Parishioners at Mhonda and Mandera today," Kollman notes, "recall the old villagers as amazing their fellow Africans and other visitors alike by their literacy and their familiarity with Catholic lore and liturgical arcana."[126]

The beneficial impact of *les oeuvres des Noirs* in eastern Africa, despite limitations, is not underrated. The settlements in Zanzibar and Bagamoyo for young male and female repurchased or redeemed slaves were unforgettable for Africa and for humanity—as were the orphanages and schools for the empowerment of the deprived. Even the thought behind the Latinist school

to train local clergy, and the special formation for girls and prospective nuns, must be recognized as high (though never realized) aspirations. Unforgettable, too, is the settlement of the Bagamoyo graduates in the interior. Setting up the Christian villages was an evangelistic project that dominated the agenda of the seventh assembly of the 1870 Spiritan vice-provincial chapter. The chapter held sixteen assemblies between June 2 and June 22, 1870, with Antoine Horner (the superior) presiding. Participating were Charles Duparquet (secretary), Etienne Baur, and Pierre Machon. Spreading into the interior, which dominated the seventh assembly (June 6), was so important that an exploratory visit to the region of the Kamis, in the interior, was carried out before the chapter. Eventually, the advancement and well-being of the Christian villagers—the *noyau* of the peasantry—were assured by providing them land on which to farm.[127]

These positive results of the evangelistic humanitarian plan deservedly drew the admiration of visitors in the 1880s. The Spiritans were described as "tireless knights of civilization." The Christian villages equaled "schools of agriculture and the habits of industry" that upended the racialized prejudice against the *Noirs*. For his part, as the superior general of the Spiritans, Alexandre Le Roy, mused, the Christian villages put an end to the old spirit of slavery that led to desertions, theft, and so on. Kollman is quick to disagree. Le Roy's optimism is an exercise in "selective memory," he asserts. "The villages continued to have problems in the late 1880s and beyond. Residents fled, protested the amount of their work, stole from the mission, sought to found their own villages, bought and kept slaves, and continued to frustrate the Spiritans."[128] Kollman's measured skepticism is understandable.

In eastern Africa, the liberated learned to read and write. Some emerged as catechists contributing to the transmission of the Catholic message and the performance of the Catholic liturgy. Some quickly moved upward in society to become chiefs of the various Christian villages, though still under the close supervision of Spiritan missionaries. Why did the liberated revolt? Why did they flee this otherwise impressive and effective work of evangelization and human development that fulfilled Libermann's dreams? Why did they radically disagree with the Spiritan default position, "our slaves are good natured and feel attached to us," as described by Duparquet in Landana? Why did they, as "ungrateful" and disloyal "children," prefer to cause "widespread unrest in the Christian Villages" and contest (directly and indirectly) the authority of their Spiritan benefactors?[129]

Freedom, Full Humanity, the New Normal: Liberated Slaves Contesting the Authority of Missionary-Benefactors

The contestation of the supervisory role and authority of the missionaries, benefactors of the liberated slaves, was central to the conflict. The new Catholics of eastern Africa appeared to make their own the prophetic ideology of Isaiah. Moving from exile (slavery) to restoration and reconstruction, they did not want to "remember the former things" or "consider the things of old" (Isa. 43:18).[130] On the contrary, their benefactors, the Spiritans, wanted them to remember and to live their "former" lives, that is, their exile from humanity, their slave condition. The liberated rejected their condition as classificatory children unfit for the freedom reserved only for racially "superior" Europeans.

Freedom was their new normal. The Spiritan default interpretation of their revolt bristled with racism. It is racist to claim that the "liberated" are ineradicably tied to their "slave roots" and could never be freed from the "essential incapacities" of Africans. To claim that only "outside" influence could explain the frequent flights or escapes is to underestimate their agency. Finally, the evocation of Islamic influence served as the best ruse, good for the ears of donor agencies, to explain Black Catholics' unsuitability for the clerical state.[131]

The truth is that Black Catholics rose and challenged the missionaries' misrepresentation of the *Noirs*. The process of contestation was pacifist and gradualist, replicating the patron-client economic model. Liberated yet unfree villagers appealed to the local Spiritan superior, to the regional superior, and to the bishop (who was also Spiritan). Finally, the more radical move was to take their case to the French consul in Zanzibar. The increasing flights and escapes constituted the ultimate contestation of missionary authority. Schism and secession from the Christian village to found alternative Christian villages, with or without the blessing of the missionary, and outright apostasy (joining the Islamic faith) were pathways taken after flight.[132]

To stem the tide of revolt, escape, and flight and to fend off the cry for emancipation, independence, and freedom, the Spiritans met at Bagamoyo in 1884 in a legislative chapter. The chapter turned to Le Roy for counsel. Alexandre Le Roy, an anthropologist with proven credentials, eminent preacher, and botanist,[133] was not immune to bias—to the Spiritan racist treatment of adults as children or the representation of the *Noirs* as

inferior. For example, he had proposed Ignatian-type spiritual exercises for the "children" to arrest the hemorrhage of the Christian villages. The (Ignatian) habits, thus acquired, would change "the superstitious and materialist spirit of *les noirs* and [keep them directed toward] God and the truth." The Spiritan overseer must strive to regulate their lives: "From the time that the children [*les enfants*] leave the orphanage [in Bagamoyo] in order to go found a village [in the interior], the missionary who directs them must allow *no lapse* in their habits of regularity and piety: in the caravan, at the station the prayers will be made, the sacraments practiced, etc."[134]

It was therefore not surprising that the 1884 chapter adopted Le Roy's three-step process to resolve the thorny question of forced labor, emblematic of the perduring slave or captive condition. Under stage one, developing the Christian village, "the villagers would complete the new mission and their own village, with all their needs supplied by the mission." The new couples relocating from Bagamoyo to Mhonda, Mandera, Morogoro, and the interior would labor to build the new Christian village. Stage two is directed toward self-sufficiency: the villagers "assume their own plots of land" but would still be "supplying the mission regularly with labor and receiving support" from the mission. Finally, stage three, the most controversial: "In the third stage the mission would end its supplies and the villagers would be granted freedom with their land and their homes, except for a specified number of days' labor per year allotted for general maintenance of the mission property. If the Spiritans wanted the villagers to work on the mission's behalf apart from the days allotted according to the agreement, then the missionaries would have to pay them."[135]

There are parallels with the strategy adopted in Landana in west central Africa. The difference is that in Landana, freedom, for the Slaves of the Mission, was firmly bound to Christianization. "We do not accord them freedom," says Duparquet, "until they are well settled, converted and civilized. Or else, it would become a totally useless enterprise."[136] While in eastern Africa, the villagers constituted a burgeoning Catholic community.

Stage three proved unsatisfactory. In some villages, it was dead on arrival. Raoul de Courmont, the bishop and superior of the Spiritans, disseminated a circular letter in 1892 in the hope of obtaining "thirty days of work per year for the mission from the villagers."[137] Spiritans were applying the French colonizing/civilizing policy of indentured and forced labor (*engagement à temps*) in the Christian villages. The rejection of the policy by the villagers was unequivocal. Protests continued!

The Spiritan misconception of freedom beclouded by racism—the *Noirs* as inferior and unfit for freedom—confirms the grip of Enlightenment representation.[138] For example, Léon and his unnamed companion, having escaped from the Christian village in Mhonda, appealed to the French consul in Zanzibar. There was consternation among the Spiritans. The consul was initially sympathetic to the fugitives. Later the consul thought better of it, imprisoned Léon and his companion, and then returned them to the village. The comment of Etienne Baur, the Spiritan superior, reveals the dominant Spiritan mentality in which white freedom was unavailable to the inferior *Noirs*: "The French consul was 'trumped . . . [H]e had believed to win them with money and *treat them like Europeans*, but then saw this was silliness.'" Baur's concluding remarks rhyme with the dominant colonial trope and apartheid ideology. To deal with the Africans, the *Noirs*, "a firm hand is needed."[139]

The radical option for freedom by *les Noirs* in Landana (west central Africa) and the Bagamoyo hinterland (eastern Africa) displayed their experiment in practical political theology. Their choices dramatized the way deprived peoples "have made themselves and continue to make themselves and their world." Though Léon and his companion were ultimately returned to Mhonda, they made a point with socio-ecclesial implications. Indeed, says Kollman, "their appeal to the consul" is a commentary on an "identity that was self-consciously Catholic," the "effect of missionary evangelization, but which at the same time refused to follow the prescriptions within the official ideology motivating that evangelization."[140]

Léon, his companion, and other liberated but unfree individuals proclaimed a new sociality, the equality of all humans, within a novel ecclesiology and realized eschatology: "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). They were representative of a collective voice dismantling the pyramidal social structure to invent a post-slavery, postcolonial sociality. Their performance was way ahead of those hidden transcripts, the "infrapolitics," that characterized the "offstage" performance of African slaves in New England.[141]

The emergent ecclesiology of "new people" in late nineteenth-century eastern Africa moved Black people away from "exile" (a slave condition) to liberation and restoration. Kollman observes, "No group, no matter how deprived of overt power, is incapable of making its own history, even if those efforts remain hidden."[142] The numerous liberated but unfree people

who were socially committed to renewal within Catholicism were overtly appealing to the liberating Catholic worldview, the liberating power of religion, even when it was misused and abused by Spiritans.

The above discussion shows that Catholic Africans rejected the racialized definition, the restriction of "freedom," to claim freedom entrenched within Catholicism beyond its Spiritan interpretation (or confiscation). They are human and Christian! They not only displayed the birthing and development of a local church by "believing in their own places" (as Augustine says), but they also displayed a Catholicism, enfleshed in freedom, that was incompatible with dehumanizing slavery and the slave economy. In agreement with Kongo mulatto Laurenço da Silva, Capuchin Epifanio de Moirans, and Spiritan Alexandre Monnet, they were in good company. They rejected mainline Capuchin and Spiritan missionaries.

The disagreement with their Spiritan benefactors was inspirational for church-becoming. Some broke away; going their "separate ways," they founded alternative Christian (Catholic) villages without the blessing of the Spiritans. The ecclesiological and missiological moment of the disagreement must be celebrated. It evokes the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas that revealed the hidden hand of God guiding the spread of the Gospel, giving increase to the churches. As in the early church, "the disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord" (Acts 15:39–40).

The ecclesiological performance of the Catholic villagers expanded the Spiritan-Libermann dream of local churches, formulated by Jean Luquet and applied by Libermann (Spiritans) and Marion Brésillac (SMA). In "My Thoughts on the Mission" (ca. 1855), Marion Brésillac chanted with pathos, "According to the ways established in the order of grace, missionaries are so useful everywhere that it may be said they are everywhere necessary. Nevertheless, in the work of sanctifying souls, they should everywhere be only auxiliary. Unhappy the country where the voice of a missionary is never heard. But still more unhappy is the country that has only missionaries to look at."[143] Marion Brésillac was insisting that once the missionary begins preaching s/he prepares his/her handover note! The ecclesial expansion ("only God who gives the growth"; 1 Cor. 3:7) is the result of what was referred to as the "euthanasia of a mission."

Spiritan missionaries, formed within the Libermann ideal, embraced *les oeuvres des Noirs* in imitation of the Liberator, Jesus the Christ, "who, though he was in the form of God . . . emptied himself, taking the form of

a slave" (Phil. 2:6–8). In the process, they spawned what was greater than the Spiritans, than the Church, than religion itself. This must be celebrated and memorialized!

On their part, the redeemed, repurchased, or purchased slaves, living out their freedom as the no-longer-slaves, the no-longer minors, "heirs" belonging "to Christ" (Gal. 3:28–4:1), asserted their freedom from missionary-ecclesiastical control for the good of humanity. In doing so, it is fair to conclude that they were reconstructing the Spiritan absolute. This must be remembered for the sake of the liberated—and in memory of the Spiritans.

The Spiritan absolute, "*nègres* with the *nègres*"—redefined and reconstructed through the performance of the liberated—reinvented the missionary strategy, *les oeuvres des Noirs*. They framed freedom as the soul of *les oeuvres*, beyond any paternalistic missionary-ecclesiastical control. They affirmed that another world is possible, another social arrangement born beyond racism, beyond white (European) privilege, beyond epistemic Spiritan narrowness. Memorializing the unsung proclaims the socio-ecclesial and eschatological relevance of God's work through and in them. With them one proclaims a renewed creation "set free from its bondage to decay" to "obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

CONCLUSION

Cry Freedom: No Longer Slaves, but Children in God's Household

> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.
>
> —EPH. 2:19–20

Two strong emotions stay with me, pursuing me without letup, as I recount the divide between the protagonists of this research—the Slaves of the Church and their priest-religious-missionary benefactors. On the one hand, observing and, at times, feeling in my bones, as a Black person, the dolorous, everyday experience of the Slaves of the Church, it is difficult for me to account for or understand their "useless suffering," in the words of Emmanuel Levinas.[1] Yet it is impossible to ignore their indispensable, unsung contribution to human dignity and church-becoming in both the west central and eastern coastal areas of Africa.

Similarly, I struggle to account for the performance of the priest-pastors and missionaries (the Capuchins and the Spiritans) in the tumultuous seventeenth century through to the nineteenth and twentieth. Their empathetic, Gospel-driven commitment to evangelization—of Blacks, the socially and culturally marginalized who were represented in their Western culture-area

as *nègres*-subhuman—is admirable. The evangelical-humanitarian enterprise was mediated through the imperative to civilize-colonize-Christianize. Yet this evangelical-humanitarian performance stands in contrast with their criminal participation in slavery and the slave trade, undermining the humanity of the slaves who were their wards. Not only did the priests' participation in the crime against humanity speed the normalization of the culture-driven inferiorization of Blacks, but pastors also profited from this dehumanization: the slaves were property, a commodity that could at times be resold.

This study suggests that undermining the dignity, freedom, and liberation of the "slaves" was a deliberate choice made by Capuchins and Spiritans. They could have chosen the path of abolition and total freedom, like Capuchin Epifanio de Moirans and Spiritan Alexandre Monnet. As a member of one of the congregations that labored among the Slaves of the Church or Slaves of the Mission—and that still labor in parts of Africa and the rest of the world—I am involved. Their "mission" and my mission, our "missions" then and today, are "on trial."[2] Critical in evaluating the historical evidence, I do not pretend that I am reflecting from detached or pure objectivity.

Because I am involved, as a Black man and a member of the Spiritan missionary congregation, I felt compelled to tell the story, even though it can never claim to recapture the unique slave experience.[3] To memorialize the unsung—the heroes of the struggle for humanity and freedom despite racist representation, the heroes of church-becoming—is a way of learning from their socio-ecclesial reconstruction of reality. Their story occupies center stage in this study to ensure that while displaying the complexities of church-becoming initiated by the pastor-missionaries, the truth that church-becoming was unrealizable without the unsung "helpers" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8) will never be lost. Memorializing these persons, these assistants and helpers that the pastor-missionaries failed to accord full humanity, argues that their Catholic liberational reclaiming of humanity reinvents the social construction of reality and ecclesiology from the underside of history. Because I am involved, I am compelled to draw attention to the criminality of the catastrophic errors of the past, to never again decouple the Gospel from human dignity. The memory of the errors, embedded in the consciousness of present actors, keeps those actors restless so that the crimes of the past will never be repeated.[4]

In concluding this study, I begin by reevaluating my emotional investment in memorializing the Slaves of the Church and in trying to account

for the complex performance of their pastor-missionary benefactors. After the reevaluation, I discuss what I learn from the political theology and radical ecclesiology of the Slaves of the Church, summed up in a new sociality built on dismantling slavery and reinvesting in humanity.

Reevaluating Emotional Investment in the Slaves of the Church and Their Pastor-Missionary Benefactors

Observing the horror reserved for Black bodies—described in this study variously as the Slaves of the Church, the Slaves of the Mission, and even the liberated slaves—from the seventeenth century through to the nineteenth leaves one in a state of shock. True, the slaves located in the west central African side of the Atlantic did not have to contend with the Middle Passage. Yet the Middle Passage was always in the pastor-benefactors' toolkit. The threat of tasting "salt water" was real for maroons and misbehaving slaves. The decision to force misbehaving Black persons, *nègres* without rights, to taste "salt water" was deliberately made by pastor-missionaries on the ground. It was a normal lesson for the *nègres* whom the infamous 1685 Code Noir formally defined as property ("We declare slaves to be charges, and as such enter into community property"[5]).

Yet while observing the slave, I also felt surprise and admiration—admiration for the transformational quiet revolution occurring in the intermeshed world of the classificatory minors. They were casually referred to as "boys" and "children" (*les enfants*). Gifted by the Holy Spirit, they became the helpers that rendered all "forms of assistance" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8) to the pastor-missionaries "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). Their story, told and retold, memorializes not only their role in the emergence of the lay-driven church but also the ineradicable inventiveness of Black humans—a major lesson on humanity and hominization. How could one not be emotionally captivated by the six slaves who routinely accompanied their Capuchin father—the coworkers who made the treks possible and safe—to ensure the administration of the sacraments that make the church? Above all, how could one not be struck with amazement at their courageous performance as mediators, co-creators, and reinventors of their world? Not only were they facilitating the treks of the Capuchin priests and ensuring the functioning of the hospices and hospitals, but through their principled clash and ideological disagreement with their priest-missionary benefactors, they were also

socially negotiating a new space for mutuality, inspiring a different kind of sociality. Capuchin and Spiritan priest-missionaries related to them as inferior humans unfit for the freedoms reserved for and enjoyed by only white Europeans. Tactically, and then strategically, the slaves rejected the missionary error of interpretation of the *humanum*. They rejected the misinterpretation of evangelization as a (postmortem) salvation of souls. They insisted that the fruit of missionary evangelization is not true freedom insofar as it dictates their exclusion from humanity and defines them as *nègres*, unsuited to human freedom and dignity. As mediators or co-creators of modernity in Africa, through their collaborative performance of church-becoming and their unique insight into freedom and human dignity, they presented a new space for a different kind of sociality impacting the wider social context, impacting the Church and the emergent new world.[6]

Considering the priest-pastor-missionaries also left me with hard-to-reconcile emotions. Observing the Capuchin priests who came to help the Kongo church, a lay-driven church that never had sufficient clergy, I felt admiration for the generosity of the Portuguese, Spanish, and later Italian priest-missionaries in the service of the local church in west central Africa. In the Kongo, Christianity was translated through African idioms, an exercise comparable to the Catholicism interpreted in southern European medieval languages. The Capuchin priest-pastors held a dual role in the politico-ecclesiastical organization of the time. Arriving in the Kongo in 1645 as emissaries of the Propaganda Fide, they came "as dedicated priestly reinforcements, bringing the sacraments of salvation and committed to strengthening the link with Rome."[7] The same dual role was present in the mission of the Spiritans in west central and in eastern Africa, propelled by their radical commitment to *les oeuvres des Noirs*. More than the humanists, the Capuchins and the Spiritans embodied the Gospel of liberation. In the nineteenth century, Spiritans pushed to another level the challenge and novelty of the Gospel captured by their nickname: *nègres*. The nickname combined the humanistic empathy for the slave with the Gospel absolute, rooted in the instruction of Libermann, "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" (be Negro-slave with the Negro-slave).[8]

However, and precisely because of my admiration for the countercultural ideal embodied by the Capuchins and Spiritans, my feelings of shock, shame, and sadness refused to go away. How could the messengers of the Gospel of liberation be held in such captivity to *normalized* cultural assumptions and prejudices toward Blacks (*nègres*)? How could they descend into the quagmire (*bourbier*) of normalized racism and be rendered utterly blind

to the reality of Black humanity?[9] Even when these same Black people were showing the Spiritans the common pathway to freedom, for the salvation of their very (Spiritan) souls, how could they fail to see the overriding "humanocentric" truth of the Gospel performed by the liberated slaves?[10] Paul transmitted that overriding evangelistic truth in the Galatian hymnody: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). For the liberated slaves, in their novel experience of freedom, the one humanness in Christ must be corporeally expressed in the "flesh of the Church" that is the "flesh of Christ."[11]

When judged on the altar of the Gospel absolute, when measured with the yardstick of the ecclesiology of communion within the emergent churches of west central and eastern Africa, the Spiritans' performance did not improve on that of their Capuchin predecessors. Nevertheless, to the Spiritans' credit, no individual Spiritan or Spiritan superior was reported to have personally benefited monetarily from the sale or resale of slaves, as some Capuchins did. However, the casual and insensitive way pastor-missionaries of both congregations reacted to slavery and their unanimous acceptance of extreme, inhumane treatment for maroons and dissenters baffle the imagination. This must be categorically denounced. The liberated slaves give us the toolkit for dismantling slavery and the status, condition, or caste of slaves.

Dismantling Slavery and the Slave Caste: Learning from the Slaves of the Church

"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). In this section I focus on the performance of the slaves to tease out what one could learn from them about humanity, about freedom and liberation, that founded church-becoming on a new form of sociality. First, let me highlight the lessons about humanity.

It is not clear that the slaves of the Capuchins and of the Spiritans were branded with hot irons, as happened to those sold to the white Portuguese coastal traders. It is therefore not clear that Orlando Patterson's comments on this dehumanizing practice, normal in the Americas, applied without reservation to the west central side of the Atlantic or the eastern African coastlines. "Throughout the Americas," writes Patterson, "slaves were routinely branded as a form of identification right up to the second half of the

eighteenth century."[12] Branding demarcated the slave as property ("meuble," in the 1685 Code Noir). It separated the slave from the freeborn and signaled social death. The slaves' degradation and dehumanization were corporeally displayed as contrasting sharply with the honor enjoyed by the freeborn. "Quality" whites dehumanized "Tasked" Blacks to heighten their identity.

Struggle for their humanity and resistance to enslavement were the dominant slave responses. Wherever they were, in Capuchin hospices or in Spiritan Christian villages, they fought against dehumanization. In resistance, they rejected natal alienation, being deprived of honor and dignity. In fine, they rejected being assaulted as "non-persons," who in their corporeality, as dominated bodies (*ta somata*), were unworthy of respect. They rejected the normalized inferior status, undisputed in the New Testament, in Pauline, Patristic, and Scholastic writings. These Christian sources popularized the theological idiom of slavery, e.g., to sin. No longer should one be inattentive to the somatic, to the corporeality of the dehumanized enslaved, nor trivialize the unjust social relations, the centuries-long Christian anti-witness to the Gospel![13]

Slave revolts were, anthropologically, a reclaiming of their humanity; ecclesiologically, they were a reinvention of Christianity. Guided by the truth of the Gospel, the fugitives served notice to their Capuchin and Spiritan owner-benefactors. Their humanity, their personhood—their somebodyness—is indispensable. Humanity undergirds their recuperation of the prophetic Christian Gospel. The argument, from negation, of the Encyclopedist Montesquieu applies: "It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians."[14]

Humanity, central to Christianity, was inspirational to the antislavery argument in the 1688 petition of the German Quakers, "one of the first and foremost documents to make a humanitarian argument against slavery."[15] Denial of humanity justified the slaves' possession as property, as chattel, and their treatment as beasts, "in the midst of dirt and refuse" (in the words of Lorenzo da Lucca). On the other hand, the affirmation of their humanity and dignity proclaims the truth of the Gospel. By claiming, corporeally, "Quality" as their entitlement and rejecting the "Tasked" condition, their everyday performance displayed and gave consistency to the supreme value of humanity.

The ambiguous relationship the slaves (and the "liberated") had with their benefactors, who never accorded them the full legal space of their

humanity, impelled them to let out the one clear, unquestionably human cry: Dismantle the slave caste, dismantle slavery! For me, their African cry embodies the prophetic Word that carries a surplus of meaning, as do all prophetic utterances.[16] Their polyvalent cry, whose vibration or sound is too loud to emerge from the mouth of a single town crier, solidified the revolt against dehumanization anywhere, anytime. Sound or vibration, their cry transformed into "ultimate reality,"[17] beyond religion, beyond a performed Catholicism that could trivialize their humanity. Consequently, the Christian religion and the Christian Gospel must never again be co-opted to sponsor dehumanization. Their deep-seated voice, groping for the imperative ethical guardrails, affirms the *humanum* as the criterion of the truth of the Gospel.

Perhaps Patterson's attempt to stress the centrality of the slaves' struggle for their humanity, expressed in the negative idiom of deprivation, captures the quality of their struggle as an inalienable, fundamental right. The slave revolt corporeally lent voice to the impossibility of suppressing a foundational human value or need, the affirmation of one's human dignity. "One invaluable weapon emerged in all slaveholding groups," Patterson writes. "No matter how much the slave struggled, he remained illegitimate. Indeed, the struggle itself forced upon him a need that no other human beings have felt so acutely: *the need for disenslavement, for disalienation, for negation of social death, for recognition of his inherent dignity*."[18]

Driven by the overriding need to perform their God-given, inherent human dignity, west central and eastern African Catholic slaves challenged mission and missionizing. They challenged Christianity as well as the priorities of the Capuchin and Spiritan pastors, whose pastoral wisdom pales before the seventh-century gradualism of Gregory the Great, respectful of the world and humanity of the Angli.[19]

In the end, in performing their full humanity, the African slaves also challenge humanists and abolitionists. On the one hand, abolitionists detest slavery "to the extent that they would be willing to die for its abolition." On the other, by the racist denial of humanity to the (infrahuman) *nègres*, they would "detest the enslaved and the formerly enslaved with equal passion."[20] Even the powerful British navy, parading the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, arresting traffickers, and confiding recaptives to missionaries, stands critiqued. The slaves' recovery of their humanity, the recuperation of their wholesomeness, must not be confused with the colonial and economic interests of Britain.[21] Those interests explain the persistence of the trade beyond the treaty of Vienna in 1815, which prohibited it only "north

of the equator."[22] Every hidden or overt performance of inhumanity is challenged by the liberated slaves in the name of humanity. Full human dignity is the Absolute, the Ultimate, and the Home of God. Its proclamation by the unsung embodied and embodies the realization or the manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

Turning next to lessons about freedom and liberation, one needs to repeat that representation as *nègres* provoked in the slaves the determined pursuit of their full humanity in freedom. Their response was loud and clear, contradicting the overbearing diktats of their benefactors. The rejection of their representation as infrahuman also contradicted the performance of some "liberated" slaves, who, though pursuing freedom through flight from the Christian villages (in eastern Africa), failed to see participation in the dehumanizing trade and normalization of the social condition of slavery as a betrayal of the cause. The liberated slaves "bought and kept slaves."[23] They were not only approving but also spreading the social evils decried in their cry of freedom. Rather than help eradicate the slave economy, they were enabling the pernicious culture. This calls for a pause to temper our optimism (on what we learn from slaves) with realism.

One would think that widespread unrest in, and flight from, the Christian villages bonded the African Catholics with "Tasked" bodies in the Atlantic world and beyond, in mystical solidarity with all the maroons. Was confirming their humanity and freedom, by flight, not a rejection of the spurious logic, the "lie," that "Blacks were born to be slaves"?[24]

Kongo historian Kabolo Iko Kabwita, like other African and African American historians, notes the parasitic and destructive nature of the traffic. The African elite, the middlemen, betrayed trust and betrayed Africa in aiding and abetting the dehumanizing slave trade. Mary Hicks suggests that "middlemen," "West African mariners" or "skilled contracted canoemen," ferried "goods and people to shore." They actively participated in the "ruthless process that enriched the few at the expense of the many."[25] The traducements around the transatlantic business provokes postcolonial lamentation: "Africa was the privileged site for the extraction of ore [slaves], the New World plantation was where it was cast [labor], and Europe where it was converted into financial currency [wealth, propelling the industrial revolution]."[26] The brutality and brutishness of the trade—realized through kidnappings, wars, and the frightful Middle Passage—normalized fear and hatred as the reaction of Kongolese to the white man. The entrenchment of this experience in the unhappy memory of Kongo, of Africa, is captured in the lament "nkondo nkadi," the bitter taste. Kongo ate the bitter fruit that

left countrywide, region-wide, continent-wide, worldwide, the perennial sour taste. Since then, the dystopian diagnostic was that the country has been groaning: "Nsi ifwidi" (the country is dying/finished).[27]

Despite the counter-witness of the liberated, the middlemen, the pastor-missionaries, slavery must be dismantled. It is the negation of humanity, the demonic denial of the inalienable pathway to self-transcendence. Opposed to humans as *imago Dei*, ordained to freedom, racialized slavery endorses the distortion of "self-transcendence," a condition and a possibility that became identified with a particular amount of melanin: white skin.[28] That the liberated participated in the practice, following the example of their pastor-missionaries without discernment, shows how difficult it is to eradicate. But the evil must be named for what it is, a parasite! "Nsi ifwidi" is not a descent into pessimism; rather, it is a desperate cry for freedom.

When Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza criticized the Spiritans for their inability to understand the true French meaning of *liberté*, he had a point. Spiritans did not fully grasp the implications of the generalized destruction of the land by parasitic slavery. *Nsi ifwidi!* They were incapable of proclaiming, like Capuchin priest Epifanio de Moirans, that escape from the slave condition was not only a right but a moral obligation, enabling the slaves, in freedom, to "take care of their own eternal salvation." Spiritans preferred accommodations, satisfied with "change of ownership" of the slave rather than "change of condition" from slavery to freedom. But Savorgnan de Brazza was equally mistaken in claiming that the colonial enterprise was a school of human freedom.[29] The French dominance and ownership of peoples inhabiting the territories of colonized French Equatorial Africa portended death and destruction rather than freedom/liberation. *Nsi ifwidi.* The coup de grace was "King Leopold's Ghost," the apocalyptic horror beyond the imaginings of the Kongo ancestors.[30]

Nsi ifwidi! The country was finished! It died. In the Kongo interior, the parasite was named and challenged. The antagonism, opposition to the slave trade, was so severe that the Kongo interior was dangerous territory, off-limits to the *pombeiros* (mulattos acting as middlemen in the slave trade). They were killing the country! *Nsi ifwidi*, a cry for freedom in Kintandu, a language in the present western Congo (Bas-Congo), translates variously into French as "le pays est détruit," or "le pays est mort," or "le pays est fini" (the country is destroyed/dead/finished).[31] Freedom and liberation are imperative. The escapees, the maroons, in west central and eastern Africa made common cause with the opponents of the slave trade

in the Kongo interior to proclaim that freedom alone ensures the survival of Black humans.

For the Kongo, then and today—for Africans—the unprecedented nature of the encounter with southern Europeans, with modernity, has shed all ambiguity. Kongolese have seen and experienced what their ancestors never anticipated. Up to the twentieth century, *Nsi ifwidi*, which captures the popular imagination, not only dresses the slave trade in apocalyptic imagery but also normalizes fear and hatred as reaction, or exercise of painful closure, to the experience of the white man. Still bruited in this region, in modern Congo, is the bitter conclusion: "Bu bukala bambuta, ka bwa tumwene ko! Si nkondo nkadi." This is variously translated into French as "c'est du jamais vu à l'époque de nos ancêtres/de nos vieux"; "on ne voyait pas ça du vivant de nos ancêtres/de nos vieux" (What since the time of our ancestors has never been experienced [has never been seen] is here with us, the bitter fruit, the arrival of the white man). Apocalypticism was sealed at the Berlin Congress (1884–85): the piratic partition of Africa.[32] Neither the Spiritan accommodation of slavery nor the solution of Livingstone—colonize-Christianize-civilize—could replace freedom. Rather, they all helped normalize the inferiorization of Blacks and Africans.

The revolt in the Christian villages of west central and eastern Africa, to affirm the full humanity of the liberated, showed readiness to pay any price for full freedom and liberation. These African lay Catholics move us forward to embrace the truth of the Gospel and its inspirational boldness (*parrhesia*). Their persistent exercise of *parrhesia*, "openness, honesty, and the courage to tell the truth, even if it meant causing offense,"[33] incomprehensible to the Catholic missionary, marked freedom as a priority of African Catholicism. Freedom is stronger than the challenging "danger at sea" (2 Cor. 11:26), even when the danger included the Middle Passage.

The challenging memory of the performance of the slaves celebrates their reclaiming freedom in their flesh (what M. Shawn Copeland calls "enfleshing freedom"), despite threats. It sets aside freedom as defined by modernity (that is, the Western Enlightenment), racialized and denied to Black bodies. The slaves' insight into freedom as a primordial human value opens a window to a new and radical sociality, born from the experience of the new being in Jesus as the Christ. The new being releases the potentials of redeemed humanity, challenging and conquering "human estrangement."[34] On the ground, the redeemed Catholic slaves were emboldened to reject the unprecedented inhumanity of enslaved existence.

Finally, the slaves teach us to draw from the fire of the Gospel of liberation the radical sociality caused by the liberating experience of Jesus the Christ: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer *slave or free*, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28, my emphasis).

For the Black Africans, Christianity, full humanity, and freedom are intermeshed, inseparable. Memorializing their performance, as Jesus's evangelistic and inspirational "little flock" (*to micron poimnion*),[35] makes an unforgettable statement. Their choice, their embrace of freedom and humanity, banishes all fear and harbors a new sociality, inspiring a new ecclesiology from the underside of history. They embody a "freedom church," contradicting and interrupting racialized religion (Catholicism) and racialized humanity (Black and white).[36] They were laying down the ground rules for a new sociality based on the full humanity of Africans, Europeans, and Asians, among others.

There is no halfway point between the freedom claimed by escapees and the slave condition. The slave condition, the existence of the slave caste, must be dismantled. Despite the criminal collusion of some slaves in the practice, despite the endorsement by Christianity of the horrors of the slave condition, slavery cannot coexist with the Beatitudes. Those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness," who undergo persecution "for righteousness' sake," possess or are on the way to "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:6, 10).

Dismantling slavery and the slave caste also means dismantling the mistaken symbolic conceptualizations such as "slave of God" or "slave of Christ." How tolerable is this language?[37]

Freedom, New Sociality, and Dismantling the "Slave of God" Idiom

Alienating or dismissing Black bodies from humanity and preventing them from the exercise of freedom halt rather than enable civism. This argument was lucidly made by Alexandre Monnet in his letter of December 10, 1840, to the superior of the Holy Ghost Seminary. Resident in Bourbon (Réunion) and engaged, on the ground, with *missions des Noirs* (missions of the Blacks), his pastoral evangelism positioned him against mainline French Catholicism. Freedom through abolition is inspirational to the practice of true religion. Free Blacks, formerly slaves, ensured a deeply rooted Catholic faith and civism in the colony. Monnet's theology of liberation would create new sociality and cause the emergence of new humans re-created

in the image of God. In Bourbon, in the late 1840s, his Catholic position was considered extremely dangerous. He paid the price. At the instigation of the Europeans and the colonists, he was expelled by the governor-general on September 28, 1847.

Strategically, Monnet, a pastor on the ground, passionate for the evangelical-humanistic *missions des Noirs*, was bolder and freer than the more cautious Libermann, resident in Paris, preoccupied with the security of *les oeuvres des Noirs* and the freedom of the missionaries to perform their evangelistic task. Similarly, the seventeenth-century Capuchin missionary Epifanio de Moirans took the risky but prophetic side of freedom for Black bodies and affirmed their full and equal humanity as a fundamental right. Capuchin and Spiritan superiors lacked the courage and insight to embrace the full humanistic imperative of the Gospel: a new sociality. The horrors of slavery and the persistent aftereffects (manifest in the forms of modern-day slavery) carry deep sclerosis—what Engelbert Mveng terms the "indigence of being" or "anthropological poverty."[38] Had João III of Portugal cooperated, perhaps King Mvemba, in sixteenth-century Kongo, could have helped reduce the deleterious effects of this virus causing the demographic depletion of the Kongo and the surrounding regions. Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, Catholic kings of Kongo and Portugal as well as Capuchin and Spiritan pastor-missionaries could have done more to create the new liberating sociality—had they been on the side of the liberating Gospel.

What surprises the researcher is that faced with the unprecedented, the victims held on to and never stopped claiming and affirming their full humanity. Their performance of freedom transforms into the invention of a new sociality in church-community and society. This fascination with the slave response to their unprecedented subhuman condition is not an exercise in the glorification of suffering. Rather, one learns from them to effectively scale the hurdles of inhumanity into freedom, to create an alternative sociality to forever put an end to slavery. There is also a need to banish or radically transform the idiom of enslavement, "slave of God" or "slave of Christ," as a theological idiom. This last point concludes this study.

In casual remarks on Igbo (Nigerian) religion of the early 1920s, Portuguese Spiritan missionary Alves Correia mentioned, in passing, local deities that have servants or, more correctly, slaves. These servants were not priests dedicated to the deities. Rather, they were "slaves of the gods." Their charge was to keep the shrines and the compound, or the worship space, of the local deity spotless for public worship or private devotions. Devotees from

the village community, or from elsewhere, who gather to worship or solicit the protection of the deity do not perform the tasks reserved to the slaves of the gods. The slaves of the gods, as property of the deity, were separated from the rest of the "free," "uncontaminated" villagers. They lived apart and intermarried only within their group. These were persons the Igbo classify as *osu*, that is, "cult slaves." They were held in high regard or respect because of the power and reputation of the deity, but from a distance. They were sacred, or holy, but at the same time "horrible" (dangerous).[39]

Correia's narrative addressed the question of the unfreedom of the slaves of Neñgo, the river deity of the town of Ñteje (in present-day Anambra state in Nigeria). They abandoned, by taking flight, the condition of slave of the deity for the greater freedom provided by the new (white) colonial government: "One day in Ñteje, some slaves of Neñgo disappeared, in search of freedom in a country where the white authorities will protect them. As soon as the escape was discovered, alarm was raised with the ivory trumpet of the chiefs. Immediately, the whole population, on war footing, assembled. But the slaves of the god had the protection of the law of the Whites. Calm was imposed."[40]

The dismantling of the idiom "slaves of the gods" by the "slaves" of Neñgo stands in sharp contrast to the slave idiom (and reality) programmatically adopted by Paul in his letters to the Philippians and to the Romans. Paul, a Roman citizen, never had a personal experience of chattel slavery, though the social system of chattel slavery impacted his theological language. Indeed, the exceptional freedom Paul enjoyed must be underlined to appreciate the connection (or disconnection) between the social reality of subjugation from the theological idiom of *mimesis*, an imperative of a new sociality. In Acts 22:24–29, when the tribune directed that Paul "was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him," the freeborn, freedom-loving Paul, tied up "with thongs," boldly (unlike a chattel slave) queried "the centurion who was standing by":

> "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen." The tribune came and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back

> from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

One should not ignore the complications in Paul's theological appropriation of the slave idiom. Greeks and Romans could neither contemplate nor countenance the slave social condition, for whatever theological reasons. In other words, the loss of the freedom of movement, or the loss of the freedom to attest to or speak for oneself, was intolerable. Freedom is considered the absolute value that brooks no compromise. The apostle Paul was fully aware of this: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1). The freedom-loving escapees from the Capuchin hospices or liberated slaves in flight from the hostels or Christian villages of the Spiritans had unimpeachable insight into this freedom and new sociality.

Addressing the freedom-loving Corinthians, Paul did not describe himself as a "slave of Christ," notes John Byron. Rather, Paul "chose the language of a philosopher to describe himself as operating freely within the divine plan." Nevertheless, Paul's evangelistic commitment made him challenge the Corinthians to deploy their freedom, as he did, through enslaving themselves for others: "Paul encourages his readers to use freedom to enslave themselves to their fellow believers" for their salvation.[41]

This Pauline evangelistic passion was, perhaps, the driving force that led nineteenth-century Spiritan missionary Francis Libermann to craft his famous instruction, a command to the Spiritan missionaries: "Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres" (be Negro, i.e., slave-subhuman, with the Negro). There was no thought, in Libermann's mind, nor in the minds of the freedom-loving French Spiritans, to abandon *la liberté*. Rather, the deliberate conversion of the Spiritan to the lowly slave condition was for evangelistic purposes, to free the nègres, the Negro-slave-subhumans, and by extension the *Noirs*, from their *bassesse* (lowly estate—baseness, lowliness, vileness, inferiority, etc.) and through the Gospel "bring them out [redeem/save them] from their mindless state" (*abrutissement*).[42]

Libermann's detailed instruction, recommending that the missionary deliberately choose the slave condition for the salvation of souls, is worth repeating:

> Strip yourself of Europe, its customs and its mentality. *Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres* (be Negro with the Negro) in order to form them as they ought to be, not in the European manner, but leave to them what is their own. Treat them as servants ought to treat their

> masters, according to the customs, manners and habits of their masters . . . to perfect, sanctify, uplift them from their baseness, and make them little by little, in the long run, a people of God. It is what Saint Paul calls becoming all things to all people in order to win them to Jesus Christ.[43]

Paul Coulon is perhaps right in considering this instruction crucial to understanding Libermann's inspirational missionary legacy. In Coulon's view, Libermann successfully brought together diplomacy, liberation hermeneutics, and mission theology/strategy to guide the mystical life of the missionary.[44] One must stress, nevertheless, that this guide was proposed to, and embraced by, free and freedom-loving persons. The free persons were in no way experiencing, nor threatened with the experience of, the social condition of chattel slavery. Rather, captured by the experience of the Christ event, the "freedom for which Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1), Paul, Libermann, and the Spiritans were so transformed as to be ferociously committed to the transvaluation of all values. Transvaluation reached the point of adopting the culturally determined language of chattel slavery, crafted in the everyday slave performance, for the realization of the Gospel ideal. The mystery of the Christ that gives access to new wisdom—"what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9–10)—was key to this unheard-of transformation.

On the ground, however, in the slave plantations where the social condition of chattel slavery predominated—a condition that Paul, a Roman citizen, never materially experienced and was never under any threat to experience—the theological argument was liberation-driven, unmasking, deconstructing, and dismantling the condition of slavery. Renita Weems references Howard Thurman as providing insight into the popular liberation hermeneutics dominant among the plantation slaves in the southern United States. This is captured in the Thurman's grandmother's musings, which deconstruct field slavery and Christianity. The nonliterate though intensely listening grandmother interspersed the Bible with social criticism of life in the plantation:

> During the days of slavery, the master's minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves. Old man McGhee was so mean that he would not let a Negro minister preach to his slaves. Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three

> or four times a year he used as a text: "Slave, be obedient to them that are your master . . . , as unto Christ." Then he would go on to show how it was God's will that we were slaves and how, if we were good and happy slaves, God would bless us. I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.[45]

To paraphrase Thurman's grandmother, "that part of the Bible"—"Slave, be obedient to them that are your master . . . , as unto Christ"—does not represent what "my Maker," God the protector of the oppressed, is to "those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:10). The social condition of slavery must never be allowed to be interpreted from a purely post-historical perspective ("salvation of the soul") nor be deployed to further inhumanity. Paul, every good religious leader, and every theologian ignore the dehumanizing social condition of chattel slavery at the risk of undermining the truth and pertinence of the prophetic Gospel. The fact is that ultimately the *humanum* is the criterion for the truth and the challenging deeper meaning of any religion.[46]

From the above, it is clear to me that any co-optation of *doulos* as a theological metaphor must clarify, without equivocation, how the idiom transforms, practically, on the ground (from the perspective of everyday, this-worldly living) the ambient social subjugation and unfreedom of the slave. *Doulos* must not simply be positioned as an otherworldly idiom, as used by the Cynics, the Stoics, Saint Paul, and the Church Fathers. It does not suffice to be fixated or concerned with liberation from slavery to sin and death (as in Paul's Letter to the Romans) to the point of ignoring or trivializing the materiality of being socially enslaved.

Jennifer Glancy demonstrates, in *Slavery in Early Christianity*, the philosophical uses of the slave idiom and the reality of the dehumanizing practices of slavery in the early church. Philosophically, the thinking of early Christianity aligned with the positions of Cynics and Stoics (like Epictetus, a liberated slave). The philosophical alignment prioritized the internal flourishing of the spiritual person rather than the integral freedom of the physically or bodily subject-person in the socio-temporal order. Giving priority to the spiritual ignores that the *body*, as reality and metaphor, is crucial in the Greco-Roman definition of slaves (*ta somata*). The definition captures the Greco-Roman experience and understanding of the slave as voiceless and without rights. Greco-Roman slaves were defined in terms of availability of the body (*ta somata*), bodies without boundaries, available to the owner. This is the worst condition one can think of or wish

on a person.[47] Indeed, for rabbinic Judaism, and for Judaism in the time of Jesus, the slave was chattel—a condition desired by no one. Without genealogy, there was no way of "controlling their origin." The proverb "A dog is more honourable [i.e., of greater worth before God] than a slave" captures the rabbinic position. The greatest insult hurled on a person is to call them a slave. One could be excommunicated for insulting one's neighbor with that appellation.[48] As Carolyn Osiek puts it, "in a dyadic society" (as in the Greco-Roman social arrangement), "personhood is granted by reason of embeddedness in kinship structures, the very thing denied to the slave in any legally recognized way."[49] The situation was the same in the Kongo and neighboring nations.

Political theology, from the underside of history, from the viewpoint of the slave, does not allow the conversation to move away from the reality of unfreedom, that is, the condition of the slave, a social condition that must be overcome. It has its eyes trained on dismantling this unacceptable and inhuman social condition for the reinvention or recreation of sociality. Nonetheless, is the slave idiom usable? Could one reevaluate *ebed* (servant), translated *doulos* (slave) or *pais* (child)?

The Hebrew Bible adopted *ebed* as a theological term—often rendered *doulos* by the Septuagint (LXX), and at other times, *pais*. The LXX sense influenced aspects of the New Testament use of *doulos*.[50] An analysis of the Pauline usage of *doulos* enables the search for its impact on ecclesiological investigations. For example, the one who did not think it robbery to cling to the *morphe theou* (form of God) took on the *morphe doulou* (form of the slave) and "became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). The theological intent of the Pauline connection of the kerygma with the *parenesis* is radical change, new norms of sociality in the Christian community. This kerygma (of Jesus Christ, "who, though he was in the form of God" took on "the form of a slave") provides for Paul, Karl Heinrich Rengstorf insists, "a basis for the introduction of the hortatory material."[51] In Philippians, the *doulos* idiom was for Paul a foundational hermeneutical tool to explore the kerygma, the Christian faith. Paul did this to drive home the imperative, that is, the socio-ecclesial implications of *kenosis* (the indicative). On the one hand, the *kenotic*—incarnation, death, and resurrection—was proclaimed as undertaken by Jesus the Christ. This *kenosis*, on the other hand, imposes the imperative and desired change of behavior in the Christian community. *Kenosis* translates into a new sociality in the Jesus community.

Pauline theology in Philippians, with its radical and novel sociality, would historically interrogate both fifteenth- to nineteenth-century Kongo Catholicism (imaged in triumphalist Christendom) and the contemporary world church. Guided by the slaves' rejection of their inhuman social condition as interpretive assumption, the political theological appropriation of this slave idiom, the *mimesis* of Christ Jesus the God-slave, presents a transformational framework for the liberation of oppressed and dehumanized peoples—the radical assurance of the elimination of all forms of dehumanization and oppression in church and society. This indicates the path of reinventing the community called church, willed by the Lord to change society. In fine, the imperative new sociality ensures the emergence of a community where there will no longer be *douloi* without rights, without lineages, lacking, as in Kongo-Mbundu-Angola, four clan chiefs ready to attest to their ancestry.[52] Rather, as "citizens with the saints" and as "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19), one is within a church-community where one is a child (*pais*)—the community of children with rights and freedoms in God's household (*oikos*).[53] This assures the dismantling of the social category of chattel slavery and the setting aside of the subjugation of *douloi*.

Members of God's Household: The Regime of Christ-God Dismantling the Regime of Sin and Death

Paul, the most prolific New Testament writer, was deeply steeped within the Hebrew tradition ("a Hebrew born of Hebrews" [Phil. 3:5]) and upped the ante of the imperative new sociality by self-identifying as "slave [*doulos*] of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1). How will the "Slaves of the Church" appropriate or struggle with the Pauline language? In other words, drawing examples from west central and eastern Africa, how will the communities of the descendants of the slaves of the Capuchins and the slaves of the Spiritans, who unconditionally rejected chattel slavery, endorse the self-deprecatory Pauline language as the Word of God?

These communities would not countenance a condition of *douloi* without rights, without lineages, lacking supportive clan chiefs to attest to their kin-related ancestry. Rather, from their flight from Christian villages to zones of freedom, they opted and were searching for alternative communities where one is a child (*pais*), with rights, in God's household (*oikos*).[54]

Furthermore, the example drawn from Indigenous Igbo religion generalizes and universalizes the rejection of the slave condition, including the "slaves of the gods." The rejection of being slaves of Neñgo, the river deity of Ñteje, and the preference for the alternative zone of freedom in "a country where the white authorities will protect them" confirmed as universally "inhuman" the return to the condition of unfreedom, of being slaves, the "slaves of the gods." Is there any compelling reason (i.e., "humanocentric" evidence) to opt for Paul's "slave of Christ" language?

In chapters 5 and 6 of the Letter to the Romans, Paul contrasts the regime of God/Christ, of Grace and Righteousness, in radical opposition to the regime of Sin and Death. Paul's survey of the entirety of human history leads him to the pessimistic conclusion that "all have sinned." In other words, the tragic situation that has befallen all, Jews or Gentiles (practicing either the Jewish or the Greek religion), was explainable: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin (*Hamartia*, capitalized in this Pauline vision) is seen as a sweeping, devastating colossus bringing Death (*Thanatos*) in its train as the inevitable consequence (Rom. 5:12–14). Salvation, or redemption, is God's unmerited *Charis* (Grace): "They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24). In view of this universal religious situation, one must make the choice to belong either to the regime of God/Christ or to continue to belong to the destructive regime of Sin and Death.

The Pauline theology of *charis* evokes and/or is perhaps better understood from the overriding theme of the Book of Exodus. In the making of Israel, the challenge presented to Moses and Aaron—the leaders or prophets of the people of Israel—was in the form of the clear choice of whom to serve. The impossibility of serving the Egyptian Pharaoh was sharply contrasted with the imperative of serving Yahweh: "Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness."' But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go"' (Exod. 5:1–2).

To appreciate the full effect of Paul's position in Romans and the contrast between the two regimes, one must fall back, Jon Levenson argues, on the relationship of Israel to Yahweh of the covenant. In the Book of Exodus, the demand, "Let my people go," implied change in the "treatment of the Israelites." Their choice was a movement from the service of a "bad pharaoh" to the service of a beloved covenantal Yahweh. Israel has a particular or personal covenantal love relationship with Yahweh, which Amos

captures in the verb *yada'* ("to know"). The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is fundamentally of a "familial-national dimension," not to be confused with liberation from the social condition of slavery.[55] Consequently, when their Catholic faith confirmed their freedom as "children of God," and with the additional social egalitarian order ("freed" or "liberated") making them humans equal in honor and dignity to their benefactors, the Pauline theological use of "slave of God/Christ" could be usable. Being "slaves of God/Christ" under the regime of Grace and Righteousness, they could not socially return to servitude and the dehumanization of enslavement, to the regime of Sin and Death. For those solidly planted within the regime of Grace and Righteousness, of God/Christ—the regime of freedom, for which "Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1)—the condition of slavery is perennially undermined, if not abolished.

Nevertheless, guided by the hermeneutic of suspicion, one could only adopt the Pauline "slave of God/Christ" with caution. Caution imposes the necessity of reading or interpreting "slave of God/Christ" from the "underside" of history. The freedom-loving Roman citizen Paul, who fearlessly objected to being flogged "uncondemned," and the white French Spiritans under no threat of losing *la liberté* are socially ill-positioned to lecture the Slaves of the Church on servitude to God/Christ. The experience of and the exegetical tools deployed by the Slaves of the Church, on the ground, must always have priority in the critical theological positioning of individuals and community as "slaves of God/Christ." As an evangelical choice, the idiom must be clearly shown to be under the freedom regime of God/Christ. The unambiguous indictment of oppressive slave masters and their colluding pastors in the southern United States by Howard Thurman's grandmother must haunt every appropriation of the saving Word to expropriate and further oppress the weak: "I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible." The choice of "slave of God/Christ" as a theological idiom must never be allowed to be deployed to propagate the condition of slavery.

Some may validly argue that one should not judge the religious (Catholic) performance of the fifteenth to the nineteenth century with the ethical canons of the twentieth and twenty-first. In other words, the ethical assumptions of the present should not be deployed to judge the performance of the Capuchins and the Spiritans. Despite the independence of the domain of ethics—in our case the ethical imperative of protecting the human rights and dignity of Black bodies—and the domain of religion, expressed in the performance of the Capuchins and the Spiritans, the two are closely

interrelated. The question was partly addressed in 1999 by the Roman Catholic International Theological Commission. The scandal and ambiguity surrounding the Church's historical, unethical participation in slavery and other scandals led the Commission to ponder the responsible way to undertake an "appropriate historical examination of conscience." In *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, the Commission underlined that it is necessary to "recognize the 'forms of counter-witness and of scandal'" in the behavior of the agents of the Gospel.[56] In our analysis, not only did the Capuchins and the Spiritans fall short of the Gospel ideal but the highest supervisory organ of mission in the Roman Catholic Church, the Propaganda Fide, was implicated as well.

The presence of the Slaves of the Church and Slaves of the Mission and the subhuman treatment meted out to "liberated slaves" are a "counter-witness" to the liberating Gospel of Jesus the Savior. Their story, their very existence, even the possibility of returning them to the condition of slavery is a counter-witness to the expression of the encounter with the inexpressible. Only the correct ethical performance that upholds their human rights and dignity can confirm and give consistency to the truth of the Gospel. In our exploration of the performance of the pastor-missionaries, Capuchin and Spiritan, the complex relationship between the experience of the mystical in religion (through the performance of Roman Catholic liturgy and prayers) and its "practical and ethical" dimensions (the absence of the recognition and protection of human rights and dignity) were under scrutiny.

In his elaborate reflection on the "authority of experience" as a guide to the appropriation of the truth and power of the experience of the inexpressible, Schillebeeckx carefully notes the "intrinsic connection" between religion and ethics despite their independence from each other. Their connection is "of such a kind" that "it is ethics which gives the density of reality to 'mystical' thematization." For despite the "relative autonomy" of the ethical with regard to the religious, "in the last resort," Schillebeeckx says, ethics "points towards religion and the 'mystical' thematization of the astonishing world" that traditions try to express in symbols and celebrate through liturgical performance. One may wonder "which element has the greatest density of reality"—that is, which better captures the expression of the truth surrounding the experience of the inexpressible. Is it the "indirect and 'orthopractical' expression of God in ethical action or the indirect symbolic expression of the source of this practice in explicit nomenclature: 'my God,' 'our God'"? For Schillebeeckx, "Both seem to be indispensable, but

in view of the experiential structure of revelation, the symbolic-religious talk of God owes its density of reality to the *mediation* of *ethical existence*." Indeed, salvation is not experienced through "a correct interpretation of reality, but by acting in accordance with the demands of reality." Indeed, one "can act 'rightly' without having a correct theoretical model of reality, even if we are not professing Christians. But being a Christian essentially implies liturgical praise and thanksgiving; however, these are robbed of their real basis and their density of reality if they lack the ethos of human, helping, healing and liberating love and righteousness."[57]

Slavery, the condition of chattel slavery, the definition of a human as property, and the denial of honor and dignity to Black humans clearly "lack the ethos of human, helping, healing and liberating love and righteousness." The foundational Christian reality, the *skandalon* of the indicative—the one who abandoned the *morphe theou* to assume the *morphe doulou*—is stripped of its power to save when ethically reprehensible dehumanization, totally opposed to the imperative new sociality of *Jesus-doulos*, becomes part and parcel of its performance. The insight of singular saints within the Capuchin and Spiritan congregations, Epifanio de Moirans and Alexandre Monnet, confirms them on the side of the truth of the Gospel.

One must repeat, in conclusion, that good religious leaders, missionaries, pastors and theologians, and witnessing religious communities ignore, at the risk of the truth and pertinence of the prophetic Gospel, the fact that ultimately the *humanum* is the criterion for the truth of any religion—especially the religion that is called Christianity.

Thinking of the Slaves of the Church, drawing inspiration from memorializing them, leads one to walk from the margin, from the performance of the dehumanized, to challenge church-community. The critical challenge blazes a trail for the world, arguing that another world is possible. This engagement in ecclesiological investigations from the underside of history puts humanity, human freedom, honor, and dignity at the center of the mystery of Christ. The "enfleshing" of freedom (to borrow Copeland's language) in the performance of the Catholic Slaves of the Church and Slaves of the Mission helps clarify how freedom redefines humanity and reshapes sociality. The new and free children of God claim, and witness to, the new sociality: "no longer strangers and aliens" but "citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God." The new sociality in Church and society is possible because it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19–20).

Notes

Introduction

1. *Gente da igreja* (people of the church) in Portuguese. See Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 235.

2. See the discussion of "hidden transcripts" in Scott, *Domination*.

3. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*.

4. Gray, "Kongo Princess," 152.

5. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 39; quoting from Propaganda Fide, *Scritture originale riferite nelle Congregazioni generali* (hereafter *SOCG*), p. 514, fol. 471, "Compendiosa relatione . . . data da me F. Andrea da Pavia" considered on April 6, 1693.

6. I regret that maps are not available in this book. For a map of the six provinces of the Kongo kingdom, see https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Kongo-kingdom-and-its-six-main-provinces-Mpemba-Nsundi-Mbata-Soyo-Mbamba_fig1_361329948, published in Anna Tsoupra, Bernard Clist, Maria Lopes, and Patricia Moita, "A Multi-Analytical Characterization of Fourteenth to Eighteenth Century Pottery from the Kongo Kingdom, Central Africa," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (2022), doi: 10.1038/s41598-022-14089-x.

7. Recent archeological work around Nsundi reveals aspects of the Kongo's economic and political relationships with Portugal. Bostoen et al., "Elusive Archaeology."

8. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 23–24.

9. Ibid., 575.

10. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 26.

11. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 105n31. See also Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*.

Chapter 1

1. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 14. The Code Noir outlawed slavery on French soil. In the introduction to Equiano's *Narrative*, Robert Allison refers to the Somerset decision of 1772 that a slave setting foot on English soil is free. Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 7, 11, 24n10.

2. Charles Long, foreword to Olupona, *African Spirituality*, xiii.

3. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 56.

4. Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 23. See also Prendergast et al., *Congo Stories*.

5. From an interview granted to *The Atlantic* in the year 2000. See Ashley Fetters, "Chinua Achebe's Legacy, in His Own Words," *The Atlantic*, March 22, 2013, accessed February 7, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/03/chinua-achebes-legacy-in-his-own-words/274297/.

6. Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe*, 1, 3–4.

7. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 2; Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 134 and chap. 4.

8. Sanneh, "Domestication of Islam and Christianity," 6.

9. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, underlines the fusion of horizons or enculturation in Kongo Catholicism; also see Fromont, "From Image to Grave and Back." Sanneh develops the titular idea in *Translating the Message*; in *Christianity in Africa*, Bediako affirms that Christianity is a non-Western religion.

10. Hammond and Jablow, *Africa That Never Was*. Representation requires ignoring the African origin of ancient civilizations. Eurocentric historiography preferred the Hamitic theory of Seligman. See Seligman, *Races of Africa*, 96; Ohadike, *Anioma*, 6–7; Sanders, "Hamitic Hypothesis"; Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*.

11. Coates, in *Water Dancer*, contrasts "Tasked" bodies from "Quality" bodies. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 28, 14 (introduction and conclusion). See also Curran's response to his critics in *H-France Forum*.

Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 149, 162, 186, adopts Richard Wright's anti-essentialist reading of "Negro" as "something *purely social*, something made in the United States" (Wright, *White Man, Listen!*, 80).

12. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*.

13. In her study of two letters of Augustine of Hippo, "Sold to Sin Through Origo," Elm clarifies the conditions of the freeborn (never enslaved), the child (whose labor can be sold for twenty-five years but who does not lose his/her freedom), the *colonus* (tied to the land, therefore not completely free), and the enslaved, whose body is property.

14. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 34, 32–34.

15. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 9–10, citing the abridged 1762 *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* of Pierre-Charles Berthelin.

16. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.

17. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 217, 218.

18. Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*.

19. Wright, *White Man, Listen!*, 80; quoted by Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 159–60.

20. Gates, *Stony the Road*, 11.

21. Frederick Douglass, quoted in ibid.

22. Ricks, *First Principles*, xxii.

23. Augustine, *City of God* 4.4.

24. Mudimbe, "Romanus Pontifex (1454)," critiques absolutist papal power. See International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation*.

25. The good life for the individual and best sociopolitical order discernible by "rational means" (Enlightenment) "came to an end some time ago," Gilroy insists; see *Black Atlantic*, 39, 40.

26. The Rwandan genocide and war in the DRC justify Fanon: "Africa is shaped like a gun, and Congo is its trigger. If that explosive trigger bursts, the whole of Africa will explode."

27. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition*.

28. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (serialized in 1899 and published as a book in 1902).

29. Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments*, 11. Reactions to Achebe from Watts, "'Bloody Racist.'"

30. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations*.

31. Thornton, "Development," 148.

32. Davis, *History of Black Catholics*, 62, 66. Pope Gregory XVI, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, 1839, accessed May 5, 2020, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/greg16/g16sup.htm. For Davis, the failure of American Catholicism to endorse *In Supremo* reveals "a Church under chains" (see *History of Black Catholics*, chap. 2).

33. Kaplan, "Ezana's Conversion Reconsidered"; Faraji, *Roots of Nubian Christianity*.

34. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 39; Balandier, *Daily Life*, 220.

35. Cuvelier and Jadin, in *Ancien Congo*, 62–75, provide the list of religious congregations and diocesans in the Kongo from the Franciscans who baptized Nguzu a Nkuwu.

36. Capuchins left the Kongo in 1835. The Portuguese government continued its financial aid until 1838. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 376–82.

37. Russell-Wood, "Before Columbus," 139.

38. Ibid., 140.

39. See Catholic Church, *Africa pontificia*, 1:63–64; English translation from "The Doctrine of Discovery, 1493," The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed July 25, 2020, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/04093_FPS.pdf.

40. Catholic Church, *Africa pontificia*, 1:63–64; English translation, "Doctrine of Discovery."

41. Thornton, "Development"; Thornton, "Origins of Kongo"; Thornton, "Soyo and Kongo."

42. Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 44; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 98.

43. Hilton, "European Sources," 301.

44. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 274–76.

45. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 269; Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 146.

46. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 273.

47. Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 113–14.

48. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 59–60. Batsîkama ba Mampuya ma Ndâwla, *Ancien royaume du Congo*, pleaded for the canonization of Ndona Béatrice during Paul VI's 1969 visit to Zaire.

49. On the lodgings of Manuel in the Vatican, see Gray, "Kongo Princess," 149. Bellarmine was called "hammer of heretics"

and "model of the defenders of the faith" by Benedict XIV (1675–1758) and Benedict XV (1854–1922), respectively.

50. Cuvelier and Jadin in *Ancien Congo* display pictures of the visit and the tombstone (284–85; photos opposite 284 and 285). For the narrative of the journey, the Pope's speech at the consistory, the funeral mass, and the inscription on Manuel's monument, see 288–99.

51. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 67.

52. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 50–51, 49–63.

53. Two Kongo historians, Thornton and MacGaffey, recently tried to reconcile their views on the origin of the Kongo kingdom; see their chapters in Bostoen and Brinkman, *Kongo Kingdom*.

54. The treaty of Tordesillas (June 7, 1494) was an "agreement between Spain and Portugal" to settle conflicts over lands "newly discovered" by "Columbus and other late fifteenth-century voyagers." See "Tordesillas, Treaty of," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010).

55. Fromont, "Collecting and Translating Knowledge," 136 (my emphasis).

56. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 23–24.

57. Hastings, "Christianity of Pedro IV."

58. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 51–63, disagrees with the Capuchins and historians who interpreted the Antonine movement as heretical. Rather, it was about identity, human rights/dignity, and "social harmony" (60). See also Petelo, "Dimension religieuse."

59. Heintze, "Luso-African Feudalism," 117–18, 122; Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*.

60. Tillard, *Flesh of the Church*.

61. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 487.

62. MacGaffey, "Central African Kingdom," 58.

63. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 49.

64. Thornton, "Development," 148.

65. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 151.

66. This is a popular position among Congo theologians such as Alphonse Ngindu Mushete, who often caricatures this type of attitude as "*christianisme*," *défini, définitive et définissant*.

67. Augustine, Letter 199.12, 47, from *Letters 156–210*, 350; Alberigo, "Chrétienté et culture," xi; Maduku, *Pour des Églises régionales*, 212.

68. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 9.

69. The Congolese philosopher Ekanga On'Okundji Okavu insists that one should not ignorantly claim *ce n'est pas comme chez nous*. Okavu, *Entrailles du porc-épic*.

70. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations*, 266–67, 268–69; Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 256.

71. Achebe, "Image of Africa," in *Hopes and Impediments*, 2–3, 17.

72. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 79–80.

73. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 3.

74. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 253–57.

75. Thornton, "Development," 148.

76. Hilton, "European Sources," 301, 295, 305.

77. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575 (my translation).

78. Ibid.

79. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 52.

80. Laburthe-Torla, "Pourquoi et comment"; also Gesché, "Christianisme comme monothéisme relatif"; Gesché, "Christianisme comme athéisme suspensif."

81. Gray, "Kongo Princess," 152. Also see Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 157–61.

Chapter 2

1. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 3.

2. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 128.

3. I adopt the Kongo names of the most celebrated Kongo kings, as listed in Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 449–52, rather than the Portuguese or Europeanized names.

4. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 410.

5. Maurier, *Missions*, 43.

6. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 306; on finances, 306–12 (Vatican Archives, Arch. Vat. 12516, De statu regni congi). Cuvelier culls information on the *regimento* from Raquel Abella et al., *El sistema de las artes*, 386, 387. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 79–82, summarizes Kongo finances.

7. Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 47; correspondence with Vivès, for the Pope, on the royal chapel dedicated to Saint James: Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 427, 429. For the

correspondence concerning the clergy and their financial support, see ibid., 426–32.

8. For the bull *Super Specula*, see Catholic Church, *Africa pontificia*, vol. 1, pars. 110–17, pp. 89–91. For the 1534–96 correspondence—the bull establishing the diocese of São Tomé (September 23, 1534) and erecting the diocese of San Salvador (May 20, 1596)—see Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 99–213. Note the letter of Fabio Biondo to King Álvaro II (Lisbon, September 15, 1596): Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 214–16.

9. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 152–53; Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 184, 185.

10. Fromont, "Collecting and Translating Knowledge," 136.

11. Bostoen and Brinkman, *Kongo Kingdom*, 223.

12. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 192 (quoting from Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*).

13. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 48.

14. Thornton, "African Dimensions," 1107.

15. This is common in pre-colonial and colonial Africa. Chrétien, "Premiers voyageurs étrangers."

16. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 259.

17. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 41.

18. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 259, quoting from Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*.

19. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 258–59; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 50–52.

20. Meno Kikokula, "Politique intellectuelle," 214.

21. Ibid., 201–2.

22. Omenka, *School in the Service*, 6; Clarke, "Methods and Ideology."

23. Meno Kikokula, "Politique intellectuelle," 212–13.

24. Meno Kikokula, "Autour de l'ambassade," 472, 477–82. Pope Julius II was already dead when the delegation arrived in Rome in 1513. Leo X was the Pope. Did the delegation ever leave Portugal for Rome? Meno Kikokula summarizes the views (473–77).

25. Meno Kikokula, "Politique intellectuelle," 205–6.

26. Experts (masters) of the school, of the chapel, or of the Church.

27. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 260–61.

28. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 49.

29. Hilton, "European Sources," 292.

30. Quote from English translation of Balandier, *Daily Life*, 226. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 49, left out the testimony of Broecke.

31. Van Wing, *Études Bakongo II*, 268.

32. Gray, review of Balandier, *Daily Life*, 655. Peel, "Syncretism," has helpful ideas on the complexity of syncretism.

33. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 306 (citing Arch. Prop., vol. 6, fols. 2534–2539).

34. Shaw, *Tropical Dependency*, 17–18 (my emphasis). Dennett cites Shaw at the beginning of *Black Man's Mind*, xvi.

35. For Diop, "royalty" in the Egyptian language signifies one "who comes from the south." Nubia (Kush, Sudan) is the origin of the "Egyptian civilization." From archeological evidence, the "Nubian royalty" that preceded "the Egyptian monarchy . . . by at least three generations" was "the oldest [monarchy] in the history of humanity." Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, 105, 108. See also Obenga, *Africa in Antiquity*.

36. Thornton, "Development," 164–65; Thornton, "African Dimensions," 1107.

37. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 143–52; Hastings, *Church in Africa*, 92.

38. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 192–93.

39. Meno Kikokula, "Politique intellectuelle," 216.

40. Thornton, "Afro-Christian Syncretism," 56.

41. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 273.

42. Thornton, "Development," 166.

43. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 269–72.

44. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 146.

45. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 191–94.

46. Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 26. Andrew Walls draws a sharp contrast between politics (the art of the possible) and translation (the art of the impossible): "Exact transmission of meaning from one linguistic medium to another is continually hampered not only by structural and cultural difference; the words of the receptor language are preloaded, and the old cargo drags the new into areas uncharted in the source language."

47. Ibid.

48. Thornton, "Development," 152.

49. Gray's review of Balandier, *Daily Life*.

50. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 257. Recall the narrative of the conversion of two court officials in Augustine, *Confessions* 8.15; wandering in the royal gardens at Trier and entering a cottage, they found and read *Life of Antony*.

51. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 80–81.

52. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 257.

53. Hilton, "European Sources," 290, 302; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 51.

54. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 81, 275n28 (citing *Historia de Reino do Congo*, manuscrit no. 8080, F.G. de la Bibliothèque nationale de Lisbonne).

55. Recall Constantine's vision, the Chi-Rho (Christ, embossed on his standard, 312 CE). Just as the Chi-Rho functioned in Constantine's military, the Kongo stone-cross had its own life.

56. Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life," 84. On co-revelations, appropriating but disagreeing with Hilton's interpretation, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 255, 257–58, and chap. 9; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 90–103. On the priests involved in the conversions, building, and dedicating the Kongo church, see Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 77–82.

57. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 78. The Kongo cosmogram displays the motion of the sun to Kalunga. See Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, chap. 2; see also Desch-Obi, "Combat and the Crossing."

58. Schreiter, "Role of Intercultural Hermeneutics," 29–43.

59. Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 28.

60. Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life"; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, chap. 9.

61. Anderson, *Creative Exchange*.

62. Uzukwu, *God, Spirit*, 19–22.

63. Achebe, *Arrow of God*; Nnolim, *Approaches*, 210, and 209–33.

64. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 255; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 49. Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 90–103, dismisses Hilton's arguments. Balandier, *Daily Life*, chap. 10.

65. Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 28.

66. Donald Mackay's review of Anne Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 384, points to the value of her work (the abundance of data provided) but underlines as a weakness her adoption of the "anthropological model," "whose relation to her material" she appears not to be "sure about."

67. Hilton, "European Sources," 290–91.

68. Perhaps, as neighbors, Ndongo acknowledged the more significant role of Kongo in the region. See Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, chap. 1 and p. 17.

69. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 67–68.

70. Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power," 25–27; for Nzinga "born to rule," Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 240. See also Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba."

71. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 259.

72. Ibid.; Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 25.

73. Hilton, "European Sources," 291n2.

74. Heintze, "Luso-African Feudalism," 118–20; Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power"; Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba"; Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life," 86–87.

75. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, foreword.

76. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 267.

77. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 48.

78. Thornton, "Origins and Early History," 101.

79. For this letter, see Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 102–3. Paul V, replying to Álvaro III (August 31, 1620; Alvaro's letter of October 20, 1619), acknowledged that King Álvaro was a "very pious king" highly "devoted" to the Apostolic See (ibid., 410).

80. Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 4; Toren, "Kwame Bediako's Christology," 222.

81. Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 24. See also Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*; Hartman, *Theology After Colonization*.

82. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 123; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 253–62.

83. Augustine, Letter 199.12, 47, from *Letters 156–210*, 350.

84. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 67.

85. Ibid., 177–78.

86. Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 28.

87. Hilton, "European Sources," 291n4.

88. Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 38–40, 61–65, 74.

89. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 178.

90. Laburthe-Torla, "Pourquoi et comment," 18–23. On blood-brotherhood with the king of Kilema, see Le Roy, *Mission to Kilimanjaro*, 130–33.

91. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 178–79, 180, quoting from Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 1:479–80. See also Bediako, *Theology and Identity*.

92. Prudence, *Psychomachie—Contre Symmaque*. The immemorial statement of Symmachus: "Aequum est, quidquid omnes colunt, unum putari" (One is justified to consider what all peoples worship as one and the same being). Also: "Uno itinere non potest perueniri ad tam grande secretum" (One and only one way does not suffice to approach such a great mystery). *Symmachi Relatio*, art. 10.

93. Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 33; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 53.

94. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 47–48n37.

95. Hastings, *Church in Africa*, 92.

96. Hilton, "European Sources," 303, accusing the Kongo elite of a "conspiracy of silence" regarding Indigenous religion. Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 184–85.

97. Fromont, "Collecting and Translating Knowledge," 150–51. Anne Hilton, in "European Sources," is concerned about addressing "pagan abuses." The editor of Cavazzi's book noted that Propaganda Fide had raised objections: "In particular the Propaganda Fide wanted to delete the passages relating to 'pagan abuses'—the very passages of most interest to us here—on the grounds that they were prejudicial to the Faith. In the event these passages, or the editor's version of them, were retained, excision being mainly confined, it would appear, to Cavazzi's frequent references to miracles. Nevertheless, the work as finally published consisted of seven books; the original manuscript had consisted of nine" (Hilton, "European Sources," 305).

98. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 177.

99. Thornton, "Origins and Early History," 113.

100. Volavka, "Insignia," 51, 50.

101. Cuvelier, *Ancien royaume de Congo*, 305 (annotated bibliography, the cult), quoting Albuquerque Felner, *Angola*, 376. See also Cavazzi and Alamandini, *Istorica descrizione*, 1.2, no. 77.

102. Hilton, "European Sources," 290.

103. Peel, *Aladura*, 68.

104. Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 29, and chap. 2 (my emphasis).

105. Hilton, "European Sources," 293–94; Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 155–56.

106. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 294, citing O. de Bouveignes and J. Cuvelier, *Jérôme de Montesarchio, apôtre du vieux Congo* (Namur: Grands Lacs, 1951), 41.

107. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 48, from Cavazzi and Alamandini, *Istorica descrizione*, 7.123, p. 856, and citing A. Wilson, "The Kingdom of Kongo to the Mid Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., University of London, 1978), 19.

108. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 50, citing Louis Jadin, "Andrea da Pavia au Congo, à Lisbonne, à Madère: Journal d'un missionaire capucin, 1685–1702," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 41 (1970): 440–41.

109. Wilson, "Nyakyusa Ritual," 240; Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*.

110. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 50.

111. Augustine, *Confessions* 6.2.1–2.

112. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 50.

113. Wiredu, "Death and the Afterlife," 149.

114. Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 26–27; Jensen, "Dining with the Dead," 133–34, 140–43; Schenk, *Crispina and Her Sisters*.

115. Jensen, "Dining with the Dead," 107.

116. See Gesché, "Christianisme comme athéisme suspensif" and "Christianisme comme monothéisme relatif."

117. Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life," 85.

118. Fromont, "Collecting and Translating Knowledge," 150–51. She states, "The word 'Religion' with a capital R here refers, of course, to the Catholic faith" (314–15n38). Fromont cites Cavazzi and Alamandini, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo*, 117.

119. Jousse, *Anthropologie du geste*.

120. Volavka, "Insignia," reads the history of the Kongo from the terrain in the 1970s back

to the museums, and to Kongoland, clarifying the divine in the Kongo *mfumu* (chief). Burial markers and other remembrances of the dead, among African Americans, display amazing ethnographic continuities with rituals of Kongo slaves. Young, *Rituals of Resistance*.

121. Sienaert, "Marcel Jousse," 95.

122. Uzukwu, "Endless Worlds."

123. Conférence Episcopale du Zaire, *Supplement au Missel Romain*, 84–86.

124. Ligier, "Autour du sacrifice eucharistique"; Hänggi and Pahl, *Prex eucharistica*, 82ff.

125. Kabasele Lumbala, "Nouveaux rites," 65.

126. Ela, *My Faith as an African*, 29–30. See also R. Kane, *Syncretism*, chap. 6.

127. See Roth, "Ecclesiasticus in the Synagogue Service."

128. Bouyer, *Eucharist*, 246, 250. I studied this Syrian type of Eucharistic prayer; see Uzukwu, *Blessing and Thanksgiving*, 115–42.

129. Bujo, *African Theology*, 79ff.

130. Theologians like François Kabasele Lumbala and Tinyiko Maluleke will not follow Bediako in "desacralizing" the ancestral relevance. Bediako, "Missionaries Did Not Bring Christ," 26, cited by Hartman, *Theology After Colonization*, 170. Bediako is unequivocal: Jesus Christ is "the only real and true Ancestor and Source of life for all mankind, fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors." See Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 31.

131. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 39–40n23.

132. See Fagerberg, *Theologia prima*.

133. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters," 263. See also Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 146; on the staff of the office of the interpreters, called *mestres* or *maestri*, see 143ff; see also Thornton, "Development," 164–65.

134. On an earlier catechism, see Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 17–23.

135. Ibid., 16; see 29–30 for conversations with Dom Felix on *Cariampemba*.

136. Thornton, "Conquest and Theology," 247.

137. Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (founded in Scheut, part of Anderlecht, Brussels).

138. Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 39–41.

139. Thornton, "Conquest and Theology," 257, citing the Jesuits' letter to Lord Collector, October 20, 1623, in Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 15:512; Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 25–26.

140. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 212. For *Super Specula*, see *Africa pontificia*, 1:90, esp. par. 111.

141. Historical and biographical notes to the catechism in Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 25–26, 30; see 12 for the dedication page to Pedro II.

142. Cardoso, "Doze Cartilhacs na lingoa de Congo" in Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, cited by Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 33–34.

143. Thornton, "Development," 152.

144. For the pre-Cardoso technical religious terms, see Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 43–44. Also see Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 31–32; Mbiti, *Bible and Theology*, 11.

145. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47–48. The possibility of enslaving dissidents exists.

146. Smith, *Faith and Belief*, 12.

147. Thornton, "Conquest and Theology," 258.

148. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 48, quoting Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*, 105.

149. Ibid., 52. Gray's reasoning agrees with that of Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and Lamin Sanneh.

150. Starkloff, "Problem of Syncretism," 77.

151. Internet Sacred Text Archive, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*, ed. A. M. Sellar (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907), chap. 32, accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bede/histo34.htm.

152. From book 11, letter 76, in *Epistles of St. Gregory the Great*, trans. James Barmby, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., vols. 12–13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1895), accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360211076.htm.

153. Ibid.

154. Demacopoulos, "Gregory the Great," 368, 367. *Condescensio* enables "the spiritual director to relax or strengthen a prescribed

reprimand according to individual circumstances" (360).

155. Starkloff, "Problem of Syncretism," 77.

156. R. Kane, *Syncretism*.

157. Balandier, *Daily Life*, 254.

158. Mbiti, *Concepts of God*. On Eboga in Gabon, see Mary, *Défi du syncrétisme*, 10.

159. Peel, "Syncretism." Levinson, "Traditional Religion," took Robin Horton to task.

160. Mary, *Défi du syncrétisme*, 11.

161. See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Horton claims that African traditional thought is located in the "closed predicament" and therefore not open to change; see "African Traditional Thought." Levinson, in "Traditional Religion," corrects Horton's error; I also pointed out that Horton's thesis misreads African thought. See Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*, chap. 2.

162. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47, quoting Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*, 227–34.

163. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47, quoting Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*, 227–34.

164. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 78, 79.

165. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 108–9; see also Desch-Obi, "Combat and the Crossing," 354–55.

166. See chap. 3, below, for the discussion of evil and the Devil.

167. Tertullian, *Prescriptions Against the Heretics*, in *Early Latin Theology*, trans. and ed. S. L. Greenslade (London: SCM Press, 1956), 40, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.tertullian.org/articles/greenslade_prae/greenslade_prae.htm [scanned and corrected by Hannah Scurrell and Roger Pearse, 2001].

168. Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life," 62.

169. Dennett, *Black Man's Mind*, 132; Van Wing, *Études Bakongo*, 231–32 (my translation).

170. Van Wing, *Études Bakongo*, 231–32; Dennett, *Black Man's Mind*, 132.

171. Starkloff, "Problem of Syncretism," 94; see also 86. In *Theology of the In-Between* (esp. 151–52), Starkloff further clarifies his ideas of what he calls "Christian views of syncretism," drawing from the works of Moltmann (*Church in the Power*) and Pannenberg (*Basic Outlines in Theology*).

Chapter 3

1. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 163.

2. Nnolim, "Achebe's Tragic Heroes," 90. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, part 2, "La traite des esclaves au paroxysme."

3. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*. Also see Eddie Glaude's study of James Baldwin, *Begin Again*.

4. Shaw, *Tropical Dependency*, 17–18.

5. Letter from Gabon, June 10, 1857: Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome I*, 48.

6. Heywood, "Making of Kongo Identity," 260–61.

7. Chinweizu, *West and the Rest of Us*, 54; Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*.

8. Letter of Afonso I to João III of Portugal, October 18, 1526. Jadin and Dicorato, *Correspondance*, 168, 166–68.

9. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 120n77.

10. Prendergast et al., *Congo Stories*.

11. The terms are fluid. See Buakasa, *Impensé du discours*; MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 6, 85. For *nganga* in Catholicism and indigenous Kongo religion, see Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, 54.

12. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 28–29, 258n5, cites Douglas, *Lele of the Kasai:* "In the nineteenth century the Lele of Kasai kept slaves mainly to kill at important funerals."

13. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, chap. 5. Perhaps burial with the master compares to the potlatch ceremonial slaughter of slaves among American Indians.

14. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 26.

15. Hilton, "Family and Kinship," 190, 191.

16. See Buakasa's *Impensé du discours*, chap. 1, clarifying *kindoki*, *ndoki*, and *nkisi* (spiritual religious power and witchcraft), linked to lineages or clans.

17. MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 11.

18. In the southern United States and the Americas, the loss/change of one's name symbolizes natal alienation. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 54–58.

19. Hilton, "Family and Kinship," 190, 191; MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 26.

20. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 258n3, quoting Cunnison, *Luapala Peoples*, 71.

21. Hilton, "Family and Kinship," 191 (my emphasis), referencing the letter of Afonso I to João III, October 1526 (dated October 3, 1526, rather than October 18 as in the 1974 edition of Jadin).

22. In *Slavery and Social Death*, Patterson notes, "Throughout the Americas slaves were routinely branded as a form of identification right up to the second half of the eighteenth century" (59).

23. Jadin and Dicorato, *Correspondance*, 167–68. Gonçalo Pires was perhaps the person in charge of the royal canoes at the port of Pinda.

24. Ibid., 9; item 53, letter of July 6, 1526, to João III of Portugal (154–56); letter of João III to Afonso I, dated end of 1529, responding to letters of Afonso I (171–86).

25. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 85–86.

26. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 30; Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power," 36.

27. Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba," 205.

28. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 299–333.

29. Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba," 205.

30. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 240. In "Legitimacy and Political Power," 25–27, Thornton discusses Queen Njinga, agreeing with and depending on Parreira's argument in *Economia e sociedade*.

31. Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 50. Talib notes the cost of African slaves in the Arab world: "The Abyssinian Abu' 1-Misk Kâfur, who later became regent of Egypt (334/945–356/966), was reported to have been purchased in 312/924 for the paltry sum of 18 dinars, even though he was a eunuch." Talib (based on the contribution of F. Samir), "African Diaspora in Asia," 717. Hilton dates the scenario of kings being born to enslaved women to the seventeenth century.

32. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 30.

33. On the fluid language of "slave" and "servant," see Hilton, "Family and Kinship."

34. MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 71.

35. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 32.

36. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 85–86.

37. Van Wing, *Études Bakongo*, 268, declares: "La mémoire de ce chef, dont le caractère égalait le génie, est restée vivante dans les clans les plus reculés de l'ancien royaume Kongo."

38. Meno Kikokula, "Politique intellectuelle," 200–201.

39. Walter Wink, in *The Powers That Be*, indicates the nonviolent spirituality helpful in this struggle.

40. Canons regular of Saint John the Evangelist, Santo Elói, named after the convent where they were cloistered in Lisbon.

41. Jadin and Dicorato, *Correspondance*, 81–82, 81n10.

42. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology*, 11.

43. Ibid., 82–83. Mvemba's position is comparable to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, book 3, 6:53): priests in ministry must be transparent in their relationship with the women to avoid questions of public propriety. "Even Paul did not hesitate in one letter to address his consort. The only reason why he did not take her about with him was that it would have been an inconvenience for his ministry." From *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 11, *Alexandrian Christianity*, ed. Henry Chadwick and J. E. L. Oulton (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), accessed July 15, 2020, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book3-english.html. Gray, "Kongo Princess," shows Kongo women's roles in spreading the faith.

44. Afonso I to King Dom Manuel of Portugal, October 5, 1514, Jadin and Dicorato, *Correspondance*, 77–101.

45. Ibid., 98. Curiously, like Deborah and Barak (Judg. 4:8), Mvemba took the same Father Nuno along on war campaigns. Recall the crusades led by popes and priests; see Moses, *Saint and the Sultan*.

46. Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 97.

47. Bostoen and Brinkman, *Kongo Kingdom*, 223.

48. Jadin and Dicorato, *Correspondance*, 91.

49. Chinweizu, *West and the Rest of Us*, 54; Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.

50. Van Wing, *Études Bakongo*, 268.

51. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves.'"

52. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575 (my emphasis).

53. See Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 171–76.

54. Cuvelier and Jadin, *Ancien Congo*, 212–13; see 99–213 for the correspondence from 1534 to 1596. See *Super Specula* of Clement VIII in *Africa Pontificia*, 1:89–91, pars. 110–17.

55. Randles, *Ancien royaume*, 152–53.

56. D'Asti contributed to *Missione in Pratica*.

57. D'Asti, *Missione in Pratica*, 74–75 (*Missione in pratica de pp. Capuccini italiani ne regni di Congo, Angola et adiacenti*, in *La pratique missionnaire des PP. Capucins italiens dans les royaumes de Congo, Angola et contrées adjacentes*, ed. J. Nothomb [Louvain: Aucam, 1931], 74). Quoted by Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 165, 177n13 (my translation).

58. Cited by Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 195.

59. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 171.

60. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 258n3, quoting Cunnison, *Luapala Peoples*, 71.

61. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, 32.

62. Moses, *Saint and the Sultan*.

63. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves'"; Hilton, "Family and Kinship"; Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 120–21.

64. Garcia II (Ndo Ngalasia II Nkanga a Lukeni a Nzenze a Ntumba) reigned from February 23, 1641, to the end of 1660. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 450.

65. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 48, quoting Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*, 399. In the Capuchin religious lexicon, *nganga* in Kongo Catholicism is acceptable for ministers, but *nganga* become sorcerers in Indigenous Kongo religion.

66. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 167–68. On the tragic death of Father de Geel, see Hildebrand, *Martyr Georges de Geel*.

67. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 166, 172–73; Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 160–64.

68. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 172; Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 163–64.

69. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 175–76.

70. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 168n67.

71. Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*.

72. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47–48, citing Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*.

73. Cf. Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 28.

74. Hilton, "European Sources," 303.

75. Jorge et al., *Catéchisme kikongo*, 29–30; Thornton, "Afro-Christian Syncretism," 69.

76. Correia, "L'animisme Ibo," 364. Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, sums up the Christian strategy.

77. MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 2, 3–4.

78. Bujo, *Foundations*, 128, 140. Also Hebga, *Rationalité d'un discours*; Buakasa, *Impensé du discours*.

79. MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, clarifies terms such as *nkisi*, *simbi* shrines and priests, *nganga*, and *kitome*. Van Wing, *Études Bakongo*, 170, presents the ethnography of investiture with *mpu*. On the insignia of authority, see Volavka, "Insignia."

80. Douglas, "Problem of Evil," 29; Uzukwu, *God, Spirit*, 88–89, 186–99.

81. Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, 99.

82. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47–48, citing Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e svccinta relatione*.

83. Fromont, "Collecting and Translating Knowledge," 150–51.

84. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 48.

85. Peel, *Aladura*, 68.

86. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 47–51. Congar, *Challenge to the Church*, chap. 3, claims that "error has no rights" was very much alive even after Vatican II.

87. Chatillon, "Évangélisation des esclaves," 83, 17.

88. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 264.

89. Chatillon, "Évangélisation des esclaves," 17.

90. Rosny, *Yeux de ma chèvre*, 48–49; Wijsen, *There Is Only One God*, 201, 217.

91. Bastide, *Candomblé*.

92. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:296.

93. Ross Kane contrasts two seventeenth-century Jesuits, José d'Acosta (in Andean territory) and Matteo Ricci (in Chinese territory). While d'Acosta was exclusivist, Ricci was irenic. R. Kane, *Syncretism*, 138–39. The

Chinese Rites controversy put an end to Ricci's openness.

94. Augustine, *Letter* 199.12, 47, from *Letters 156–210*, 350.

95. Tillich, *Life and the Spirit*, 102.

96. Tertullian, *Apology*, 24.

97. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 39.

98. See Gaston Jean-Michel's lecture "Epiphane de Moirans, un abolitionniste un siècle avant l'Abbé Grégoire," December 1, 2008, accessed August 4, 2020, https://touscreoles.fr/epiphane-de-moirans-un-abolitionniste-un-siecle-avant-labbe-gregoire/.

99. Moirans, *Just Defense*, 5.

100. In the seventeenth century, as opposed to the twenty-first, "mulatto" was an acceptable category.

101. Gray, *Black Christians*, 24, and chap. 1.

102. Ibid., 24.

103. The language is taken from Coates, *Water Dancer*.

104. Moirans, *Just Defense*.

105. Gray, *Black Christians*, 33, citing Fra Giuseppe Maria da Busseto's letter to the Cardinals of the Propaganda, March 8, 1687, Archives of Propaganda Fide, SC. Africa, Angola II, fol. 92.

106. Thornton, "Conquest and Theology," 246, 259.

107. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 50.

108. Ibid., 50–51, from *SOCG*.

109. Desiderius Erasmus suggested syncretism (Plutarch's *syn-cretismos)* to counter breakdowns in communication by Reformers. R. Kane, *Syncretism*, 21–26.

110. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536) and Georg Calixt (1586–1656) followed Plutarch (ca. 50–120 CE, *De Moralia, On Brotherly Love*) to propose the reconciliation (*synkretizein*) of scholars of all parties. Leopold and Jensen, *Syncretism in Religion*, 14–16.

111. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 49.

112. Ibid., 51; from *SOCG*, comments by Cardinal Carpegna.

113. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 39, quoting da Pavia in *SOCG*.

114. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 164–65.

115. Gray, "*Come vero Prencipe Catolico*," 48.

116. Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 170.

117. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 195.

118. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575.

119. Gray, review of Balandier, *Daily Life*, 655.

120. Brinkman, "Kongo Interpreters."

121. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575. Also see *Bulletin Général* (de la Congrégation du Saint Esprit) 11 (1877–81): 487.

122. Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 235, corroborating Duparquet's disbelief of the report by Father Poussot. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575.

123. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition*.

124. Balandier, *Daily Life*, 226, 254.

125. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 575.

Chapter 4

1. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.

2. Bethell, "Independence of Brazil," 120 (my emphasis).

3. Shaw, *Tropical Dependency*, 3.

4. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 105n31. The Kongo elite, Kabwita argues, had limited responsibility in the tragic transatlantic slave trade. On Belgium, see Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*.

5. See Dodd, "Fall of Jerusalem." Cf. Mark 13:24–27; Luke 19:42–44, 21:20–24; Matt. 24:15–16; Dan. 9:27, 11:31.

6. Cited by Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 165.

7. Ibid., 120n77.

8. Koren, *Spiritans*, 15.

9. Ibid., 28. Priests trained in the Spiritan seminary were in the colonies—Canada, Saint Pierre et Miquelon, French Guiana, Martinique, Saint Louis—and therefore not in independent Haiti. On the seminary and the qualities of candidates, see ibid., 9–18. See also Michel, *Claude-François Poullart des Places*.

10. Koren, *Knaves or Knights?*, 15–16.

11. Louis XIV, "Code Noir." Article 44: "Déclarons les esclaves être meubles, et comme tels, entrer dans la communauté."

12. The *fleur de lys* (lily flower), on the coat of arms and flag of dynastic France, is a symbol of Catholic saints.

13. Louis XIV, "Code Noir."

14. Kamara, "Slavery, Colonialism" (quoting Joan DeJean).

15. Etchegaray, "Esclavage," 6. Quote from Aubert, "Libermann in Conflict," 6.

16. Letter from the Superior of the Holy Ghost Seminary, rue des Postes, published in *L'ami de la religion* 125, no. 4048 (1845): 85–89.

17. Bühlmann, *Missions on Trial*.

18. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 340–42.

19. Ève, "Mgr Alexandre Monnet."

20. Par. 30 of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963, accessed January 4, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

21. Ève, "Mgr Alexandre Monnet," 43.

22. Gray, *Black Christians*, chap. 1.

23. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 338–39.

24. Étienne, "Église et la révolution," 30–32.

25. Ève, "Mgr Alexandre Monnet," 45–46.

26. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 338–39, 340–42.

27. Letter published in *L'ami de la religion* 136, no. 4513 (1848): 755–57.

28. Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*.

29. Kimambo, "East African Coast," 262. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, provides an account of female missionaries empowering the French colonial project.

30. Harrison's review of Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, highlights Javouhey's commitment to the slaves, at Mana, French Guiana, and her aim to reproduce the "virtues of the French peasantry." She "sponsored seminary training for Africans and admitted black women to her order." However, "conversion was the necessary first step toward civilization."

31. Mare, *Extraits du Mémoire*, 100.

32. Drescher, "British Way, French Way," 711.

33. Ibid., 721. For Drescher's description of slaves' exercise of "revolutionary violence," which accelerated emancipation, see 711–16. Arsène Aubert has difficulty defending Libermann: see "Libermann et les maîtres."

34. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 340–42.

35. On this colorful figure full of controversy, at war with the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, see Baber, "Political Economy."

36. The Code Noir, never denounced by French Catholicism, implicates the Church in the evils of slavery. Aubert, "Libermann in Conflict," 5–6.

37. Coulon, "Léopold Sédar Senghor." *Nègres* is the dominant trope in Coulon's study of Senghor, occurring at least thirty-six times in a thirty-page essay.

38. My translation. Full text in Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*, 518, 516–19. Coulon, "Faites-vous nègres," sums up Libermann's missiology and spirituality.

39. Preface reproduced in Coulon, "Léopold Sédar Senghor."

40. Soyinka, *Burden of Memory*, 21–22.

41. See Elizondo, *Future Is Mestizo*. Coulon, "Léopold Sédar Senghor," 108–11, celebrates Libermann's missionary spirituality.

42. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 342.

43. Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, prefers "recaptive" to describe slaves recaptured by the British navy and handed over to missionaries, as in Sierra Leone.

44. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 211, 381. Letter 505 to Holy Childhood, 209–13; 1875 letter to the Superior General, 381.

45. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 192–97.

46. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 211–12.

47. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 196.

48. Isichei, "Seven Varieties of Ambiguity," 212.

49. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 80.

50. Ibid., 212. For a detailed description of the first three categories, see the letter to the director of Holy Childhood (October 6, 1873), ibid., 209–13, 525, 527.

51. The repurchased slaves were called "children" (*les enfants*), whether they were adults or children.

52. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 34–37. For the decision on language and curriculum (fourth assembly, June 3, 1870), see 24–25.

53. Ibid., 212; for the 1876 correspondence, see 525–27. Also see Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 194–96, for the Cluny schools.

54. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 375–87. Fifteen adult slaves

were named, with the cost of purchase, in the acknowledgment letter (dated April 10, 1875) to Abbé Speesen for 1,000 francs donated for "l'œuvre des noirs" (387–88).

55. Ibid., 375, 381.

56. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 100n256, quoting Carrie, "Lettre à la maison mère," Rome, 16 April 1896, BG, t. XVIII, no. 112, mai 1896, p. 114.

57. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, chap. 4; Mukuna, "Question des 'esclaves,'" 172.

58. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 376.

59. Henschel, "First Spiritan Mission," fails in debunking Kollmann's *Evangelization of Slaves*.

60. Not even *In Supremo Apostolatus* of Gregory XVI (1839) condemned "slavery," though it condemned the "slave trade."

61. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 80.

62. Paul Coulon confirms Duparquet as the trustworthy follower of Libermann (personal communication).

63. Youth leadership is described this way in post–Vatican II Congo. The saintly Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa pioneered the *bilenge ya mwinda* (Youth of Light) to rejuvenate and reform the church. Duparquet played a similar role in nineteenth-century eastern and west central Africa.

64. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 342.

65. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome I*, letter from Ouidah dated 1856 (25–29). In a letter from Gabon dated August 16, 1857, he clarified that the priest was from São Tomé (49–51).

66. Laburthe-Torla, "Pourquoi et comment."

67. Coulon, "Un mémoire secret."

68. Mandirola and Trichet, *Lettres du Dahomey*, 7; Gantly, *Histoire de la Société*. Brandt, "'Character of Extravagance,'" discusses Jean Luquet and the establishment of the second archdiocese in the United States. Luquet was influential in the 1844 Synod of Pondicherry (India) that prioritized residential bishops with full authority in local churches. Luquet's "éclaircissements" (clarifications) on the synod of Pondicherry, requested by the Propaganda Fide, drew inspiration from the 1659 *Instruction* of the Propaganda to missionaries departing for China, discovered at Missions Étrangères de Paris archives in Paris.

69. Coulon, "Un mémoire secret," 41.

70. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome I*, 82–83.

71. Ibid., 94.

72. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 155, citing Jehan de Witte, *Monseigneur Augouard . . . Sa vie, ses notes de voyage et sa correspondance* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, Éditeurs, 1924), 348.

73. Aubert, "Libermann in Conflict," 5.

74. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 338.

75. Etchegaray, "Esclavage," 6. Quote from Aubert, "Libermann in Conflict," 6.

76. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 375. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 198–200, 208, discusses Javouhey's equivocation on indentured labor.

77. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 207.

78. The four (Curtis says three) ordained were better educated than the colonial clergy. Lacking mentorship (owing to systemic racism), they failed to integrate. The one who stayed in Gorée, Father Moussa, was racially stigmatized by Henry Koren: Moussa "slowly returned to the life of a savage." Then, "after his recall to France, he went to Haiti, which at that time was the last refuge of troublesome priests." Koren's failure to note the racism is incomprehensible. Koren, *Spiritans*, 77–78n15. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 206–7, notes that the apostolic prefect "had only contempt for indigenous priests." Moussa, condemned "for his taste in African music . . . for teaching the catechism to slaves (in Wolof no less)," left for Haiti in 1853; excommunicated, he died there "embittered in 1860."

79. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 208; for discussion of the farm project and its collapse, see 197–203.

80. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 340.

81. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 62, 64, 262n194.

82. Letter of Libermann to M. Galos in Cabon, *Notes et documents*, 282–86.

83. For Maurier, *Missions*, missionaries were carriers of the Western civilizational instruments.

84. Cabon, *Notes et documents*, 283. Cf. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:5).

85. Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*, 231. Aubert, "Libermann et les maîtres"; English revision, "Libermann in Conflict."

86. Brasseur, "Libermann et l'abolition," 337, 344n44.

87. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 207–8.

88. See Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, book 15, chaps. 1, 4–8. Ricks, *First Principles*, 202; chap. 11 celebrates Montesquieu's impact on the US Constitution.

89. Gray, *Black Christians*, 22.

90. Encomiums of Epifanio de Moirans in *Mémoire spiritaine* no. 9 (1999); Legrain, "Éthique chrétienne," 64.

91. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 375, 375n16.

92. Moirans, *Just Defense*, 5.

93. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 100 (my translation).

94. Daniels, "Kongolese Christianity," 224–25.

95. Jones, *God a White Racist?*, chap. 11.

96. Martin, "*Haustafeln*," 216–17 (my emphasis).

97. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 2–3.

98. Jones, *God a White Racist?*, chap. 11, esp. 169–72.

99. Anthony Gittins, "Prosper Augouard," Dictionary of African Christian Biography, accessed January 26, 2012, http://www.dacb.org/stories/congo/augouard_prosper1.html.

100. Kimambo, "East African Coast," 268.

101. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 381–82.

102. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 90–91.

103. Quote taken from ibid., 102 (my emphasis).

104. Ibid.

105. Augouard's first report as apostolic vicar of Ubangi-Chari, September 6, 1894: Coulon, "Catholicisme"; see also Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 98–101.

106. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 16; Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France.'"

107. Kimambo, "East African Coast," 268.

108. Applicable to Duparquet and the Spiritans is the point made by Comaroff and Comaroff on the Tswana mission, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:296.

109. Richards, "Ideology of European Dominance."

110. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:xvi.

111. Tillich, *Life and the Spirit*, 102.

112. Koyama, *No Handle on the Cross*.

113. Chinweizu, *West and the Rest of Us*, 54.

114. Metz, "Communicating a Dangerous Memory," 42. Also see Metz, *Faith in History*.

115. International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation*.

116. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 228.

117. Full text of instruction in Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*, 518, and 516–19. On symbol, see Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*.

118. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, chap. 5: slaves retained their shared "moral economy" with the Spiritans. "Somebodyness" is Martin Luther King Jr.'s expression, appropriated by Black theology. See Earl, *Dark Symbols*.

119. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 228, 237.

120. Ibid., 227.

121. See Williams, *Self-Governing Church*.

122. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 227.

123. Shenk, "Contribution of Henry Venn," 35; Williams, *Self-Governing Church*, 5–6.

124. Thomas and Luneau, *Religions d'Afrique noire*, 28. Uzukwu, *Listening Church*, chap. 6. The density of the Word is best captured by Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli*.

125. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95, 107, 138.

126. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 265.

127. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 15–41, 16.

128. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 261. In 1901, Le Roy had a rethink and criticized the strategy of the "Christian village" (264).

129. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 374; Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 225. See Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, on Enlightenment literature and *nègres*.

130. Bentzen, "On the Ideas."

131. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 244, 249–50, 265.

132. Ibid., 256–60. Hilarion, estranged, converted to Islam.

133. Le Roy, *Mission to Kilimanjaro*.
134. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 6, 4.
135. Summarized by Kollman in ibid., 222.
136. Duparquet and Vieira, *Père Duparquet, Tome III*, 375.
137. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 264.
138. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*.
139. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 254–55 (my emphasis).
140. Ibid., 256; for escapees' claim of freedom, see 253–56.
141. Scott, *Domination*, 5.
142. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 229, 255.
143. Marion Brésillac, *Mission and Foundation Documents*, no. 5.

Conclusion

1. See Levinas, *Entre Nous*.
2. Bühlmann, *Missions on Trial*.
3. I borrow the phrase "Because I am involved" from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu's musings on the Biafran war.
4. Metz, "Communicating a Dangerous Memory," 42.
5. Louis XIV, "Code Noir," article 44.
6. Kenzo, "Thinking Otherwise About Africa." "Slaves of the Church" preceded African evangelistic "founders of churches" in reinventing Africa.
7. Gray, "Kongo Princess," 152.
8. Coulon, "'Faites-vous nègres.'"
9. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 155. "Bourbier du paganisme" is Augouard's language.
10. "Slaves" were challenging the original Spiritan inspiration, contained in the 1839 Provisional Rule, commented on by Libermann. Article 3: "The missionaries will do their best to treat those most unfortunate people in the world with very special and holy tenderness" (107). And Article 6: "They will be the defenders, the support and intercessors of the weak and the little ones with respect to those who oppress them." For Libermann, in defending the oppressed, "the missionary should be on his guard against yielding to indignation or any other passion or violent emotion that is aroused in him by the sight of such ill-treatment" (109–10). James Chukwuma Okoye drew my attention to Libermann, *Provisional Rule*. I am grateful.
11. See Tillard, *Flesh of the Church*.
12. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 59.
13. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 38.
14. Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*; Ricks, *First Principles*, 202. The rights and humanity of Blacks and people of color are still central to US politics.
15. See "A Minute Against Slavery, Addressed to Germantown Monthly Meeting, 1688," accessed July 2, 2021, http://www.meetinghouse.info/uploads/1/9/4/1/19410913/a_minute_against_slavery.pdf. Christopher J. Lebron, "The Germantown Petition Against Slavery," citing historian Katherine Gerbner, in Kendi and Blain, *Four Hundred Souls*, 86.
16. Ela, *Cri* (translated as *African Cry*).
17. Anyanwu, "Sound as Ultimate Reality"; Uzukwu, *Listening Church*, chap. 6.
18. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 340 (my emphasis).
19. Demacopoulos, "Gregory the Great."
20. Gates, *Stony the Road*, 11.
21. Drescher, "British Way, French Way."
22. Bethell, "Independence of Brazil," 120.
23. Kollman, *Evangelization of Slaves*, 261, 264, 225.
24. This *lie* is central to Texan history, as "the Texas Constitution prevented the immigration of free Black people into the republic." Why? "Seeing that Black people could exist outside of legal slavery put the lie to the idea that Blacks were born to be slaves." Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth*, 128.
25. Mary Hicks, "1694–1699: The Middle Passage," in Kendi and Blain, *Four Hundred Souls*, 90, 91.
26. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.
27. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 105n31. See Hicks, "1694–1699."
28. Tillich and Fanon, theological-anthropological bedfellows? Tillich, *Life and the Spirit*, 102; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 128.
29. Coulon, "'Guerre des deux France,'" 100.
30. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*.
31. Variations in the meaning of these crucial phrases were made available to me thanks to Richard Tambwe, a Congolese PhD student at Duquesne University, in conversation with

Guy Makonko Mandiangu, whose language is Kintandu.

32. Kabwita, *Royaume Kongo*, 105n31; Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*.

33. Bejan, "Two Concepts of Freedom," 100.

34. Following Tillich's method of correlation, the questions of human existence and estrangement have, as a Christian theological response, the "new being in Jesus as the Christ." Tillich, *Existence and the Christ*.

35. Luke 12:32; cf. Matt. 25:40, 45.

36. See the comments of the ancestor of William Barber, David George, founder of the first Black Baptist church in the United States. The "freedom church"—with Black, white, and Native peoples together—would "interrupt the lies of slaveholder religion." William J. Barber II, "David George," in Kendi and Blain, *Four Hundred Souls*, 186.

37. See Goodrich, "From Slaves of Sin."

38. Mveng, "Impoverishment and Liberation," 156–57.

39. Leith-Ross, "Notes on the Osu"; Ezeanya, "Osu (Cult-Slave) System."

40. Correia, "L'animisme Ibo," 363 (my translation).

41. Byron, "Slave of Christ," 195, 194.

42. Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*, 518. Cabon, *Notes et documents*, 283 (Libermann's 1842 letter to the Minister of the Colonies).

43. My translation. Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann (1802–1852)*, 518.

44. Coulon, "'Faites-vous nègres.'"

45. Weems, "Reading Her Way," 61–62.

46. I adapt Schillebeeckx's secular pre-understanding of the meaning of the Christian faith. Boeve, "Experience."

47. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*.

48. Rengstorf, "Doulos," 271–72, 271n84.

49. Osiek, "Slavery," 174.

50. Rengstorf, "Doulos."

51. Ibid., 279.

52. Hilton, "Family and Kinship."

53. Rengstorf, "Doulos."

54. Ibid. Hilton, "Family and Kinship," 190, 191.

55. Levenson, "Exodus," 7–9.

56. International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation*.

57. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 59, 60–61; Lefébure, "Schillebeeckx's Anatomy of Experience."

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