

Opening First-World Catholic Theology to Third-World Ecofeminism: Aruna Gnanadason and Johann B. Metz in Dialogue

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Recommended Citation

Baumgardt, Gretchen, "Opening First-World Catholic Theology to Third-World Ecofeminism: Aruna Gnanadason and Johann B. Metz in Dialogue" (2012). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 198.
http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/198

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ARUNA GNANADASON AND JOHANN B. METZ IN DIALOGUE

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2012

ABSTRACT
OPENING FIRST-WORLD, CATHOLIC THEOLOGY TO THIRD-WORLD ECOFEMINISM:
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Gretchen M. Baumgardt, B.A., M.Div.

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This dissertation responds to the dearth of scholarship in first-world, Catholic theology, particularly in the United States, that adequately and actively engages theologies of third-world women who highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, humanity's interconnectedness with all creation, and the spiritualities of third-world women that shape their relationship to and care for the earth. I contend that greater intentional dialogue with these theologians, particularly third-world, Christian ecofeminist theologians, could expand first-world, Catholic theology's appropriation of ecofeminism, develop a more comprehensive understanding of the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world, and deepen understanding of spirituality and social action from a third-world, ecofeminist perspective.

As an interdisciplinary project, I adapt the "boomerang pattern of influence" model, developed by political scientists Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, for theological discourse. This model comprises practical and intellectual dimensions for engaging dialogue among first-world, Catholic theologians and third-world, Christian theologians on third-world, ecofeminist concerns. To further explicate this model, I orchestrate an intellectual dialogue between third-world, Indian, Protestant theologian Aruna Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology and first-world, German, Catholic theologian Johann B. Metz's concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity. By integrating their theological approaches, I demonstrate how Metz's dimension provides a conduit for opening first-world, Catholic theology to third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology, as articulated by Gnanadason, and especially deepens our understanding of the relationship between spirituality and social action from an ecofeminist perspective.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gretchen M. Baumgardt, B.A., M.Div.

I could not have completed this project without the support and guidance of many people who have accompanied me on my ongoing journey of becoming a theologian. I would like to begin by thanking the academy – that is, the theological academy. First, I would like to thank Marquette University’s Theology Department for the opportunity to pursue this degree. In particular, I offer my sincere thanks to my dissertation director, Dr. Jame Schaefer, for her theological insights, guidance, encouragement, and consistent optimism. My independent study with her on environmental justice became the foundation for this project, which developed in ways I never imagined. I also extend deep thanks to my board members, Rev. Bryan Massingale, Dr. Irfan Omar, and Dr. McGee Young, and my former advisor, Rev. Thomas Hughson, SJ, for their support and for helping me shape my dissertation.

I would also like to thank the theology faculty of the University of Notre Dame and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) who inspired my original interests in feminist theology and spirituality, especially Cathy Hilkert, OP, and Bob Krieg, who also served as tremendous mentors for me. Along these lines, I am grateful for my international friends at the GTU who led me to examine the relationship between human rights and spirituality. I also extend my thanks to my undergraduate advisor, Bro. Bob Smith, FSC, at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota, who initially encouraged me to consider pursuing graduate studies in theology.

On a professional level, thank you to my former colleagues in Marquette’s Division of Mission and Ministry, especially the staff of the Office of Campus Ministry. I greatly appreciated your collegiality, sense of humor, and support throughout this process (“oh, and just one more thing...”). I am also humbled by the grace and blessings of being able to walk with so many amazing college students on their journeys. My dissertation would not be the same without these powerful experiences of ministry.

On a personal level, I owe many, many thanks to my family and friends. To my parents, Mary and George, I am incredibly grateful for your loving support and concern, especially your generous hospitality (and patience with me!) over the past year. Thanks also to my siblings (Erika, Rich, George, and Greg), in-laws (Peter and Mel), nieces and nephews (Paige, Hunter, Peyton, Logan, and Kamrynn), and my huge extended family for the moments that reminded me that there is more to life than writing a dissertation.

I have also been blessed with the deep friendship of people throughout my life who have shaped me and my theological vision – too many to name here lest I forget someone. However, there are several friends I must mention. Tracy and Anthony, you will always be two of my dearest friends and theologians. To my lay M.Div. classmates, Rhodora, Monica, Gary, and Mark, and our “honorary M.Divvers,” Zeynep and Jen, where do I begin? I think another class reunion is in order. To my dissertation “coaches,” Jen and Lee, if not for your cajoling conversations with me,

this moment would not have arrived. Mark, thanks for your hilarious analogies and for “keeping it real.” Rebecca, thanks for your spiritual wisdom and consistent encouragement. Nikki, thanks for modeling a Christian “spirituality of resistance” for me.

In closing, I would like to thank Sharon, Tara, and my spiritual directors on directed retreats whose care, wisdom, and guidance changed my life and shaped the nature of this dissertation. As the poetry in my appendix reflects, through the grace of God, I have been able to more deeply understand and experience the power of God’s abiding love in the lives of others and in my own life during the time in which I wrote this dissertation. My hope is that my life’s work can contribute in some small way to healing and reconciliation in our world.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCCC	Catholic Coalition on Climate Change
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CTS	College Theology Society
CTSA	Catholic Theological Society of America
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
GGCA	Global Gender and Climate Alliance
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-governmental organization
TAN	Transnational advocacy network
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
WCC	World Council of Churches
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Chapter One: Introduction

As people of faith, we are convinced that “the earth is the Lord’s and all it holds” (Ps 24:1). Our Creator has given us the gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish. All of this God created and found “very good.” We believe our response to global climate change should be a sign of our respect for God’s creation.

~ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops,
“Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good”

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, various research studies endorsed by the United Nations (UN) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) document the negative effects of global climate change.¹ In particular, these studies reveal the exponential growth in climate change forced by human activity, which contributes to environmental degradation.² The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which accepts the findings of the IPCC, affirms that climate change most adversely affects people living in poverty, even though they “contribute least” to this problem

¹ The IPCC is both a scientific and intergovernmental body comprised of countries that are members of the U.N. and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It does not conduct its own research but “draws upon the work of numerous scientists, and countries assent to the authority of the findings of the IPCC through their membership,” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s website, <http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.htm>. In addition, the IPCC defines climate change as “a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g. using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. This usage differs from that in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where climate change refers to a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods,” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report,” section 1.1, http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/main.html. This dissertation supports the definition of climate change outlined by the UNFCCC.

² The IPCC’s most recent report states that “the radiative forcing of the climate system is dominated by the long-lived GHGs [greenhouse gases]Global GHG emissions due to human activities have grown since pre-industrial times, with an increase of 70% between 1970 and 2004,” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report,” section 2.1. Examples of environmental degradation include damage to and loss of ecosystems, desertification, pollution of natural resources, etc.

and have the fewest resources to resist the harmful implications of climate change.³

Women in the third world⁴ represent the majority of persons in this category.⁵

Lorena Aguilar, Senior Adviser for Gender of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), explains that “climate change exacerbates existing inequalities and slows progress toward gender equality.”⁶ The daily experiences of girls and women in the third world, who typically bear the primary responsibility of procuring resources for their families, substantiate her claim. Specific climate changes, such as “drought, desertification, and erratic rainfall,” increase the time necessary for them to attain these resources, limiting their opportunities for income and education.⁷ Likewise, the loss of domestic plant and animal species contributes to food insecurity, which diminishes their ability to provide for their families.⁸

³ USCCB, “Global Climate Change 2010,” <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/global-climate-change-2010.cfm>. See USCCB, *Global Climate Change*, (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2001), 14n, for the USCCB’s affirmation of the IPCC.

⁴ Throughout this project, I use the term “third world” and modifier of “third-world” to refer to underdeveloped or developing countries and the term “first world” and modifier of “first-world” to refer to developed countries, following Aruna Gnanadason’s socio-economic use and spelling of these terms.

⁵ See Rachael Nampinga, written statement for Emerging Issues Panel on “Gender Perspectives on Climate Change” at the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 25 February – 7 March 2008), 2, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/panels/climatechangepanel/R.Nampinga%20Presentation.pdf>.

⁶ She also writes that “in a similar manner, gender inequality worsens the impacts of climate change and a society’s move toward gender equality reduces the impacts of climate change,” Lorena Aguilar, written statement for Emerging Issues Panel on “Gender Perspectives on Climate Change” at the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 25 February – 7 March 2008), 4, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/panels/climatechangepanel/L.%20Aguilar%20Presentation%20Climate%20change%20.pdf>.

⁷ IUCN and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with member organizations of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change*, 86, <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2009-012.pdf>. For similar examples, see UN Population Fund, “State of World Population 2009: Facing a changing world: women, population and climate,” 7, <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp/englishswop09.pdf>. In addition, the IUCN et al. training manual cited above states that “gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but rather, that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female,” 15. Likewise, the IUCN manual also discusses how women experience a “special condition” that

Along these lines, gender injustices related to climate change pose grave physical danger to girls and women. Traveling longer distances for resources puts them at higher risk of sexual violence and of physical injuries resulting from heavy lifting.⁹ Limits placed on mobility and access to resources for some women also leads to disproportionate effects of natural disasters compared with men, including increased risk of infectious diseases and death.¹⁰ These implications highlight an undeniable link between gender inequalities and environmental degradation.

Likewise, many women in the third world depend heavily upon forest resources to meet the daily needs of their families. Thus, more women face harm due to deforestation, but these experiences often lead women to become advocates for forest preservation.¹¹ In particular, Indigenous women possess incredible biodiversity knowledge that preserves our natural environment.¹² Therefore, while recognizing the disproportionate harm experienced by women in the third world as

comprises “the social, economic and cultural factors and mechanisms which keep women in a situation of disadvantage and subordination with regard to men,” which I consider to be a form of gender conditioning, IUCN et al., 17.

⁸ Aguilar, 5.

⁹ UN Women Watch, “Women, Gender Equality, and Climate Change,” fact sheet, 2, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf.

¹⁰ UN Commission on the Status of Women, Issues paper for Emerging Issues Panel on “Gender Perspectives on Climate Change” at the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 25 February – 7 March 2008), 2, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/issuesspapers/Gender%20and%20climate%20change%20paper%20final.pdf>. See IUCN et al., which notes that “a 2007 study by the London School of Economics, the University of Essex and the Max-Planck Institute of Economics analyzed disaster events in 141 countries and found that when women’s economic and social rights are not protected, more women than men die from disasters. In societies where both genders enjoy equal rights, disasters kill similar numbers of women and men,” 83.

¹¹ Nampinga, 2.

¹² As an editorial note, I use the terms “natural environment,” “the earth,” and “creation” interchangeably to refer to the entirety of our natural environment (all of the eco-systems, species, and land that comprise our planet).

a result of climate change, these women “can be effective agents of change” by sharing “expertise” that prevents environmental degradation.¹³

Moreover, steps are being taken to confront challenges related to environmental degradation and gender inequalities in the third world. In 2007, several key international organizations established the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) to bring gender concerns to the forefront of climate change policy and initiatives.¹⁴ However, the GGCA reports that, “in a 2006 UN survey of environmental ministries, governments cited lack of capacity and understanding on the topic of gender and environment, and specifically on gender and climate change, as a reason for not incorporating gender into their work.”¹⁵ These survey results demonstrate how gender issues related to our natural environment lack the adequate attention needed from political entities to redress these injustices.

The IUCN cites the development of a common language and collaboration among institutions, policy makers, and aspects of civil society as helpful ways to ameliorate the lack of capacity and understanding regarding these issues.¹⁶ As major bulwarks of civil society, Catholic institutions play important roles in redressing social injustices at local, national, and global levels. Within these institutions, both theologians and Church leaders discuss social justice concerns as an integral aspect of theological discourse.

¹³ UN Commission on the Status of Women, 2.

¹⁴ This Alliance was initially formed by the UNDP, the IUCN, the Women’s Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2007. By 2009, the GGCA comprised more than twenty-five UN agencies and international civil society organizations.

¹⁵ IUCN et al., 5.

¹⁶ IUCN et al., 5.

Regarding injustices specific to environmental degradation, first-world, Catholic theologians, Church leaders, and institutions have intentionally addressed the impact of climate change, especially in relation to poverty, and our responsibility to care for all creation in recent years.¹⁷ In fact, Pope Benedict XVI has been dubbed “the green pope” for his attention to environmental justice in his writings and speeches.¹⁸ In addition to the Catholic community, he continues to implore world leaders to work for environmental protection in solidarity with the poor.¹⁹

Likewise, both the USCCB and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are members of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (CCCC) that was launched in 2006.²⁰

Regarding more recent initiatives, the USCCB, the CCCC, and the Catholic University of America (and its Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies) are jointly sponsoring an academic conference in November of 2012 on environmental justice

¹⁷ See Maura A. Ryan and Todd David Whitmore, eds., *The Challenge of Global Stewardship* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Drew Christiansen and Walter Grazer, eds., *And God Saw That It Was Good* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1996); John A. Coleman and William F. Ryan, eds., *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005); Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008); Richard W. Miller, ed., *God, Creation, and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010); Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Chapter 10: Safeguarding the Environment,” in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004), 197-211; Jame Schaefer, ed., *Confronting the Climate Crisis* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011); Jame Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009); USCCB, *Global Climate Change*; Tobias L. Winright, ed., *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011).

¹⁸ See John L. Allen, “Benedict XVI’s very own shade of green,” *National Catholic Reporter* 31 July 2009, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/benedict-xvi%E2%80%99s-very-own-shade-green>; Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2007, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_benxvi_mes_20061208_xl-world-day-peace_en.html; Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_benxvi_mes_20071208_xli-world-day-peace_en.html; Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_benxvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 50, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html.

²⁰ For information on the CCCC, see <http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/>.

and climate change with a focus on assessing Benedict XVI's "ecological vision for the Catholic Church in the U.S."²¹ While their writings and actions express concern for environmental justice, neither Benedict XVI nor the USCCB have yet to intentionally address the gravity and disproportionate impact of the effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world.

Many first-world, Catholic theologians who write on environmental justice concerns typically discuss them in relation to globalization, through the lens of Catholic social teaching, or in dialogue with disciplines like the natural sciences.²² Theologians also explore ways to highlight our responsibility to the earth through liturgy and worship.²³ While interlocutors of first-world, Catholic theologians are often primarily also from the first-world, publications from recent international conferences gathering Catholic ethicists from the first and third worlds include essays that discuss environmental concerns, but they are few in number.²⁴ Overall, intentional discussion of the relationship between ecology and feminism, third-world ecofeminism, and the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world, remains on the margins of first-world, Catholic theology.

²¹ See http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/upload/USCCB_CCCC_CUA-Call-for-papers.pdf.

²² See footnote no. 17.

²³ For example, see Dianne Bergant, Richard N. Fragomeni, and John Pawlikowski, eds., *The Ecological Challenge: Ethical, Liturgical, and Spiritual Responses* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994); Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Preaching from the Book of Nature," *Worship* 76, no. 4 (2002): 290-313; David N. Power, "Worship and Ecology," *Worship* 84, no. 4 (2010): 290-308.

²⁴ For example, see Linda Hogan, ed., *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), and James F. Keenan, ed., *Catholic Theological Ethics, Past, Present, and Future: The Trento Conference* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

Since the 1960s, first-world, Catholic feminist theologians have championed the concerns of women. However, initial feminist theologies from this time period did not adequately engage racism and classism.²⁵ In addition to being critiqued and further developed by Catholic theologians from minority racial groups,²⁶ first-world, feminist theology has increasingly discussed the relationship between ecology and feminism, especially since the 1990s.

Historically speaking, the term “ecofeminisme” originated with French writer Françoise d’Eaubonne who, in her 1974 book *Feminism or Death*, “called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet.”²⁷ Today, ecofeminists from around the globe write from various religious and spiritual perspectives, secular approaches, and academic disciplines.²⁸ Even when limited in scope to Christianity, neither feminist nor ecofeminist theology is monolithic.

Although ecofeminism encompasses a diversity of approaches, principal presuppositions support an ecofeminist hermeneutic. Writing from a first-world,

²⁵ For an overview of the historical development of Christian feminist theology see Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Emergence of Christian Feminist Theology” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3-22 and Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Where is it Going?” *International Journal of Public Theology* 4, no. 1 (2010): 5-20. I use “feminist theology” as an umbrella term for the various expressions of feminist theology, such as womanist, Latina, Asian, etc.

²⁶ For examples of anthologies edited by women from specific racial groups in the U.S. highlighting their experiences and struggles, see María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodriguez, eds., *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology Religion and Justice* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), which includes essays from Catholic and Protestant perspectives, and Emilie Maureen Townes, ed., *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), which includes essays from Catholic and Protestant African-American theologians. Likewise, see Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis, eds., *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), which includes essays from womanist and male theologians.

²⁷ Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 194.

²⁸ Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen, eds., introduction to *Ecofeminism and Globalization* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 3. For a succinct historical overview of ecofeminism, see Laura Hobgood-Oster, “Ecofeminism – Historic and International Evolution,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, eds. Bron Raymond Taylor, Jeffrey Kaplan, Laura Hobgood-Oster, Adrian J. Ivakhiv, and Michael York (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 533-539.

Catholic perspective, Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen present three claims that they observe to be “central” to connecting women and nature in ecofeminism: “the empirical, the conceptual (cultural symbolic), and the epistemological. The empirical claim is that environmental problems disproportionately affect women in most parts of the world.”²⁹ The two other claims propose that “women and nature are connected conceptually and symbolically in Euro-western worldviews,” and women have an “epistemological privilege” about ecosystems that can help redress environmental degradation in light of the disproportionate effects they experience.³⁰ Eaton and Lorentzen point out that most ecofeminists avoid essentialist arguments in making these claims and consider the connection between women and nature to be rooted in the experiences and practices of women.³¹

Along these lines, Eaton and Lorentzen identify key unifying ecofeminist commitments as “the recognition and elimination of male-gender bias” and “the valuing and preserving of ecosystems broadly understood.”³² Likewise, first-world, Catholic theologian Anne M. Clifford affirms that ecofeminism recognizes the link “between the domination of women and other forms of social domination (e.g., racism and economic classism) and the exploitation of nonhuman nature.”³³ Eaton and Lorentzen add that ecofeminism “is a textured field of theoretical and

²⁹ Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 2.

³⁰ Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 3.

³¹ Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 3.

³² Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 3.

³³ Clifford also contends that “an important characteristic of ecofeminism as a scholarly theory is the significance of the preference for the word ‘ecology’ over ‘environment.’” Even though these terms are commonly interchanged, she writes that “ecofeminists argue that the two are not synonymous”; ecology is a term that reflects a more “holistic” approach and is more inclusive of both human and nonhuman nature,” Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: 2001), 267, 223. I follow the UN’s use of the term “environmental degradation” in its reports instead of “ecological degradation.” See footnote nos. 1-2.

experiential insights encompassing different forms of knowledge, embodied in the concrete,”³⁴ demonstrating its practical dimension. Ecofeminism continues to develop as a field within various disciplines, and women from the third world have broadened its scope of concerns to be more attentive to the dire situations facing women described earlier.³⁵

In addition, while ecofeminism addresses the negative effects of male-gender bias, men are important partners in endeavors supporting ecofeminist concerns, as exemplified by the work of the Navdanya Movement in India and The Green Belt Movement in Kenya.³⁶ Clifford also maintains that ecofeminism unites aspects of feminism, ecology, and deep ecology “with the goal of ending discrimination against women and subjugated men and treatment of nonhuman nature as if it is a ‘thing’ that exists solely for human benefit.”³⁷ Likewise, first-world, Catholic theologian Mary Grey suggests that “focusing on the vital link between poor women and the sustaining of life opens up priorities for communities of all men and women,” which can be facilitated by an ecofeminist worldview that recognizes our interdependency with all of creation.³⁸

Turning to ecofeminist theologies, Grey writes that “one of the key characteristics of ecofeminist theology is that it is a fusion of the environmental movement, feminism, and women’s spirituality,” with an underlying guiding

³⁴ Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 3.

³⁵ Eaton and Lorentzen, introduction, 5.

³⁶ See <http://www.navdanya.org/home> and <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>.

³⁷ Anne M. Clifford, “Trees, ‘Living Symbols of Peace and Hope,’” in *Confronting the Climate Crisis*, 346.

³⁸ Mary C. Grey, *Sacred Longings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004); Ursula King, *The Search for Spirituality* (New York: BlueBridge, 2008), 129, 130.

principle that all life, including all of creation, is sacred.³⁹ More specifically, Clifford writes that “ecofeminist Christian theologies not only encourage us to new thinking about our relationships to all other forms of life, but also challenge us to embrace these new relationships as agents for healing change.”⁴⁰ From Clifford’s perspective, application of this agency “translates into transformative praxis” that reverences all creation and is shaped by one’s social location and use of resources therein,⁴¹ recognizing the interconnectedness of and responsibility to our global community. She also observes that “prophetic calls for changes that honor precolonial values of indigenous culture characterize the ecofeminism of Third World theologians,” and she argues that the “earth-based” spiritualities of third world women, their reverence for the sacredness of all creation, and an “emphasis on practical remedies to wasteful consumption” offer “important challenges” to first-world, ecofeminist theologians.⁴²

Several prominent first-world, Catholic feminist theologians consistently engage works written by ecofeminist theologians from the third world in their writings, including Clifford, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and, to a lesser extent, Elizabeth A. Johnson.⁴³ Likewise, Grey and Ursula King in the United Kingdom and Eaton and Anne Marie Dalton in Canada also incorporate third-world, ecofeminist

³⁹ Grey, 127.

⁴⁰ Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 254.

⁴¹ Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 254.

⁴² Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 250, 253.

⁴³ See Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005); Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Women Healing Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

sources.⁴⁴ Theologians Mary Judith Ress, originally from the U.S., and Gabriele Dietrich, originally from Germany, moved to Chile and India, respectively, became involved with local women's movements, and write from this local context.⁴⁵ Some of the theologians listed above also draw from works of third-world ecofeminists from disciplines outside of theology, such as the writings of Indian environmentalist Dr. Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdanya, and Kenyan scientist and former university professor, Dr. Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement.⁴⁶

As I explain below, theologies of third-world women who write on the intersection of ecology and feminism reflect the claims of ecofeminism outlined above, whether or not these theologians categorize themselves as "ecofeminists." Their writings highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women and both the interconnectedness with all creation and the interrelated suffering of women and ecological systems. Despite the positive developments

⁴⁴ Grey, *Sacred Longings*; Ursula King, ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994). King is originally from Germany.; Eaton and Lorentzen, *Ecofeminism and Globalization*; Anne Marie Dalton and Henry C. Simmons, *Ecotheology and the Practice of Hope* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ See Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Gabriele Dietrich, "The World as the Body of God: Feminist Perspectives on Ecology and Social Justice," in *Women Healing Earth*, 82-98, and Gabriele Dietrich, "People's Movements, the Strength of Wisdom, and the Twisted Path of Civilization," in *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, eds. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 407-421.

⁴⁶ See footnotes 28-30. Maathai died on 25 September 2011. Clifford notes that "although Maathai does not use 'ecofeminism' in reference to the Green Belt Movement in her writings, it is clear that she is mindful of the interconnectedness of the undervaluing of women and the domination of Earth. She recognizes that impoverishment of the land and the human poverty that accompanies it affects women more severely than most men. This is the case because women, particularly African women, are the poorest of the poor, because, along with non-human nature, women are the primary sustainers of society. Maathai's ecofeminism is not an academically oriented theory as it often is for women living in the Northern hemisphere. Her ecofeminism is grassroots critical engagement of human-Earth and inter-human relations," Clifford, "Trees," 346. In addition, "though paying significant attention to diversity, white ecofeminists have often essentialized racial difference," and in several academic anthologies, "Shiva's voice figures prominently and seems to stand for all women who are not European or Euro-American," Laura Hobgood-Oster, 536.

mentioned above, more work needs to be done to bring the wisdom, experience, and expertise of third-world theologians who focus on these issues related to ecology and feminism to the forefront of first-world, Catholic theological discourse.

As Grey points out, “there is still a huge chasm of ignorance as to what is meant by ‘ecofeminism’ and what it offers to Christian theology.”⁴⁷ A contributing factor to the gap in the literature could be the ways in which ecofeminist concerns are expressed and defined within the first and third worlds. Clifford notes that “the very practical concerns of women of the Third World are far removed from the romanticizing tendencies of many Euro-American ecofeminists, including Christian ecofeminist theologians,” given the dire effects of environmental degradation on women in the third world.⁴⁸

Some third-world, Christian feminist theologians also discuss ecological concerns under the umbrella of globalization, post-colonial theology, or in relation to violence against women without the moniker of “ecofeminist.”⁴⁹ In addition, some third-world, feminist theologians are currently involved in work that links ecology and feminism, but they may not be publishing writings that discuss these activities.⁵⁰ Another challenge is that many works written by third-world

⁴⁷ She also argues that “Christian ecofeminist theologians – for example, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catherine Halkes, Sallie McFague and Anne Primavesi – are largely ignored by systematic theologians.” However, she also acknowledges that some ecofeminists have dispensed with Christian theology. Grey, *Sacred Longings*, 123.

⁴⁸ Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 250.

⁴⁹ For example, see Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), especially p. 162-167. See also Ivone Gebara, “Ecofeminism: A Latin American Perspective,” *Cross Currents* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 93-103; Mary Judith Ress, “‘Remembering Who We Are’: Reflections on Latin American Ecofeminist Theology,” *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 3 (2008): 383-396.

⁵⁰For example, Missionary Benedictine sister Mary John Mananzan of the Philippines is a feminist theologian who has held important posts in EATWOT (including International Coordinator of its Women’s Commission), founded both the Women’s Studies Program and the Women and

theologians are published by local presses in the third world, making these resources even more difficult to discover let alone attain.⁵¹

Therefore, my dissertation seeks to respond to the dearth of scholarship in first-world, Catholic theology, predominantly in the U.S., that adequately and actively engages theologies of third-world women who highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, humanity's interconnectedness with all creation, and the spiritualities of third-world women that shape their relationship to and care for the earth. I contend that greater intentional dialogue with these theologians and their writings could expand first-world, Catholic theology's appropriation of ecofeminism, develop a more comprehensive understanding of the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world, and deepen understanding of spirituality and social action from a third-world, ecofeminist perspective. In order to better contextualize my project and more narrowly define my research questions, I now present a brief overview of third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology as it relates to Christian feminist theology as a whole.

Ecology Wholeness Farm at St. Scholastica's College in Manila, and now serves executive director of its Institute of Women's Studies. Yet, despite publishing articles throughout the 1990s on feminism, spirituality, and issues related to globalization and violence against women, she has not written any articles that directly address ecofeminism. See http://www.catherinacollege.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69%3Asr-mary-john-mananzan-phd&catid=36%3Asponsors&Itemid=59&showall=1 and <http://www.asianjournal.com/aj-magazine/midweek-mgzn/9220-sr-mary-john-mananzan-osb-one-of-the-top-100-most-inspiring-people-in-the-world.html>.

⁵¹ Many third-world theologians publish articles in EATWOT's journal, *Voices from the Third World*, which lacks adequate accessibility even from its own website (http://www.eatwot.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=36). See also Janina Gomes, "Women theologians in India are reclaiming space," *National Catholic Reporter*, 19 October 2004, <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/globalpers/gp101904.htm>; Pauline Chakkalal, "Asian Women Reshaping Theology: Challenges and Hopes," *Feminist Theology* 27 (May 2001): 21-35. Sr. Pauline Chakkalal has also published articles in *Voices from the Third World* and the *Journal of Dharma* (which are not available through Marquette University's library).

Defining Third-World, Christian Ecofeminist Theology

Germane to a working understanding of third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology for this dissertation is its evolution within the broader context of Christian feminist theology. From a historical perspective, Christian feminist theology is typically categorized in three “waves” of development.⁵² As noted by Clifford, ecofeminist theologies are included in the “third wave” of feminist theology, which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s and also comprises movements that critique the absence of racial and cultural differences in previous waves of feminism.⁵³ Theologies written by third-world women also developed during this wave.⁵⁴

Given various appropriations and critiques, one may question the use of the modifier “third-world.” Influential Filipina theologian and Maryknoll sister Virginia Fabella acknowledges how the term typically referred to “‘underdeveloped’ and

⁵² Clifford observes that “even in the first wave of feminism [during the mid-19th century], among its leaders were women who recognized the absence of women’s perspectives in Christian theology,” noting Mary Baker Eddy and Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s criticism of texts of the Bible used “to justify limitations imposed on women.” She writes that “second wave feminist theology was initiated [during the 1960s and 1970s] by Euro-American women who did something novel for the time: they pursued advanced degrees in theology, sometimes in seminaries previously attended only by males, to provide new lenses to correct the myopia of male theology,” Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 29.

⁵³ Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 5, 29.

⁵⁴ Ruether notes that “in the late 70s and 80s feminist theologies arose across the so-called Third World; Latin America, Africa and Asia. Parallel with the emergence of feminist theology in the US, in the context of the civil rights and feminist movements, feminist theology in Africa, Asia and Latin America generally arose as theologically educated women became involved in liberation theology conferences and movements, and were dismayed when their male colleagues resisted any incorporation of gender difference within their models of social analysis. Sparked both by secular feminist movements in their societies and the reading of first world feminist theologians, these third world women began to insist that the male theologians expand their model of analysis to include women. They were not impressed when their male colleagues responded by claiming that feminism was a ‘first world bourgeois issue’ that did not apply to third world women,” Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Where is it Going?”, 10.

‘developing’ countries,” with this distinction facing more scrutiny after 1989.⁵⁵ However, she writes that organizations like the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), founded in 1976, “affirm the term as valid and significant for their self-identification,” and it “is used as a self-designation of peoples who have been excluded from power and the authority to shape their own lives and destiny,” providing further insight as to why third-world theologians continue to employ this expression as a way of categorizing themselves and their work.⁵⁶

In addition to the three stages of feminist theology outlined above, Ruether adds a “fourth stage” that includes a 1994 meeting of first-world feminist theologians and third-world women theologians in Costa Rica (with the theme of “Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life”), which led to the 1996 publication of an anthology of essays from this meeting.⁵⁷ Other anthologies edited by first-world, Catholic feminist theologians that include the voices of third-world women were also published in the 1990s, such as *Women and Theology* (1994), *The Power of Naming* (1996), and *Women Healing Earth* (1996), which is a collection of essays specifically on ecology and feminism.

Ruether also observes a fifth stage in secular feminism today which she identifies as, “transnational feminism or global feminism from below,” and argues

⁵⁵ Virginia Fabella, “Third World,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, eds., Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 202.

⁵⁶ She adds that, “as such it has a supra-geographic denotation, describing a social condition marked by social, political, religious, and cultural oppressions that render people powerless and expendable” and comprises peoples in the First World “who form a dominated and marginalized minority.” She finds the alternate term “two-thirds world” less compelling. Fabella, “Third World,” 202.

⁵⁷ Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Where is it going?” 12-13.

that the “new networks of dialogue and solidarity between first and third world women” being formed as a result provide the context for future work in feminist theology.⁵⁸ Yet, apart from the collections footnoted in the previous section, similar works engaging first-world, Catholic theologians and third-world theologians on issues related to ecology and feminism appear limited in number.⁵⁹ In fact, a 2009 anthology published in the U.S. entitled *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology* includes essays written by theologians from diverse perspectives, such as Latina, womanist and post-colonial, but does not include an essay on environmental justice issues or ecofeminism.⁶⁰

In regard to the influence of first-world theologies on the development of theologies written by third-world women, Fabella notes that while they benefitted greatly from both theologies written by feminist and liberation theologians in the West and liberation theologies from the third world, further exploration of their own “context, culture, and experience” led third-world women to redefine theology in new ways.⁶¹ Beginning with the 1980s, third-world women “made a conscious

⁵⁸ In addition, Ruether includes interfaith dialogues in this stage. While lauding the groundbreaking work of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, co-directed by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (now at Yale University), which sponsored global conferences in the 1990s and continues to focus on interreligious dialogue on ecological concerns, Ruether points out that ecofeminist theologies remained on the margins of the dialogues in the 1990s and that this could be an area of interfaith expansion that could contribute to sustainability of our global community. Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Where is it going?”, 16, 19-20.

⁵⁹ See footnotes nos. 43-45.

⁶⁰ The editors recognize the limitations of their text, but given their stated intention to “delineate a horizon of ideas for a younger generation by being both bold and faithful to our Catholic and feminist heritage” juxtaposed with the situation facing many women in our world expressed earlier, this omission is surprising. Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, eds., preface to *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 2.

⁶¹ Virginia Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies - Introduction,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, 217.

effort to do theology from their own perspective.”⁶² She points out that “a critical understanding of women’s multiple oppression and their secondary and subservient role in both the church and society” and “active involvement in the struggle toward a new world of just and reciprocal relationships” comprised the two principal aspects that shaped the development of their theologies.⁶³

Fabella also explains how efforts by third-world women theologians fundamentally contributed to the work of the Women’s Commission of EATWOT. Activities included organizing intentional dialogues with “women from the grassroots,” to whom theologies written by third-world women “are primarily accountable.”⁶⁴ During the early development of their theologies, Fabella and other women theologians from the third world also overcame many difficulties in establishing the Women’s Commission, particularly resistance from third-world male theologians.⁶⁵ In addition, she gives insight into how third-world women theologians draw from the wisdom of grassroots women, writing that, “to lend credibility to our statements, we favor quoting a poor woman from a depressed urban area or a miner’s wife in contrast to the First World practice (including that of

⁶² Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies,” 217.

⁶³ Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies,” 218.

⁶⁴ She writes that “to be relevant to Third World women, our theologies must necessarily be inclusive, contextual, and liberational, besides being pluralistic and ecumenical,” Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies,” 218.

⁶⁵ See Ursula King, ed., introduction to *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, 1-20. Ruether also writes that “the first international assemblies of EATWOT had few women. Initially only Filipina Virginia Fabella was asked to attend, but as a secretary, not as a theologian. Soon the numbers of women present increased including, among others, María Pilar Aquino, Elsa Tamez and Ivone Gebara from Latin America; Teresia Hinga and Mercy Oduyoye from Africa; Mary John Mananzan, Marianna Katoppo and Sun Ai Lee Park from Asia,” and she goes on to explain how the Women’s Commission finally came to fruition in 1983 despite facing many challenges. Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Where is it going?,” 11-12.

Western feminists) of citing scholars or experts,” explicating differences between first and third-world approaches.⁶⁶

As discussed earlier, the contributions of third-world women’s theologies also demonstrate a commitment to raising the profile of issues related to environmental degradation, especially its interrelated effects on women and non-human nature. Fabella explains that, along with their contributions to “classical” areas of theology like Christology and ecclesiology, theologies written by third-world women address contemporary issues like “the growing violence against women and the ecosystems.”⁶⁷ Likewise, Mexican Catholic theologian María Pilar Aquino writes that third-world feminist theologies “affirm new paradigms of social relationships that can fully sustain human dignity and the integrity of creation, as well as eliminate the current patriarchal system of unequal power relationships that subjugate and exploit the poor, especially women and children around the world.”⁶⁸

Similarly, Ghanaian Protestant theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye describes how “many African women employ a ‘narrative’ theology, utilizing their life-experiences and sharing their reflections in the form of stories, thus extending the study of theology beyond the academic realm,” and by doing so, “they struggle to make religion a dynamic, relevant, and liberative force that will enhance human life and sustain the ecosystem.”⁶⁹ Along the same lines, Anglican theologian and 2011 president of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Kwok Pui-lan, originally from

⁶⁶ Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies,” 218.

⁶⁷ Fabella, “Third World Women’s Theologies,” 218.

⁶⁸ María Pilar Aquino, “Feminist Theologies in the Third World,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, 88.

⁶⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Third World Women’s Theologies – African,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, 220.

Hong Kong, maintains that “Asian women theologians develop a life-affirming spirituality that integrates body and soul, inner and outer worlds, and contemplation and social action,” which “affirms the creative power of women, the interrelatedness of all things, and the sacredness of earth.”⁷⁰ Without explicitly mentioning ecofeminism, Fabella, Aquino, Oduyoye, and Kwok highlight how theologies written by third-world women intentionally focus on issues related to ecology and feminism.

Writing from an explicitly ecofeminist perspective, Indian, Protestant theologian Aruna Gnanadason writes that ecofeminist theology from a third world perspective “emphasizes that the survival and sustainability of nature are inextricably linked with the survival of all human life, particularly of women who bear the greatest consequences of the degradation of the earth.”⁷¹ According to Gnanadason, third-world ecofeminist theology challenges the proliferation of development paradigms that compromise the sustainability of creation, and she notes “that the violence of development and the violence inflicted on creation are linked closely with violence against women. Both women and creation are too often appropriated, used, abused, and then discarded when considered ‘worthless.’”⁷² Her claims resonate with the studies cited in the introduction of this dissertation.

Gnanadason also points out that ecofeminist theology reclaims aspects of the feminine and spirituality (particularly traditions within third-world cultures) that

⁷⁰ Kwok Pui-lan, “Third World Women’s Theologies – Asian,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, 224.

⁷¹ Aruna Gnanadason, “Ecofeminist Theology” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, 79.

⁷² Gnanadason, “Ecofeminist Theology,” 79.

promote humanity's connection with creation and responsibility for its care.⁷³ She explains that "Third World ecofeminist theology has made women conscious of their responsibility to all of creation and has given rise to a new spiritual energy that leads them to find God."⁷⁴ Overall, her articulation of ecofeminist theology from a third-world perspective coalesces with the unifying elements of ecofeminism described in the previous section. Yet, third-world ecofeminist theologians also highlight concern for those most profoundly impacted by environmental degradation (women and children) and work toward reclaiming aspects of the feminine and spirituality that can promote greater responsibility and care for all creation.

While this list is not meant to be exhaustive, key third-world theologians who write specifically on the intersection of ecology and feminism include Protestants like Gnanadason (India), Kwok (Hong Kong), Chung Hyun Kyung (Korea), and Puleng LenkaBula (South Africa).⁷⁵ Gnanadason and Chung specifically identify as ecofeminists. Third-world, Catholic theologians include Ivone Gebara (Brazil) and Teresia Hinga (Kenya).⁷⁶ Apart from Gebara, who explicitly identifies as an ecofeminist, the writings of third-world, Catholic theologians on ecology and

⁷³ Gnanadason, "Ecofeminist Theology," 79-80.

⁷⁴ Gnanadason, "Ecofeminist Theology," 79-80.

⁷⁵ For example, see Kwok, Pui-lan, "Ecology and the Recycling of Christianity," *Ecumenical Review* 44, no. 3 (1992): 304-307; Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, especially 209-230; Chung's faculty profile for Union Theological Seminary states: "She defines herself as a 'salimist' (Korean Eco-feminist) from the Korean word 'salim,' which means 'making things alive.'" <http://www.utsnyc.edu/Page.aspx?pid=355>; Puleng LenkaBula, *Choose Life, Act in Hope: African Churches Living Out the Accra Confession A Study Resource on the Accra Confession: Covenanting For Justice in the Economy and Earth* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2009).

⁷⁶ For example see Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Teresia Hinga, "The Gikuyu Theology of Land and Environmental Justice," in *Women Healing Earth*, 172-84.

feminism are limited. However, in regard to my dissertation, I did not select Gnanadason primarily because of the accessibility of her writings, but more importantly, I found her ecofeminist theology incredibly compelling and her appropriation of ecumenical, interreligious, Indigenous, and interdisciplinary sources to be a helpful model for this type of work in the future.

Therefore, this dissertation affirms the elements of ecofeminism outlined by Eaton, Lorentzen, and Clifford, and supports a broad understanding of first-world, Christian ecofeminist theology that (1) seeks to eradicate the domination and oppression experienced by both humanity and non-human nature, (2) promotes “ecojustice that encompasses all forms of life,” and (3) is grounded in the belief in the liberating power of God and a desire to understand this relationship more fully.⁷⁷ Particular to third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology, this dissertation supports Gnanadason’s definition outlined above. In addition, beliefs particular to Christianity profoundly shape the hermeneutic of Christian ecofeminist theologians as a whole, but this lens does not preclude environmental justice dialogue and social action with members of other faith traditions and secularists. We now turn to how this exposition of third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology relates to the research questions for my project.

⁷⁷ I adapted this definition from Anne Clifford. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 28.

Research Questions

This dissertation presupposes the findings of the IPCC, the GGCA, and the UNDP, which demonstrate the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world. Theologies written by third-world women are informed by the practical experiences of third-world women who experience these effects and other interrelated aspects of oppression, profoundly shaping their approach to theology. The gap in the literature outlined above necessitates a closer examination of how first-world, Catholic theology, particularly in the U.S., can more deeply engage the concerns expressed by third-world women's theologies, which typify ways to discuss and respond to these injustices.

Therefore, this dissertation responds to the following questions: How can the transnational expertise of third-world women theologians broaden first-world, Catholic theology's understanding of the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world? More specifically, how can their theologies open first-world, Catholic theology to a deeper understanding of the relationship between ecology and feminism, the interconnectedness between humanity and all creation, and the relationship between spirituality and social action from an ecofeminist perspective? How can input from other academic disciplines assist in developing practical ways for dialogue between these groups of theologians to occur? How could this dialogue be constructed, and what are the possible intellectual contributions and practical implications of "opening" first-world, Catholic theology to the theologies of third-world women for our global community?

This dissertation responds to these questions by constructing a modest model for dialogue among theologians on practical and intellectual levels. In order to do so, I adapt the “boomerang pattern of influence” model articulated by political scientists Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink for theological discourse. As part of this adapted model, I interface third-world, Indian, Protestant theologian Aruna Gnanadason’s ecofeminist theology with first-world, German, Catholic theologian Johann B. Metz’s mystical-political dimension of Christianity. By comparing and contrasting their approaches to the challenges facing the third world, theological anthropology, and the relationship between spirituality and social action, I demonstrate how Metz’s dimension provides a conduit for opening first-world, Catholic theology to third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology as articulated by Gnanadason, particularly in regard to spirituality and social action from an ecofeminist perspective.

In the following sections, I provide brief introductions to the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz which explain why I have selected their works for this project. In light of my attention to spirituality and mysticism in the convergence of their theologies, I then present my operative definitions of these terms. Finally, I give an overview of the conceptual framework and outline for this dissertation, which briefly explains the interdisciplinary component and the organization of my dissertation chapters.

Engaging Aruna Gnanadason’s Ecofeminist Theology

As noted above, given the situation of women in their local communities, Christian ecofeminist theologians from the third world cannot envision the

development of theology apart from the practical realities facing third-world women and our natural environment. Along these lines, third-world, ecofeminist theologians discuss social action as a constitutive dimension of their work. Exemplifying this approach, Gnanadason has championed ecofeminist issues through both her writings and influential positions in the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Gnanadason clearly identifies herself as an ecofeminist theologian. She belongs to the Church of South India, which is part of the Anglican Communion, and her Indian context profoundly shapes her ecofeminist hermeneutic. Her theology also possesses a practical dimension that draws upon her professional experiences during her executive posts in the WCC, including her former roles as the Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Creation and the Executive Director for Planning and Integration in its General Secretariat. Reflecting the breadth of her theological approach, her primary interlocutors include Christian theologians, secular and interreligious scholars on ecology, and social movement leaders.

As part of her ecofeminist approach to theology, Gnanadason points out that women in the third world “are trying to recover patterns of spirituality that connect them to their indigenous roots—a past that is still present in the lives of communities, as women care for the earth.”⁷⁸ It is “a spiritual search for a more holistic approach to life.”⁷⁹ The link between the spiritual connection of Indigenous peoples, especially women, to the earth and their practices of care to preserve the

⁷⁸ Aruna Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!, Listen to the Earth!* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 33.

⁷⁹ Aruna Gnanadason, “A Spirituality that Sustains Us in Our Struggles,” *International Review of Mission* 80, no. 317 (1991): 35.

earth are themes that pervade her writings. Her interests in Indigenous spiritualities and practices also inform her approach to developing a Christian ecofeminist theology as she seeks to explore similar spiritual connections between the Christian faith and care for the earth.

At the end of her monograph, Gnanadason presents the following challenge to Christians and theologians: “The task is therefore before us to resist all forces, powers and systems that reduce, deny or destroy life and to ‘embrace a politically engaged spirituality.’”⁸⁰ While this is where her monograph ends, her appropriation of spirituality through the lens of ecofeminism in the third world bears the possibility of further development for Christian theology. Overall, Gnanadason’s inclusion of first and third-world ecofeminist theologians in her writings, her knowledge and exploration of Indigenous spiritualities and practices, particularly women, in her home country of India that positively contribute to the care of creation, and her position as a respected scholar in the Protestant community on ecofeminist theology make her an excellent interlocutor for first-world, Catholic systematic theology to engage third-world, ecofeminist concerns. With this background in mind, we now turn to Johann B. Metz’s mystical-political dimension of Christianity.

⁸⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. She is quoting an expression used by Konrad Raiser, former general secretary of the WCC. Konrad Raiser, “Spirituality of Resistance” (paper presented at the WCC Internal Encounter of Churches, Agencies and Other Partners on the World Bank and IMF, Geneva, 12 September 2003), 6. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/neoliberal-paradigm/spirituality-of-resistance.html>.

Engaging Johann B. Metz's Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity

As a whole, Johann B. Metz's political theology castigates first-world Christians who practice a "bourgeois religion" that "evade[s] the practical demands made by a radical Christianity."⁸¹ His personal experience of war and the suffering of Auschwitz profoundly influence his approach to theology. However, he also cites his experiences of dialoguing with liberation theologians and the poor in Latin America as having a powerful impact on his theological discourse. According to Metz, the third world is one of the three key challenges to which his political theology responds.

As part of his admittedly "practical" theology, Metz develops his concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity. This dimension calls upon Christians, especially first-world Christians, to practice a "mysticism of open or opened eyes" which obligates them to respond to the suffering of others, especially the poor and vulnerable. He explains that this approach brings theology closer to its "original task," arguing that,

in the end the mysticism which Jesus lived out and taught and which should also have directed the *logos* of Christian theology is not a narrow mysticism of closed eyes, but an empathetic mysticism of opened eyes (cf. e.g. Luke 10: 25-37). The God of Jesus cannot be found either here or there if we ignore its perceptions.⁸²

As I explicate in the chapter on Metz's theology, his mystical-political dimension of Christianity comprises the practice of opening one's eyes to the suffering of others (the mystical) and the commitment to work toward social justice (the political).

⁸¹ Johann B. Metz, preface to the second German edition, *Faith in History and Society*, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007), xi.

⁸² Johann B. Metz, "With the Eyes of European Theologian," *Concilium*, ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 6: 119.

While Metz highlights the suffering of the poor in his approach to theology, he does not specifically address third-world ecofeminism or the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world. Metz scholar and translator, J. Matthew Ashley readily acknowledges that “Metz has never taken up environmental concerns at any length” in contrast to his contemporary political theologians, Jürgen Moltmann and Dorothee Sölle.⁸³ However, Ashley also points out that attention to environmental issues is a more recent field of study, and “the Catholic Church’s official responses have tended to incorporate environmental concerns into existing structures of social ethics, leaving more radical revisions of our understanding and practice of the faith to proponents of deep ecology or ecofeminism.”⁸⁴ Ashley observes that ecofeminism, along with “deep ecology” and “ecojustice,” harmonize with Metz’s appraisal of our contemporary world,⁸⁵ suggesting the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between third-world, ecofeminist theology and Metz’s mystical-political dimension of Christianity. In the next section I present my operative definitions of both spirituality and mysticism.

Defining Spirituality and Mysticism

As noted by contemporary scholars of Christian spirituality, various definitions of spirituality exist today.⁸⁶ Similarly, Ashley observes that the work of

⁸³ J. Matthew Ashley, “Environmental Concern and the ‘New Political Theology,’” in *Missing God?*, eds. John K. Downey, Jürgen Manemann, and Steve T. Ostovich (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 140.

⁸⁴ Ashley, “Environmental Concern,” 141.

⁸⁵ Ashley, “Environmental Concern,” 146.

⁸⁶ For debates surrounding the definition of and academic discipline of spirituality see Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spirituality and the God Question,” *Spiritus* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 243-250, and

these scholars “has shown that ‘mysticism’ is not a univocal term, even within the confines of Christianity.”⁸⁷ Given the nature and scope of this dissertation, I do not engage current debates on defining these terms but proceed instead to provide definitions of spirituality and mysticism that are operative in this dissertation.

Sandra M. Schneiders, a leading Catholic scholar of spirituality and New Testament studies, argues that spirituality can be defined as the “lived experience” of “personal and/or communal efforts toward life-integration by self-transcendence toward what is perceived as ultimately valuable,” and the academic discipline of spirituality is “the study of spirituality as lived experience” described above.⁸⁸ She explains that Christian spirituality is a “response to revelation,” which is also the case for spiritualities of other faith traditions.⁸⁹ For Christians, this revelation is rooted in Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. She explains that “Christian spirituality is the experience of living that reality and the study of Christian spirituality is exploration of that particular experience in relation to all other experience.”⁹⁰ These definitions of spirituality and Christian spirituality are operative in this dissertation, which is written from a Catholic Christian perspective.

Arthur Holder, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

⁸⁷ J. Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), x. Also, see J. Matthew Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1998), 13.

⁸⁸ Schneiders, “Spirituality and the God Question,” 245.

⁸⁹ Schneiders, “Spirituality and the God Question,” 249.

⁹⁰ She writes that “the particularity of Christian revelation is constituted by the specificity of revelation focused in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the revelation of the transformation through death of humanity into God. This is the foundation of the sacramental intuition, the reading of all creation which is the unique Christian ‘take’ on the real relation of Transcendence to immanence, the mediation not only of transcendence but of the Transcendent in human being, human experience, human particularity, human history, human destiny,” Schneiders, “Spirituality and the God Question,” 249.

In addition, Christian spirituality scholar Philip Sheldrake points out that the “theory of the spiritual life” became more static in the history of Christianity spirituality when it became “separated from the core of human experience and consequently was largely alienated from, for example, nature, the body and the feminine.”⁹¹ He also asserts that Christian spirituality is “concerned with the conjunction of theology, prayer and practical Christianity,” with “a central feature” being the capacity to be in relationship with God.⁹² In effect, an ecofeminist approach to spirituality both challenges a static theory of the spiritual life and includes a practical dimension, which I explore in my explication of Gnanadason’s theology.

Referencing spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill’s classic text, *Mysticism*, Sheldrake notes that “a defining characteristic of Christian mysticism is that union with God impels a person towards an active, outward, rather than purely passive, inward life.”⁹³ In Underhill’s *Practical Mysticism*, she writes that a contemplative experience of mysticism is not “an end in itself,” rather, in impelling one to act, leads to an inward movement of “unity and freedom” and outward movement of “creative acts.”⁹⁴ She further explains that “the mystics are artists; and the stuff in which they work is most often human life,” including working toward healing and reconciliation in the world.⁹⁵ This dissertation understands Christian mysticism as having both

⁹¹ Philip Sheldrake, “What is Spirituality?” in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 22.

⁹² Sheldrake, 40.

⁹³ Philip Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A Dialectic of the Mystical and Prophetic,” *Spiritus* 3, no.1 (Spring 2003): 24.

⁹⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1915), 158.

⁹⁵ Underhill, 161.

contemplative and active dimensions. With these definitions in mind, we now turn to the overall framework and outline of this dissertation.

Conceptual Framework and Outline of Dissertation

In this dissertation I argue that the integration of Gnanadason's Christian ecofeminist theology and Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity demonstrates how first-world, Catholic theology could be opened to third-world, ecofeminist concerns. Like Gnanadason, Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity maintains that inherent in social action is a spiritual dimension that is directed outward. However, despite his attention to suffering in the third world and the necessary response of first-world Christianity to this suffering, he does not address the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women and interrelated aspects of oppression. Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology captures third-world ecofeminism from a theological perspective, with special attention to spirituality and social action. However, her perspective could be strengthened by Metz's approach to mysticism. Therefore, the integration of their theologies could deepen first-world, Catholic theology's appropriation of third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology and our understanding of spirituality and social action from an ecofeminist perspective.

As part of the interdisciplinary dimension of this dissertation and in order to develop a practical model for dialogue and action among theologians, I consulted the allied discipline of political science to explore how groups with shared values organize around a particular issue to achieve goals in the face of marginalization or

resistance. In their introduction to *Activists beyond Borders* (1998), Keck and Sikkink observe the growing influence of “nonstate actors” in world politics, particularly the role of what they define as “transnational advocacy networks” (TANs).⁹⁶ From their perspective, TANs comprise actors who collaborate on an issue internationally and “are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.”⁹⁷ There are various categories of “major actors” which comprise a TAN, however, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) were present in all the TANs they studied.⁹⁸ Other possible major actors include churches and intellectuals, as I discuss in chapter four of this dissertation.⁹⁹

When domestic groups who are members of TANs (typically NGOs) experience domestic blockages from their state regarding a particular issue, they often initiate activity that Keck and Sikkink articulate as the “boomerang pattern of influence” model. In this “boomerang” model, domestic groups “bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.”¹⁰⁰ The boomerang effect actualizes when international contacts give voice to domestic groups by “prying open” space for these issues to be heard and then “echoing back” these demands into the domestic sphere.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Referencing Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane’s *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (1993), Keck and Sikkink explain in a footnote that “ideas that specify criteria for determining whether actions are right and wrong and whether outcomes are just or unjust are shared principled beliefs or values. Beliefs about cause-effect relationships are shared causal beliefs,” Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1.

⁹⁷ In addition, “such networks are most prevalent in issue areas characterized by high value content and informational uncertainty. At the core of the relationship is information exchange,” Keck and Sikkink, 2.

⁹⁸ Keck and Sikkink, 9.

⁹⁹ Keck and Sikkink, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

¹⁰¹ Keck and Sikkink, 13.

By adapting this model for theological discourse, I suggest the formation of a TAN of theologians committed to ecofeminist concerns and explore how this network would activate the boomerang model in professional circles of theologians in order to bring third-world, ecofeminist concerns to the forefront of theological discourse. As I demonstrate, an adapted version of the boomerang model incorporates practical and intellectual dimensions, including the orchestration of a dialogue between the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz. Given the authority of Metz's political theology in first-world, Catholic systematic theology, this dialogue bears the possibility of opening first-world, Catholic systematic theology to the voices and writings of third-world, Christian ecofeminist theologians that are currently marginalized in first-world, Catholic theology. The intended effect would be to bring the voices and experiences of third-world women to the forefront of first-world, Catholic theology. As noted earlier, this dialogue could also deepen our understanding of spirituality as it relates to social action, particularly regarding ecofeminist concerns.

To accomplish this task, my dissertation is divided into four subsequent chapters. In my second chapter, I articulate key dimensions of Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology and organize her work into the categories of anthropology, ethics, and the relation between spirituality and social action, a task which has not yet been attempted. In chapter three, I explicate key aspects of Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity with special attention to his theological response to suffering in the third world, Christian social responsibility, and his appropriation of religious pluralism. In particular, I focus on how his concept of a mysticism of

open eyes could be further developed. In chapter four, I present my adaptation of Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model for theological discourse. This modification constructs a model for practically engaging dialogue among theologians, which also includes exploring an intellectual dialogue between the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz, comparing and contrasting their approaches to suffering in the third world, anthropology, and spirituality and mysticism. Finally, in my concluding chapter, I discuss the potential implications of and future considerations for opening first-world, Catholic theology to more deeply engaging third-world ecofeminism, particularly third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology. I outline the intended effects of developing a more comprehensive understanding of third-world ecofeminism and Christian ecofeminist theology, greater attention to the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women in our global community, and a deeper understanding of spirituality and social action from an ecofeminist perspective.

Chapter Two: The Ecofeminist Theology of Aruna Gnanadason

The life of Indian, Protestant theologian Aruna Gnanadason exemplifies the journey of a woman committed to bringing the voices and concerns of women in the third world to the forefront of theological circles, ecumenical movements, and churches. Both her writings and her professional ecclesial appointments in the World Council of Churches (WCC) reflect her passion for these concerns. In particular, her monograph, *Listen to the Women! Listen to the Earth!* (2005), culminates her life's work and delineates dimensions of her Christian ecofeminist theology. She begins this text by expressing gratitude "to all the Indigenous women of the Deomali Women's Society, Koraput, Orissa" in India who conversed with her about their experiences.¹⁰²

Gnanadason situates her theology within India's vast, pluralistic society. Her contextual approach also includes appropriating Indigenous wisdom traditions and Hindu texts in her writings. She incorporates the research of prominent Indian ecologists, sociologists, and leaders of social movements to support her arguments as well. Therefore, her theology comprises ecumenical, interreligious, and interdisciplinary dimensions.

Gnanadason's principal interlocutors include Catholic and Protestant systematic and moral theologians from the first and third worlds who challenge aspects of mainstream theologies from the West, primarily in the areas of

¹⁰² See "Words of Thanks" immediately preceding Chapter 1 in Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 1.

anthropology, epistemology, and ethics. The works of Protestant scholars Musa Dube (Botswana), Kwok Pui-lan (Hong Kong), Sallie McFague (USA), Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Ghana), Larry Rasmussen (USA), and Letty Russell (USA) predominantly shape her thought. She also consults the texts of Catholic theologians, including Leonardo Boff (Brazil), Ivone Gebara (Brazil), and Rosemary Radford Ruether (USA). By building upon the writings of these theologians, Gnanadason elucidates her ecofeminist theological response to the environmental degradation of our “earth community.”¹⁰³

Reflecting upon her starting point for theology, Gnanadason writes that she draws her “inspiration from the many ways in which women find spiritual resources for their struggle,” and she considers their daily struggle to be her “entry point into ecofeminist discourse.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise, she observes that women in the third world utilize a unique hermeneutic and resources in order to survive. Although she does not specifically define this “different worldview,” she avers that their experiences have something to contribute to ecofeminist discourse and solutions to environmental degradation.¹⁰⁵ Along these lines, she asserts that women in poverty in countries like India, Kenya, and Brazil face the greatest harm from environmental degradation

¹⁰³ She adopts this expression from Rasmussen’s book *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996). Like Rasmussen, she also addresses “socio-ecological dimensions” of environmental degradation. Aruna Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation and Earth Community: An Ecumenical Response to Environmental Racism,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 1-2 (2004): 98. See also Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 74-80.

¹⁰⁴ Aruna Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost: A Tragic World of Broken Relationships,” in *Ecofeminism and Globalization*, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 34, 35. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85.

but are also those most highly involved in movements to counter its effects (coalescing with the studies cited in chapter one).¹⁰⁶

Informed by the experiences of third world women, she clarifies that her “ecofeminist vision is not some romantic or esoteric vision; it is based on a plea for sanity; it is a cry that we recognize as sin the destruction of the earth. By this I mean all that is on this earth, human and otherwise.”¹⁰⁷ This vision also shapes the ways in which her ecofeminist theology redresses the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world.

Gnanadason calls for a greater response to these injustices in Christian theology by applying an ecofeminist hermeneutic to mainstream Biblical interpretations and Christian traditions regarding the relation between humanity and our natural environment. While upholding redemptive aspects of Christianity, she exposes how pernicious interpretations and doctrines buttress the exploitation of Indigenous peoples, particularly women, and the earth. Her ecofeminist hermeneutic also possesses themes of healing and reconciliation: between third and first worlds, between women and men, between humanity and our natural environment, and between God and all creation.

One of the central ways Gnanadason employs her ecofeminist hermeneutic is by identifying the roots and harmful implications of the “theology of dominion” in mainstream, Christian theologies. According to her, the “theology of dominion” promotes the idea that the primary role of the earth is to be of service to humanity,

¹⁰⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85 and footnote nos. 11 and 13 in the introduction to this dissertation.

¹⁰⁷ She adds that this gives validity to the use of the term “the earth community” as opposed to “the environment,” Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 80.

whereby “dominion” functions as domination in Christian practice.¹⁰⁸ Her writings also give evidence of how this theology of dominion continues to operate in both the first and third worlds today by discussing implications of this theology, which I group into categories of physical violations to our natural environment, interrelated violations against the integrity of women, and myriad consequences of environmental racism.

To counter these implications of the theology of dominion Gnanadason presents a unique contribution to theological discourse: her integration of Christian, ecofeminist theology with traditions practiced by Indigenous and Dalit peoples in India who recognize a deep spiritual connection with the earth that intimately influences their practices of care for our natural environment.¹⁰⁹ She asserts that, from an ecofeminist perspective, our current environmental situation necessitates bringing “the wisdom and knowledge of the poor, of Indigenous women, of Dalit women that has over the centuries been systematically ignored and suppressed” to the forefront of theological discourse.¹¹⁰ This “wisdom and knowledge” provides the foundations for her concept of “traditions of prudent care,” which she imagines as a way forward to redress environmental degradation.

¹⁰⁸ Aruna Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” in *Women Healing Earth*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 77. See also Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 48-49.

¹⁰⁹ She notes that “Indigenous peoples in India are called *Adivasis*, a word which, literally translated, means, ‘the first inhabitants or peoples of the land,’” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 39. See also Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 110. She also explains how the Dalits face marginalization in the Indian social structure: “There are four main caste groups: the Brahmins, or priestly caste, at the top, followed by the warrior caste, then the merchant class and, at the bottom, the *shudras*, the working classes. The Dalits are outside this structure and are considered unclean and polluting. (For centuries they have been treated as untouchables, and today they continue to face discrimination and violence.)” Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 74.

Gnanadason constructs the concept of traditions of prudent care by drawing from the work of Madhav Gadgil (an ecologist) and Ramachandra Guha (a historian). She writes that these Indian scholars “first introduced the expression, ‘traditions of prudent *use* by eco-system people,’” which comprise sustainable practices of “Indigenous peoples, Dalits, etc. who live in a protective relationship with the land.”¹¹¹ From the idea of “traditions of prudent use,” she develops the concept of “traditions of prudent care” in an attempt “to bring this concept in closer connection with the Christian feminist ‘ethic of care,’” highlighting the primary role of women in India and other developing countries in preserving and carrying on these traditions.¹¹² Along with the traditions of eco-system peoples, she also advocates reclaiming resources within Christianity to ameliorate environmental injustices as discussed later in this chapter.

In order to expound upon the dimensions of Gnanadason’s ecofeminist theology introduced above, this chapter is divided into three major sections. First, I contextualize her theology by outlining her assessment of Christian liberation and feminist theologies, which she credits for shaping her own theology. Second, I present her explication of the roots and implications of the theology of dominion. Third, I delineate key aspects of her ecofeminist theology, which challenges the theology of dominion, including her approach to theological anthropology, ethics,

¹¹¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3 and 107, 3n. She cites Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), but she does not list a specific page number. While they discuss these traditions throughout this text, see pages 20 and 106. See also Madhav Gadgil, “Traditional Resource Management Systems,” in *Lifestyle and Ecology*, ed. Baidyanath Saraswati (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1998), 5-26; Madhav Gadgil, “Diversity: Cultural and Biological,” *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 2, no. 12 (December 1987): 369-373.

¹¹² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 107, 3n, see also page 6.

and the relationship between spirituality and social action. I point to how she integrates Indigenous and Dalit traditions of prudent care and Christian theology and discuss her appropriation of a “spirituality of resistance.”

Contextualizing Gnanadason

Gnanadason’s attention to the struggles of the poor, especially women in India, resonates with Christian liberation and feminist theologies in both the first and third worlds. In this section, I explore her brief assessment of these theologies. This overview contextualizes her theology within the broader community of Christian theologians while recognizing her particular perspective as an ecofeminist theologian from India.

Gnanadason’s Assessment of Christian Liberation Theologies

Recognizing the influences on her own theology, Gnanadason lauds the foundational work of Christian liberation theologians from the third world and from minority groups in North America.¹¹³ In particular, she affirms theologians who dispensed with aspects of traditional theologies in order to “courageously interpret the Bible and Christian doctrines from the perspective of the struggles for liberation of peoples, each theologian from his or her own context.”¹¹⁴ She points to how their work allowed for the development of cross-cultural Scriptural interpretations and interreligious dialogue among diverse peoples in the third world and attributes

¹¹³ She mentions the role of EATWOT in this regard. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 56.

¹¹⁴ She adds that the “affirmation of the social location of the reader of the Bible as opposed to universal and homogenous interpretations, as traditional theologies tend to demand, has been a source of hope for many people,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 56.

“spiritual resources for political actions for transformation of unjust structures and institutions” to liberation theologies.¹¹⁵

Similarly, Gnanadason acknowledges the unanimity between male and female third-world theologians who support a liberation perspective. Both groups of theologians agree “that the plight of the poor is of critical importance, as is the development of a spirituality centered on the struggles of the poor for liberation from various forms of oppression.”¹¹⁶ She explains that where third-world theologians differ is that third-world women give equal weight to the “struggles of the earth for its integrity” in contrast with the approaches of third-world men.¹¹⁷

Despite the commonalities among these theologians, Gnanadason maintains that apart from eco-theological and feminist theologians, most liberation theologians fail to adequately address problematic issues associated with dualistic and anthropocentric approaches to the doctrine of God and theological anthropology that are affiliated with the theology of dominion.¹¹⁸ Moreover, she bemoans the fact that several theologies of third-world women have been omitted from both mainstream and liberation theologies written by third-world men.¹¹⁹ She reveals that third-world women “are told that poverty, national liberation, racism etc. must come first and that we betray third-world cultures when we speak on issues related to women.”¹²⁰ Her claim reflects the secondary status of women’s

¹¹⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 56.

¹¹⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 57.

¹¹⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 57.

¹¹⁸ Aruna Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God, Transform the Earth! The Earth as God’s Body in an Age of Environmental Violence,” *The Ecumenical Review* 57, no. 2 (2005): 165. See also Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 56.

¹¹⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 57.

¹²⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 31.

concerns and a failure to recognize interrelated aspects of oppression by third-world men. Their dismissal of third-world women's concerns as a priority also contributes to the gender bias that ecofeminist theologians seek to overcome in their endeavors.

Placing her writings in the same vein as Chung, Gebara, and Kwok, Gnanadason argues that, in addition to critiquing the lack of attention to "ecological concerns" in liberation theologies, third-world ecofeminist theologians have much to contribute, including the call for a more holistic approach.¹²¹ She also expresses the dire need for a movement to challenge the violent implications of patriarchy, particularly its connections to the harmful effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and of development paradigms, which diminish the lives of many and the habitats upon which they depend for survival.¹²² Her concerns coalesce with the approaches of other feminist and ecofeminist theologians discussed below.

Gnanadason's Assessment of Christian Feminist Theologies

In addition to liberation theologies, Gnanadason explores the relation between first and third-world, Christian feminist theologies, including ecofeminist theologies. While feminist theologians from the first and third worlds share common interests and goals, she purports that "it is not possible to speak of 'women' as one oppressed category. Any feminist vision of creation has to embrace and acknowledge cultural and social norms of discrimination that make the lives of

¹²¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 57.

¹²² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 31.

some women more precarious than other women.”¹²³ Not discounting the importance of universal human rights, her claim resonates with feminist theologians who question the tendency to universalize women’s experiences through the lens of majority groups.

To illustrate her point, Gnanadason writes that the relationship between women and our natural environment plays out differently between continents, nations, and even within localities.¹²⁴ From her perspective, essentialism often minimizes the cultural and political dimensions of the “historical subordination” of women to men and of women to other women, citing racism and classism in the first world and the caste system in India as examples.¹²⁵ Gnanadason recognizes that first-world women continue to experience oppression by first-world men, but in light of the disparities between the lives of women in the first and third worlds, she encourages first-world women to acknowledge their place of privilege in our global community.¹²⁶

Along these lines, Gnanadason maintains that a key difference between first and third-world ecofeminists is the way in which they address poverty in their writings. In contrast with first-world women, she explains that “women in the third world see the poverty that afflicts whole communities (particularly women and children) and land as the base line for understanding domination of women and

¹²³ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 78.

¹²⁴ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 79.

¹²⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 34. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 78.

¹²⁶ Aruna Gnanadason, “‘We Have Spoken So Long O God: When Will We Be Heard?’ Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence against Women,” *Theology & Sexuality* 13, no. 1 (2006): 21.

nature.”¹²⁷ She notes that in India and other parts of the third world, “sex-role divisions of work ensure that women do the most strenuous kinds of work in *close proximity to the resource of the earth* – food and fuel gathering and collecting of water from distant places,”¹²⁸ affirming the UN studies cited in the introduction to this dissertation. She also discusses the impact of the breakdown of traditional social structures on Indigenous and Dalit women who sacrifice their needs for the sake of their families. Many of these women suffer from the effects of hard physical labor, experience discrimination in pay compared with that of men, receive scant government health care, face domestic violence “at the hands of many men in their families,” and possess little power in family and communal decisions.¹²⁹

Gnanadason also incorporates the works of secular ecofeminists from the third world who discuss social and economic disparities among women but may frame them in different ways. For instance, she references Indian economics professor Bina Agarwal, who critiques aspects of both first and third-world ecofeminism, arguing that much ecofeminist discourse “posits women as a unitary category and ignores socio-economic heterogeneity among women.”¹³⁰ Agarwal promotes the “alternative” concept of “feminist environmentalism,” which draws from “the experience of community forestry in India,”¹³¹ and recognizes a shared

¹²⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 33.

¹²⁸ Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 163. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 80.

¹²⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 11.

¹³⁰ Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41. Gnanadason cites an earlier article by Agarwal in which she makes the same argument, Bina Agarwal, “The Gender and Environmental Debate: Lessons from India,” in *Gender and Politics in India*, ed. Nivedita Menon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 100. See Gnanadason, *Traditions of Prudence Lost*, 79.

¹³¹ Bina Agarwal, “A challenge for ecofeminisms: Gender, greening, and community forestry in India,” *Women & Environments International Magazine* 52/53 (Fall 2001): 12.

interest in forest preservation among both women and men but expressed differently due to the relationship between their responsibilities and required resources to meet them (e.g., timber for construction done by men versus fodder and fuel to meet daily cooking needs by women).¹³² Not discounting the influence of “ideological constructions of gender, of nature, and of the relationship between the two,” Agarwal writes that her approach acknowledges that the dominant influences on “people’s relationship with nature, their interest in protecting it, and their ability to do effectively are significantly shaped by their material reality, their everyday dependence on nature for survival, and the social, economic, and political tools at their command for furthering their concerns.”¹³³

Contributing to her discussion on the differences between the contexts of first and third-world ecofeminists, Gnanadason also draws from the works of Vandana Shiva. As I discuss later in this chapter in regard to violations against women and our natural environment, Shiva highlights both the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on third-world women and their active response prevent further destruction. However, Gnanadason also observes that Bina Agarwal and theologian Gabriele Dietrich critique Shiva’s lack of attention to the relation between the caste system and patriarchy in India, which neglects the purview of the Dalits and Indigenous peoples.¹³⁴ In response to Agarwal’s observations, Gnanadason contends that “ecofeminist analysis must acknowledge the internal contradictions among women,” taking into account the influences on

¹³² Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 42.

¹³³ Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 42.

¹³⁴ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 79. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35.

women's experiences in their local context and their responses to protect the earth, along with recognizing stark variations in resource distribution caused by current systems and structures.¹³⁵

Despite differences among feminists and, more specifically, ecofeminists, Gnanadason strongly rejects theologian Lois K. Daly's concept of "competing feminisms."¹³⁶ Finding Daly's notion detrimental to challenging the negative effects of globalization on our world, Gnanadason insists that "there are just many entry points and perspectives in feminist discourses," which she thinks can provide opportunities for learning from one another and offering "our plurality of visions to a common commitment to affirm life."¹³⁷ Gnanadason also places more overall importance on the need to ensure that marginalized voices can be heard, including the voices of Indian women who have unique ideas to help "transform injustice in our world."¹³⁸ In addition, examining the complexity of environmental issues helps to further contextualize the emergence of her ecofeminist theology.

Overall, Gnanadason affirms the diversity of "many 'eco-feminisms' in our world – all pioneered by women passionately committed to justice and dignity for women and for all of creation."¹³⁹ She remarks that what might be the most difficult challenge for feminist theologians is "to recognize that none of us hold the final truth."¹⁴⁰ However, she declares that feminism calls upon theologians "to read each

¹³⁵ Gnanadason, "Traditions of Prudence Lost," 79.

¹³⁶ Gnanadason, "Traditions of Prudence Lost," 79. See Lois K. Daly, ed., "Ecofeminism, Reverence for Life, and Feminist Theological Ethics," in *Feminist Theological Ethics: A Reader* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 299.

¹³⁷ Gnanadason, "Traditions of Prudence Lost," 79, 80.

¹³⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35.

¹³⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35.

¹⁴⁰ Gnanadason, "We Have Spoken," 21.

text with new eyes—to retell the story of salvation so that it can offer a word of liberation to *all* women and to *all* people. At the moment, it does not.”¹⁴¹ Her challenge applies not only to first-world, feminist and ecofeminist theologians, but also to first-world, Catholic theology as a whole.

As demonstrated above, the contextualization of Gnanadason’s theology gives insight into the influences on her work and her ecofeminist hermeneutic. Her assessment of contemporary liberation and feminist theologies also reveals the diversity of voices among ecofeminists and third-world theologians. In order to better understand how she develops her ecofeminist theology, we explore her articulation of the roots of the “theology of dominion” and how its implications reinforce gender inequalities which lead to the injustices discussed above.

Roots and Implications of the “Theology of Dominion”

As stated earlier, Gnanadason’s ecofeminist theology offers a response to the theology of dominion which, she contends, continues to influence both contemporary, Christian theologies and civil society. In this section I discuss the Christian roots of the theology of dominion according to Gnanadason. I also categorize and explore her assessment of the practical implications informed by this theology: violations against the integrity of women, interrelated violations against our natural environment, and consequences of environmental racism.

¹⁴¹ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 21. See Aruna Gnanadason, “Jesus and the Asian Woman: A post-colonial look at the Syro-Phoenician woman / Canaanite woman from an Indian perspective,” *Studies in World Christianity*, 7 no. 2 (2001): 176.

Roots of the Theology of Dominion

Gnanadason affirms that Biblical interpretations regarding the relation between humanity and creation have been actively contested in ecumenical circles due in part to textual discrepancies within the Bible.¹⁴² Espousing a view shared by other eco-theologians, she asserts that hierarchical and anthropocentric approaches devalue the intrinsic worth of creation. The command found in the Book of Genesis 1:28 calling upon humanity to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” and giving humanity “dominion” over all creation provides the fundamental Biblical foundations for the theology of dominion.¹⁴³

A common flash point for discussion of the concept of dominion in Genesis is historian Lynn White, Jr.’s 1967 article, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” Critical of the Judeo-Christian tradition, White declared that the Genesis text sanctioned exploitation of the earth and its resources.¹⁴⁴ In contrast with White, Gnanadason echoes the proposals of eco-theologians like Clifford for preserving “the integrity of creation” from an overly anthropocentric approach without dismissing what is beneficent in the Bible and mainstream Christian theologies.¹⁴⁵ Gnanadason also commends recent trends within the WCC and the broader ecumenical

¹⁴² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 48. See Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 165.

¹⁴³ Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” 77. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 48. Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 159.

¹⁴⁴ Anne M. Clifford, “Foundations for a Catholic Ecological Theology of God,” in *And God Saw That It Was Good*, 24. See Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” in *Religion and Science: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, eds. Sara Fletcher Harding and Nancy Morvillo (London: Routledge, 2011) 4:266-275. Originally published in *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-7.

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 3 of *Listen to the Women!* and Clifford, “Foundations for a Catholic Ecological Theology of God.”

movement toward greater sensitivity to environmental justice concerns, especially in the third world.¹⁴⁶

On the other hand, Gnanadason acknowledges that some theologians do not equate the concept of “dominion” with domination. For instance, she notes that some mainline and evangelical theologians translate dominion as a form of Christian service.¹⁴⁷ She also briefly mentions that Jürgen Moltmann and Ruether attempt to reframe dominion in conjunction with the related Biblical concepts of sabbath and stewardship, respectively.¹⁴⁸ However, she does not engage positive interpretations of the concept of dominion beyond these few statements.

Rather, Gnanadason stipulates that the theology of dominion reinforces hierarchical and anthropocentric anthropologies. She supports the works of other theologians who observe that Western scientific pursuits utilize this concept to justify actions that discount the intrinsic value of our natural environment.¹⁴⁹ Drawing upon environmental historian Carolyn Merchant’s writings, Gnanadason also argues that the negative influence of Greek philosophy on the connections between Christianity, science and technology, and capitalism cannot be overlooked.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 62-80.

¹⁴⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 53.

¹⁴⁹ Gnanadason does not list any specific examples. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 50.

¹⁵⁰ Gnanadason asserts that the theology of dominion “has given to humanity unlimited power to explore earth, sea and even space – so as to colonize wherever human beings venture,” noting that, “Carolyn Merchant discerns these links in the European urge to ‘reinvent the whole earth in the image of the Garden of Eden.’ This project was accompanied by the colonizing of the world, so as to make true the proposal of recovery of Paradise Lost (the lost Eden) in the Genesis account, or of dominion over all of the earth and all of creation,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 50, 112, 23n. Gnanadason is citing Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 31.

From Gnanadason's perspective, the interpretation of dominion as justification for domination greatly influenced post-World War II development projects and the competition for power during the Cold War. Freedom from colonization coincided with a "fascination" with Western science and technology, and the Cold War perpetuated this influence, supporting development ventures that continued to degrade the earth, according to Gnanadason.¹⁵¹ In response, she argues that "mainstream theology has not addressed this enough nor emphasized the connections between the resource exacting nature of the present development paradigm and the theology of dominion."¹⁵² She suggests that the marginalization of liberation, post-colonial, and ecofeminist theologies, particularly in the churches, may be the cause of this lacuna in mainstream theologies.¹⁵³

Related to the concept of dominion, similar suspicion surrounds the idea of "stewardship" in the Genesis 1 text, which is embraced by some theologians as a way of redressing environmental injustices. As Gnanadason confirms, some eco-theologians from both the first and third worlds, including Ruether, consider stewardship a helpful concept for promoting care of our natural environment.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, Gnanadason explains that some theologians from the global South perceive stewardship as "a distinction and high office of the human as steward or

¹⁵¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 51.

¹⁵² I discuss this connection in more detail in her articulation of environmental racism. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 51.

¹⁵³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 54.

¹⁵⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 53.

householder and tiller and keeper,”¹⁵⁵ suggesting a positive interpretation of this Biblical concept.

Conversely, Gnanadason points out that some Indigenous theologians resist the idea of stewardship due to its consonance with the theology of dominion. Their perspective takes into account how Indigenous peoples experienced stewardship from colonizers “who had promulgated neo-European ways laced with imperialistic and racist notions,”¹⁵⁶ demonstrating the link between stewardship and a theology of dominion which legitimized domination. She also explains that other eco-theologians critique the idea of stewardship because “it does not give to the earth its integrity nor does it see all life – human and other – as a community.”¹⁵⁷ Given these interpretations of dominion and stewardship, what are the practical and theological implications of the theology of dominion?

Implications of the Theology of Dominion

An important corollary to understanding the implications of the theology of dominion is the recognition of a hierarchical approach to theological anthropology in mainstream, Christian theologies. Exploring how the theology of dominion reinforces a hierarchical relationship between men and women elucidates how this approach is then similarly applied to humanity’s relationship to the earth. This task

¹⁵⁵ She explains this in reference to ecumenical discussions at a 1991 WCC conference. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 55.

¹⁵⁶ Gnanadason is referencing a 1991 WCC assembly discussion with Indigenous peoples in attendance, cited by Rasmussen. He writes that the “civilizers” used language of “subduing the earth,” which Indigenous peoples “remember” as “the subdued,” Rasmussen, *Earth Community*, 235. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 59, and Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 167.

¹⁵⁷ Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 167. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 54.

includes discussing violations against the integrity of women, interrelated violations against our natural environment, and the negative effects of environmental racism.

Violations against the Integrity of Women

A hierarchical approach to theological anthropology which undergirds the theology of dominion developed early on in the Christian Church's history. As Gnanadason points out, theologies written by men who are commonly referred to as the early Church fathers include presuppositions which reduce women to their procreative capacity.¹⁵⁸ In light of the prevalence of this perspective, Gnanadason maintains that Christian anthropology "has been at the heart of making the female body an obstacle to the fullness of woman's humanness in the hierarchy of creation."¹⁵⁹ In effect, the predominant emphasis on women's biological fertility diminished their creative opportunity, voice, and power in other areas of the Church, contrasting with various voices and roles of women in the early Christian community found within the texts that eventually became part of the Biblical canon.¹⁶⁰

Beyond the history of the early Church, Gnanadason points out that dualism and negative appropriations of anthropocentrism remain central themes within mainstream theologies from the West and have been assimilated by some third-

¹⁵⁸ Gnanadason, "Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India," 77.

¹⁵⁹ Gnanadason, "We Have Spoken," 14.

¹⁶⁰ See the following critical scholarship on women in the Bible and the early Church: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, New York: Crossroad, 1994; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003; Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, New York: Crossroad, 2003.

world theologies as well.¹⁶¹ She explains that “the image of God is distorted by a traditional theology of dualism that has divided the body from the divine and has placed the divine somewhere outside our lives and everyday experiences,” which contributes to the inability of many women to “recognize in themselves the image of God.”¹⁶² These themes continue to negatively impact women’s theological self-understanding in both the first and third worlds.

Informed by a theological anthropology that diminishes the equality of women, some Church leaders also condone Biblical interpretations which, Gnanadason insists, “legitimize violence against women” and “teach women submission and resignation” in the face of such violence.¹⁶³ As a result, women interiorize an inferior status from that of men.¹⁶⁴ Gnanadason avers that, “legitimized by the dominant culture and its values women have acquiesced to the worst forms of violence and women’s bodies are the site of possession, conquest, control and abuse.”¹⁶⁵ While a direct correlation may be difficult to confirm on a practical level without further research, the theology of dominion fosters a hierarchical anthropology that tolerates violations against women and their integrity as persons, justified by harmful interpretations of Biblical texts.

By way of definition, violence against women encompasses many types, such as physical, verbal, and emotional. This violence is often rooted in preconceived ideas of gender roles that permit and tolerate harmful behavior (e.g., wife-beating as

¹⁶¹ Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” 77.

¹⁶² Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 11.

¹⁶³ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 10.

¹⁶⁴ See Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 14.

¹⁶⁵ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 11.

an accepted and expected practice by both men and women.)¹⁶⁶ A common understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) is “violence that is directed at an individual based on her or his specific gender role in a society” and “intended to establish or reinforce gender hierarchies and perpetuate gender inequalities.”¹⁶⁷ Girls and women from both the first and third worlds experience higher incidences of GBV than boys and men.¹⁶⁸

To the dismay of many women and men, the reality of violence against women continues to fall on deaf ears within Christian churches, even when Church leaders are implicated in crimes of sexual violence. Gnanadason investigates the topic of violence against women in the Church at length in her work, *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence against Women*.¹⁶⁹ More than ten years after its original publication, she continues to lament the Church’s inability to redress clergy sexual abuse throughout the world. She writes that these crimes “remain as ‘embarrassing’ and hidden secrets and are a distortion of ecclesial power.”¹⁷⁰ While the WCC is her purview on clergy sexual abuse, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic

¹⁶⁶ Wife-beating is such a common practice in certain places that it is simply expected by some women once they enter into marriage, as noted by Coalition on Violence Against Women—Kenya, in “Community Advocacy on Violence Against Women: Baseline Survey reports on Violence Against Women in Taita-Taveta, Laikipia and Kajiado Districts,” 8, http://www.preventgbvafrica.org/Downloads/COVAW_vawadvocacy.pdf. In some cultures women are also strong proponents of female genital cutting (FGC), also referred to as female circumcision. It is considered by some women/tribes to be a female ritual that is passed on from one generation to the next, and they do not consider FGC to be a form of violence. See Corrine Packer, “Understanding the Sociocultural and Traditional Context of Female Circumcision and the Impact of the Human Rights Discourse,” in *Engendering Human Rights*, eds. Obioma Nnaemeka and Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 223-248.

¹⁶⁷ Judy A. Benjamin and Lynn Murchison, “Gender-Based Violence: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies, A Field Guide,” (Westport, CT: Save the Children Federation, 2004), 3, http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/technical-resources/emergencies-protection/Gender_Based_Violence_Final.pdf.

¹⁶⁸ Benjamin and Murchison, 3.

¹⁶⁹ This text was originally published in 1993 and revised in 1997.

¹⁷⁰ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 15.

Church is no stranger to years of sexual abuse of minors and systemic silence and secrecy until forced to publicly address the pervasive nature of these crimes in spring of 2002, when the mainstream media exposed the breadth and depth of this scandal.

As other theologians and victim advocates have pointed out, more work needs to be done to address ongoing clergy abuse of women religious, general abuse of power toward women in ecclesial positions, and sexual and emotional abuse of female congregants and co-workers.¹⁷¹ As recent as May of 2011, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee pleaded guilty to inappropriate use of a telephone with two teenage girls in which he enticed them to go on dates, with the intention of pursuing oral sex with one of them.¹⁷² Questions remain as to why there has been little attention paid to the abuse of girls and women by clergy in both the first and third worlds.

¹⁷¹ See John L. Allen, Jr. and Pamela Schaeffer, "Reports of abuse, AIDS exacerbates sexual exploitation of nuns, reports allege," *National Catholic Reporter* 16 March 2001, http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2001a/031601/031601a.htm Donald B. Cozzens, *Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002; Kathryn A. Flynn, *The Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003; Katherine van Wormer and Lois Berns, "The Impact of Priest Sexual Abuse: Female Survivors' Narratives," *AFFILIA* 19, no. 1 (2004): 53-67.; "Vatican says it knows nuns are abused," staff editorial, *National Catholic Reporter* 30 March 2001, http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2001a/033001/033001d.htm.

¹⁷² See "Kenosha Priest Sentenced for Suggestive Phone Calls," *WISN News* (22 July 2011), <http://www.wisn.com/news/28631802/detail.html>. The text of the article is as follows: "A Kenosha priest has been sentenced to 30 days in jail after he pleaded guilty to making sexually suggestive phone calls to two teenage girls. The Rev. Michael Nowak was charged with two misdemeanor counts of unlawful use of a telephone. The 58-year-old was convicted Thursday. A Kenosha News report says Nowak cried and apologized before he was sentenced. He said he knew he violated the trust of his church, his community, the girls and their families. Prosecutors say he asked out a 17-year-old girl and encouraged her to wear a low-cut shirt. They say he also asked a 14-year-old if he could perform oral sex on her. No physical contact was alleged. Nowak could be sentenced to an additional 30 days if he violates his one-year probation"; See Jerome E. Listecky, Letter to parishioners at St. Therese Parish, Kenosha, WI (17 May 2011), <http://reform-network.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Listecky-letter-on-Fr.-Nowak1.pdf>.

Abysmal responses by Church leaders may be related to the internalization of a hierarchical view of theological anthropology that diminishes their integrity as persons. This view also, consequently, reinforces victim-blaming. In addition to clergy sexual abuse, the tolerance of violence against women supported by a theology of dominion also finds commonalities with the violence done to our natural environment, an injustice to which we now turn.

The Nexus of Violations against Women and our Natural Environment

Another consequence of an operative theology of dominion is that women, especially women in poverty, and our natural environment share the brunt of harm informed by this theology. We discussed a common definition of GBV above, yet how is violence against the earth defined? Political science and sociology scholar Erika Cudworth expresses how definitions of violence against the earth are shaped by culture and change over time, similar to the gender conditioning that leads to GBV. She argues that “a key element of normative definitions of violence is physical damage, and deep and feminist ecologies are right to include the destruction of habitats and eco-systems as a form of violence.”¹⁷³ Cudworth also points out that acts of commission (e.g., disrupting ecosystems through the destruction of wetlands) and omission (e.g., refraining from taxing resources) by governments contribute to harm done to the earth.¹⁷⁴ Thus, similar to how women’s integrity is minimized by a hierarchical view of anthropology informed by the theology of

¹⁷³ Erika Cudworth, *Developing Ecofeminist Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 169.

¹⁷⁴ Cudworth, *Developing Ecofeminist Theory*, 168.

dominion, the intrinsic value of our natural environment is diminished by actions focused primarily on the benefit for humanity (often in the short term) without considering the harmful effects for the ecosystems upon which we all depend for survival.

Along these lines, Gnanadason acquiesces with other ecofeminist theologians who draw a link between androcentric and anthropomorphic views and harm done to women and the earth. Expounding on these connections, she explains how these views reduce women to their procreative capacity: “as the earth cooperates with seeds to produce plants, woman is to cooperate with the male seed to produce children,” as a way of fulfilling the command in Genesis discussed earlier.¹⁷⁵ Likewise, she writes that “violence against the earth is characterized in the same language used to describe violence against women – indicating the nexus in these forms of violence.”¹⁷⁶ While she does not offer any specific examples, her claim leads her to affirm a new approach to epistemology, addressed later in this chapter.

Due to the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, Gnanadason reiterates that when third-world feminists speak of the “survival” of our natural environment, “such a concern is inextricably linked” with the survival of the people most adversely affected by these conditions, predominantly women in poverty.¹⁷⁷ Her observations resonate with other third-world ecofeminists as well. For instance, she quotes Vandana Shiva assertion that, “the land, the forests, the rivers, the oceans, the atmosphere have all been colonized, eroded and polluted.

¹⁷⁵ Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” 77.

¹⁷⁶ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 11.

¹⁷⁷ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 80. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35.

Capital now has to look for new colonies to invade and exploit for its further accumulation. These new colonies are, in my view, the interior spaces of the bodies of women, plants, and animals.”¹⁷⁸ The challenges facing women in the third world as a result of environmental degradation described earlier resonate with the exploitation Shiva describes.

Another interrelated ecological challenge for both women and our natural environment is the issue of population growth. Gnanadason affirms that there is a pressing need for population control because of the great demands humanity makes on the earth, but she argues that some racial overtones persist in pointing to the third-world population as the central contributing factor.¹⁷⁹ In addition, a focus on population control as the primary cause for environmental degradation disregards other implications for women. For instance, she points out that this myopic view fails to account for “the brutal invasion into women's bodies by the population control programs in a bid to protect the earth from over-population,” which the ecofeminist movement in India seeks to address, and minimizes the poverty and status of women as contributing factors to overpopulation.¹⁸⁰ Reducing the cause of environmental degradation to this one issue also muddies the “links between poverty and inequality both of resource use as well as the inequality in the

¹⁷⁸ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85. See Vandana Shiva, “The Seed and the Earth: Biotechnology and the Colonisation of Regeneration,” *Development Dialogue* 1-2 (1992): 153. Published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. http://www.dhf.uu.se/pdfiler/92_1_2/92_1-2_11.pdf. This issue was also published as a book, which is the source from which Gnanadason cites: *Minding Our Lives: Women from South and North Reconnect Ecology and Health*, ed. Vandana Shiva (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993), 129.

¹⁷⁹ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 111, 110.

¹⁸⁰ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 113; Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

environmental burden peoples put on the world,” according to Gnanadason.¹⁸¹ In contrast with overconsumption by a privileged minority, she notes that agricultural practices in the third world help maintain a balance of resource use despite the size of their populations.¹⁸²

While not a violation to their person, Indigenous women also face the effects of unequal property rights. Gnanadason discusses this issue in conjunction with the Save the Narmada River Movement, which began in the 1980s and challenges a massive damming project that violates sacred land and ways of life, particularly those of women (as a result of displacement).¹⁸³ She explains that “when the government decides to regularize land ownership with legal documents,” which differs from Indigenous traditions of communal land ownership, “the head of the family is given the papers to indicate their legal rights over the land,” reducing the chances of compensation for Indigenous women.¹⁸⁴ She also notes estimates are that one-third of women in rural India “between the ages of eighteen and thirty are deserted or leave their husbands” but “female-headed households are still not recognized when land is redistributed.”¹⁸⁵ In light of these experiences, Gnanadason contends that “women have often been in the forefront of demonstrations because of their ability to endure personal hardship,” which she adds is the “same logic” Gandhi utilized to incorporate women in social movements.¹⁸⁶ I discuss Indigenous women’s social action in relation to their spiritualities later on in this chapter.

¹⁸¹ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 112.

¹⁸² Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 111.

¹⁸³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 14.

¹⁸⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 14.

¹⁸⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 14.

These interrelated aspects of injustices facing women and our natural environment evoke the need for greater attention to these issues by theologians. In addition, Gnanadason explains how some of these issues fall under a broader umbrella of environmental racism. In the next sub-section, I explore how she defines and appropriates this interrelated issue of oppression.

The Impact of Environmental Racism and Problematic Derivatives of Sustainable Development

A key reference point for Gnanadason's exposition of environmental racism is the 1987 national study conducted by the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Studies of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Overall, the summit became a watershed moment for the development of an understanding of environmental racism and served as a catalyst for the environmental justice movement.¹⁸⁷ Results of the 1987 study found "the existence of clear patterns which show that communities with greater minority percentages of the population are more likely to be the sites of commercial hazardous wastes facilities" and that it was "virtually impossible" that this link was coincidental.¹⁸⁸ The study also revealed that African-American and Hispanic populations faced the greatest risk.¹⁸⁹ In light of these results, the study referred to

¹⁸⁷ Gnanadason, "The Integrity of Creation," 99.

¹⁸⁸ United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States* (Public Access, New York, 1987), 23, <http://www.ucc.org/aboutus/archives/pdfs/toxwrace87.pdf>. In addition, the study stated that "race proved to be the most significant among variables tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities. This represented a consistent national pattern," xiii.

¹⁸⁹ United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 23.

environmental racism as “a new manifestation of historic racial oppression.”¹⁹⁰

Years after the publication of this foundational study, hazardous waste dumping in poor and racially oppressed areas persists today, especially in the third world, as documented by the Basel Convention.¹⁹¹

Similarly, Gnanadason notes that in 2002, the WCC published *Understanding Racism Today: A Dossier*, which supports the definition of environmental racism as “any government, institutional, or industry action, or failure to act, that has a negative environmental impact which disproportionately harms—whether intentionally or unintentionally—individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color.”¹⁹² She writes that “even the ecology movement has been divided,” pointing toward the discrepancies between different caste groups in India.¹⁹³ Similar to the issue of population growth, Gnanadason, along with liberation theologians, reveals “racist overtones” in “sustainable development,” a term questioned by peoples in the third world and other “racially oppressed” groups given its origination in the North.¹⁹⁴

The term “sustainable development” shares consonance with the theology of dominion in actual practice. Gnanadason argues for situating environmental racism within the context of economic globalization “so as to sharpen the critique of the concept ‘sustainable development’ which has been one of the pillars on which

¹⁹⁰ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 99.

¹⁹¹ For information on the Basel Convention see www.basel.int.

¹⁹² World Council of Churches, *Understanding Racism Today: A Dossier* (Geneva: WCC, 2002), 18. <http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2006pdfs/racismdossier.pdf>. The WCC cites the Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund oral intervention at the 55th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 99.

¹⁹³ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 116.

¹⁹⁴ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 100.”

globalization has found its support.”¹⁹⁵ Related to sustainable development, she explicates the following “challenges” of environmental racism: (1) “the degradation of the habitats of people of color, of Indigenous Peoples and of Dalits,” (2) “the dumping of toxic industrial wastes in the habitats of the racially oppressed,” and (3) “control of knowledge systems.”¹⁹⁶

As Gnanadason points out, the desire for sustainable development has prompted governments to pursue “aggressive industrialization, mining operations and dumping of industrial wastes in lands belonging to the most vulnerable and to those who are perceived as powerless—i.e., the poor, Indigenous communities, and the racially oppressed.”¹⁹⁷ Likewise, “national and multinational companies have been given a free hand to exploit these lands aided and abetted by governments in their bid to ‘develop’ at any cost.”¹⁹⁸ She also notes that, in addition to Indigenous peoples in India, “the Ogoni and other peoples of the Niger Delta in Nigeria; the U'wa people of Northeast Columbia; and the Amungme of West Papua” have all suffered from these types of “development” ventures.¹⁹⁹

According to Gnanadason and others who share her perspective, the primary focus of sustainable development is on “economic growth,” with secondary concerns about preservation of our natural environment.²⁰⁰ As a result, these projects diminish “community resource management systems,” which comprise Indigenous

¹⁹⁵ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 99-100.

¹⁹⁶ She expounds on these challenges in “The Integrity of Creation,” 104-110.

¹⁹⁷ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 100.

¹⁹⁸ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 104.

¹⁹⁹ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 104.

²⁰⁰ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 100.

traditions of prudence.²⁰¹ Other effects include “the import of genetic engineering” and “battles over intellectual property rights on seed varieties,” greatly affecting farming communities, especially women.²⁰²

Prior to the advent of “sustainable development” policies, colonialism by the British contributed to the shift away from traditional sustainable use of natural resources through the imposition of policies foreign to native peoples and to the desecration of the land, which, Gnanadason points out, greatly impacted agrarian communities in India and other countries “forced to model” themselves on this Western paradigm.²⁰³ In addition, the goal of “the generation of profits” led to “the creation of poverty and dispossession.”²⁰⁴ Along with the devastation of the natural resource base Indigenous peoples rely upon for survival, “a narrow elite of omnivores—powerful landowners and urban people in the organized industries and service sectors” benefitted from the redirection of resources to projects that focused on “industrial growth.”²⁰⁵ Indigenous peoples and their habitats faced the greatest harm as a result.

This Eurocentric approach to development “legitimized colonialism and imperialism,” profoundly impacting local economies, cultures, and histories, and the

²⁰¹ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²⁰² Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²⁰³ She explains: “The British established state monopoly over the forests and curtailed the customary rights of local populations to these resources. The colonial power also introduced the concept of ‘scientific’ forest management and the practice of encouraging commercially profitable species. In addition there was the invasion of the forests for exploitation by private European and Indian contractors, especially for building railways,” Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 83.

²⁰⁴ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²⁰⁵ Madhav Gadgil, *Ecological Journeys* (Delhi, India: Permanent Black, 2001), 201. Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 106.

USA and Japan later followed a similar model.²⁰⁶ Gnanadason argues that this “development” paradigm also “ignored highly developed systems of philosophical and religious thought and asserted that the Western paradigm was a so-called civilizing force in a supposedly uncivilized world.”²⁰⁷ She points toward “the language of ‘civilization’ and ‘crusades’” employed by the U.S. (which is “perceived as a ‘Christian’ United States”) in its “war on terrorism” as a more recent example of this paradigm.²⁰⁸ Her claim gives insight as to why “Western domination has been seen as an expression of Christian ‘civilization’ and ‘dominion.’”²⁰⁹ In addition, she points out that Indian governments continued these Western-style development paradigms that exist today.²¹⁰

In addition, Gnanadason also recognizes that poverty drives Indigenous peoples to abandon traditional, sustainable practices and participate in “resource depletion” in order to provide for their families.²¹¹ Bina Agarwal’s research supports this claim: “Poor women, given their substantial dependence on common pool resources, can be faced with a serious conflict between their interests in forest conservation and their survival needs,” citing the experience of a woman from Uttarakhand in India having to make “the difficult choice between saving a green tree and satisfying her children’s hunger.”²¹² Discussing the case of a village in the Garhwal region, Gnanadason explains how, in previous decades, groves of trees

²⁰⁶ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²⁰⁷ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²⁰⁸ Gnanadason, “Jesus and the Asian Woman,” 170. See also Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 53.

²⁰⁹ Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 167. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 49.

²¹⁰ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 84.

²¹¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 17.

²¹² Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance*, 42.

allotted to each family in the community sufficed for survival.²¹³ However, in violation of their own Indigenous “strict customary laws,” communities “are now forced to engage in ecocide due to abject poverty and alienation” and participate in the dominant economic paradigms.²¹⁴ Yet, as discussed later in this chapter, Gnanadason insists that acknowledging that some Indigenous peoples have abandoned traditional practices which preserve our natural environment does not diminish the ongoing work of many Indigenous communities to continue and promote these practices.²¹⁵

Along with the challenges Indigenous peoples face under the guise of “sustainable development,” Gnanadason discusses how racism violates “indigenous knowledge systems” through agreements like TRIPS, the Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, published in 1995, which she cites as an example of “bio-piracy” driven by profit.²¹⁶ Pointing out that “intellectual property rights” is a foreign concept to many people in the third world, she notes that “more than 80 percent of the patents that have been granted in developing countries belong to residents of industrial countries.”²¹⁷ Cultural diversity and differing views of ownership are dismissed by laws, and “the result is silent transfer (theft) of centuries of knowledge from developing to developed world.”²¹⁸ For all of these reasons, Gnanadason, along with other theologians, finds the concept of “sustainable development” to be suspect. The next section focuses on key aspects of her

²¹³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 17.

²¹⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 18.

²¹⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 18.

²¹⁶ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 109. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85.

²¹⁷ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85.

²¹⁸ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 85.

ecofeminist theology which challenge the roots of the theology of dominion and its implications.

Dimensions of Gnanadason's Ecofeminist Theology

While Gnanadason maintains that the implications of the theology of dominion remain a threat, she acknowledges that “for most thoughtful Christians the *theology of dominion* is no longer normative,” due to its harmful consequences as discussed above.²¹⁹ Yet, she avers that the theology of dominion continues to negatively influence Christian attitudes toward care for our natural environment. She states: “We still believe that the earth exists for us and that we can do with it what we will for the sake of our own good,” undermining its intrinsic worth and the interconnectedness between humanity and all creation.²²⁰

Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology challenges harmful implications of the theology of dominion. Throughout her writings, she often returns to themes touched upon earlier: the relationship between violence against women and the earth, the failure of many Christian theologies to adequately respond to the devastating effects of environmental degradation compounded by gender and racial injustices, and the marginalization of the voices of Indigenous women. From her perspective, “God, grace and transformation are motifs that need to be woven together for an ecotheology.”²²¹ Her theology focuses especially on how Indigenous women possess

²¹⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 48. See Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 165.

²²⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 49.

²²¹ She adapts this expression from the 2006 theme of the ninth assembly of the WCC, “God in Your Grace, Transform the World,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 90.

wisdom, knowledge, and practices that could be beneficial to and integrated with Christian theology and practice, particularly in the areas of ethics and spirituality.

While Gnanadason's corpus of works is limited, she presents unique theological concepts and proposals that could be developed even further. The strengths of her theology can be showcased by organizing her thought into specific theological categories, which has not been attempted to date. Therefore, this section organizes and discusses the following key aspects of her ecofeminist theology: (1) her ecofeminist approach to theological anthropology, (2) her ecofeminist approach to ethics, which appropriates Indigenous traditions of prudence of women in India, and (3) her articulation of the relationship between spirituality and social action.

Gnanadason's Ecofeminist Approach to Theological Anthropology

One of the ways Gnanadason challenges the theology of dominion is by reframing mainstream Christian understandings of theological anthropology. She accomplishes this task by reclaiming the following: (1) the Christian tenet of humanity being created in the image of God, (2) marginalized images of God, and (3) the concept of motherhood as an "ethical value." A deeper exploration of these aspects of her theological anthropology illuminates her ecofeminist hermeneutic.

Reclaiming the Christian Tenet of Humanity Created in the Image of God

To counter the roots and implications of the theology of dominion, feminist theologies focus on the retrieval of the Christian tenet that each individual person is created in the image and likeness of God. Gnanadason confirms that reclaiming this

concept has emboldened women to give voice to the violence done to their bodies, for “when violence is done to woman, the image of God is violated.”²²² Asserting the fundamental truth of women and men being created equally in the image of God exposes how the theology of dominion undermines women’s inner authority and colludes with violence by commission or omission.²²³

In addition, Gnanadason recognizes how some women who are victims of violence have found ways to transform their horrific experiences and speak out about their victimization. She develops a process of healing into an “ethics of survival and resistance” and outlines four brief steps which comprise this process: “remembering,” “truth-telling,” “confession and reparation,” and “reconciliation and healing.”²²⁴ These steps reflect a shift she observes within the women’s movement in which women who are victims of violence and oppression see themselves as “survivors, as those who will remain silent no longer” and work to resist “forces of violence and death,” drawing from the Christological concept of Jesus as liberator.²²⁵

In explicating these steps in relation to violence against women, particularly within the Church, Gnanadason points out that women are often expected to “forgive and forget,” which denies them the power of remembering and speaking

²²² Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 12.

²²³ For additional research on violence against women in the Bible see Carol J. Dempsey, “The ‘Whore’ of Ezekiel 16: The Impact and Ramifications of Gender-Specific Metaphors in Light of Biblical Law and Divine Judgment,” in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 57-78.; Cheryl J. Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted*, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996; Julia M. O’Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008; Johanna Stiebert, “Women’s Sexuality and Stigma in Genesis and the Prophets,” in *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Musimbi Kanyoro (New York: Orbis, 2004), 80-96.; Gail Corrington Streete, *The Strange Woman*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997; Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984; Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

²²⁴ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 18.

²²⁵ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 18.

out about the violence they have experienced.²²⁶ Likewise, confession and reparation must be sincere with practical commitments to change practices; if not sincere, rituals of confession become meaningless.²²⁷ She asserts that only when these steps are followed can true reconciliation and healing take place. She calls upon the Church, which has “tended to trivialize forgiveness,” to claim its important role in facilitating this process for victims.²²⁸ While Gnanadason categorizes this process as an ethics of survival and resistance for women who are victims of violence to their person, a similar commitment to survival and resistance can be found among Indigenous women who will risk their very lives to resist ecological violence against the earth, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Reclaiming Marginalized Images of God

Along with retrieving the concept of humanity being created in the image of God, liberation and feminist theologians reclaim marginalized images of God which depict God’s care for the poor and disenfranchised. As Gnanadason astutely points out, by looking to the Bible for inspiration, one can unearth “some metaphors for God that have been hidden behind more dominant images.”²²⁹ Throughout her writings, she uses the following expressions interchangeably: images of God, metaphors for God, and models of God. Despite the lack of distinction around her use of these terms, she makes unique intercultural and contextual connections.

²²⁶ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 18.

²²⁷ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 19.

²²⁸ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 19.

²²⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 98.

Gnanadason's intent in reclaiming Biblical metaphors is to develop possible theological responses that provide "more earth-caring values" to challenge environmental degradation.²³⁰ As part of this task, she seeks to counter inertia among Christians who do not recognize their responsibility to work toward eradicating environmental injustices and, instead, relegate this activity to God alone. She notes an "urgency to discuss" images that portray God as "one who encourages us to act for the sake of life" and invites humanity's cooperation with God's activity and grace to transform the world.²³¹

Turning to the Biblical text, Gnanadason reiterates that "multidimensional and complex metaphors for God" exist in both the Old and New Testaments.²³² In particular, she highlights the feminine aspects of God. Her suggestions, which "image God as a compassionate, feminine, mothering God who fills the earth with grace and creative power," include the following: "God as shepherd (Ps. 23:1; Matt. 18:10-14); as potter (Jer. 18:1-6); as mother (Isa. 42:14, 66:13; Luke 15:8-10)."²³³ She also writes that "the image of a child in its mother's womb or at her breast conveys a unique sense of closeness with God."²³⁴ Her retrieval of these metaphors coalesces with the work of other feminist theologians and the mystical tradition as well, such as the writings of Christian mystic Julian of Norwich.

Likewise, Gnanadason explores cultural connections by noting that in contrast with a "warrior/colonizing" image of God who sanctions the conquering of

²³⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 99.

²³¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 98.

²³² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 98.

²³³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 99.

²³⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 99.

land and peoples, Asian women tend to focus “on the immanence of God over and against God’s transcendence. Both in God’s immanence and transcendence, the image is of a God found within us and in all of creation.”²³⁵ Anticipating questions of reductionism, she remarks that, “God is not reduced to the world because God transcends human understanding,” allowing for a plethora of images as opposed to one dominant image.²³⁶ She also advocates for an image of God “as the resisting, struggling poor woman” who resists violence and an image of God “as community—as the inextricable link between the divine and humanity,”²³⁷ although she does not expound upon this link. In addition, she points out that “Indian cosmology, which affirms the interdependence of all forms of life, the dialectical harmony between humanity and the divine, between human beings and the earth and between the male and female principles,” shapes liberation images of God in India.²³⁸

Gnanadason’s appropriation of images of God is also deeply influenced by McFague’s models of God and Ivone Gebara’s approach to images of God, which Gnanadason observes, similar to McFague, “also calls for a metaphor of God as *relatedness*.”²³⁹ Gnanadason refers to “the earth as the body of God” as both a model and a concept, which conflates McFague’s use of these terms. Despite this discrepancy, she maintains that McFague builds upon Tamil poet and philosopher A. K. Ramanujan’s reflection on this “concept” of “the earth as the body of God” by

²³⁵ She references Gebara, Kwok, and Dube. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 99, 100. See Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 166.

²³⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 103.

²³⁷ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 13. She writes that the image of “God as a mothering, nurturing woman is perhaps the most crucial for our times,” Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 168. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 103.

²³⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 100.

²³⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 103.

highlighting that we experience God through our interactions with other persons and our natural environment.²⁴⁰ Informed by Ramanujan and McFague, Gnanadason adds that “exploitation and violence are thus done to the body of God, inflicted by violating the spirit when we are violent with the earth.”²⁴¹ Countering these violations and a hierarchical approach to creation, she asserts that “the model of the world as God’s body encourages holistic attitudes of responsibility for care of the vulnerable and the oppressed,” in contrast with the theology of dominion.²⁴² However, she does not elaborate on how this model can be a source for deepening our understanding of care for the earth.

In light of these various images, metaphors for, and models of God, Gnanadason observes that, despite contextual differences among feminist theologians, a common thread is the emphasis on the preservation of all life, which includes both humanity and other life present within ecosystems.²⁴³ Connected to the images and models she suggests, she also supports “a wider bio-centrism” to “complement” anthropocentrism.²⁴⁴ In doing so, she documents caution by some third-world theologians against strong anti-anthropocentric claims.²⁴⁵

To illustrate this point, Gnanadason shares an anecdotal encounter. During conversation at a small group meeting she attended with other ecofeminist theologians sponsored by the Justice, Peace and Creation team of the WCC in Geneva

²⁴⁰ Gnanadason references McFague’s *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, London: SCM Press, 1987. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 101. See Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 169.

²⁴¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 101.

²⁴² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 103.

²⁴³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 100.

²⁴⁴ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 19.

²⁴⁵ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 19.

in 2003, Chung Hyun Kyung shared the story of a Dalit doctoral student in theology (whose thesis she was directing) who expressed to Chung: “Please do not ask us to be less anthropocentric, when it is only now that we Dalits are ‘becoming a people’ who can speak of our lives and dignity as human beings.”²⁴⁶ Gnanadason admits that these words continue to “haunt” her.²⁴⁷

Validating the claim of the Dalit student, Gnanadason explains that the Dalits are “a community newly learning to resist centuries of ritual and economic violence and exclusion,” due to “organized efforts of Dalits for dignity and justice.”²⁴⁸ Because these efforts originated within “recent decades,”²⁴⁹ the circumspection of the Dalit community regarding strong anti-anthropocentric approaches to theology appears warranted. Taking into account the situation of the Dalits and other marginalized groups, Gnanadason suggests that anthropocentrism “has to be corrected by recognition of the history of injustice experienced by some sections of our communities – because of their race, their caste or their ethnic origins.”²⁵⁰ We now explore her explication of one resource that can be reclaimed for redressing environmental injustices.

Reclaiming the Concept of Motherhood as an “Ethical Value”

As noted earlier, Gnanadason and other theologians acknowledge reticence among some theologians in reclaiming the concept of motherhood due to the

²⁴⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 58, 113 n. 42. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 116.

²⁴⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 58.

²⁴⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 58.

²⁴⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 58.

²⁵⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 58.

negative implications of essentialism. However, some ecofeminists from both the first and third worlds draw upon this concept a positive resource for care of our natural environment. Gnanadason acquiesces with this approach, albeit with a few caveats.

In India, motherhood resonates with religious histories and traditions which celebrate the positive aspects of female fertility.²⁵¹ Gnanadason notes that, in addition to a “biological role,” mothers “represent creativity, regeneration, and sustenance, affirming women’s sexuality and bodies as symbols of life and the sustainability of communities.”²⁵² She further explains that, “the Indigenous woman’s energy comes from her understanding of the earth as mother who will protect her and her people and will nurture them. Therefore to reappropriate motherhood as an ethical value is a way forward.”²⁵³ Likewise, these understandings of fertility and motherhood expand traditional interpretations of these concepts discussed earlier.

According to Gnanadason, the concept of motherhood also has a sense of “interdependence” with other human beings and our natural environment, which she suggests could be helpful in moving toward the amelioration of environmental degradation.²⁵⁴ Moreover, she argues that reclaiming motherhood as “an alternative theological ethic” does not promote a romanticized view of the experience of

²⁵¹ She writes that in India, “we have a heritage of goddesses in pre-Aryan and in other religious traditions most often represented as virgin, mother and fertility symbol,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 41.

²⁵² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 41.

²⁵³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 16.

²⁵⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 40.

women.²⁵⁵ Rather, “it is a pragmatic and practical concern symbolic of resilience and resistance. It is situated in the everyday struggles, particularly of women, for access to clean water, clean air, fuel, food and fodder.”²⁵⁶ She points out that this appropriation counters essentialist arguments and highlights the agency of Indigenous women working for their own survival and that of their families.²⁵⁷ Indigenous traditions of prudence that developed from the dire situation of women persist today through movements of resistance, and she asserts that these traditions and actions “reveal a power that cannot be ignored.”²⁵⁸ I discuss the power of this resistance later in this chapter.

Therefore, while affirming an appropriation of the concept of motherhood which recognizes women’s relationship with the earth, Gnanadason cautions against “the language of biological determinism that presumes some kind of inherent link between women and nature.”²⁵⁹ She contends that patriarchy uses this argument in order to “trample” on the rights and dignity of women “so as to control their sexuality and creativity.”²⁶⁰ In order to “develop a new resource to inspire both a caring attitude and an understanding of political engagement for environmental care,” she maintains that these patriarchal interpretations must be deconstructed and new concepts reconstructed as explored above.²⁶¹ In the next section, we explore how Gnanadason’s ecofeminist hermeneutic shapes her approach to ethics.

²⁵⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 42.

²⁵⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 42.

²⁵⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 42.

²⁵⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 43.

²⁵⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 38.

²⁶⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 41.

²⁶¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 40.

Gnanadason's Ecofeminist Approach to Ethics

As part of her ecofeminist theology, Gnanadason advocates “the search for a *new feminist epistemology*,”²⁶² which is related to her approach to ethics. She avers that this search is grounded “in the knowledge systems of women who have lived in prudent relationship to the earth and who engage in resisting projects of ‘development’ that threaten to destroy that relationship.”²⁶³ Foundations of this epistemology include “a commitment to transform hierarchical structures of power and injustice,” and “a desire to seek alternatives that are based on eco-justice and are grounded in an ethic of care.”²⁶⁴ This epistemology also stipulates “new ethical judgments on what is good, just and sustainable,” in contrast with the foundations of the theology of dominion.²⁶⁵

Similar to her theological anthropology, Gnanadason avers that an ecofeminist epistemology promotes “a wider bio-centrism,” which can be realized by examining “the subversive memories of our communities.”²⁶⁶ These memories include Indigenous traditions of prudence that have resisted the implications of a theology of dominion throughout history and today.²⁶⁷ As noted earlier, she calls for listening to these “new voices of hope” of Indigenous women who have been previously marginalized in order to discover ways in which we can redress environmental injustices and develop a stronger Christian theological response.²⁶⁸

²⁶² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 39.

²⁶³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 39.

²⁶⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 39.

²⁶⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 40.

²⁶⁶ Gnanadason, “‘We Have Spoken,’” 19.

²⁶⁷ Gnanadason, “‘We Have Spoken,’” 19.

²⁶⁸ Gnanadason, “Yes, Creator God,” 164. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 39.

In contrast with the voices of Indigenous women from the East, Gnanadason remarks that, along with environmental policies and practices which originated primarily in the West, “the underlying assumption is that solutions to environmental degradation can only be found in technologies generated from the so called scientifically and developed part of the world.”²⁶⁹ However, she does acknowledge that Indigenous traditions of prudent care are garnering more recognition.²⁷⁰ Focusing on India, she explores how these traditions have much to contribute to redressing environmental injustices.

Drawing from Gadgil and Guha’s work, Gnanadason notes that Indigenous traditions of prudence in India function as “a system of environmental ethics.”²⁷¹ She explains that this system “provides for communities a code of moral guidelines for environmental protection and conservation” and applies to the entire community within the locality, regardless of one’s social status.²⁷² She outlines two conditions upon which traditions of prudence depend: “First, that some other lineage does not usurp the resource when it becomes available; and second, that the resource should continue to be of value to the lineage adopting prudence.”²⁷³ The prevention of “resource depletion” is a key outcome of these traditions, which are connected to a “deep spirituality” that recognizes our interconnectedness with our natural environment, as discussed later in this chapter.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 109.

²⁷⁰ Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 109.

²⁷¹ She writes that Gadgil and Guha “propose that the prudent care of the earth should reflect genuine efforts at restraint by following communitarian rules and regulations,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 81.

²⁷² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3. See Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 81.

²⁷³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4. She is drawing from Gadgil and Guha.

²⁷⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3.

From a practical perspective, as noted in chapter one, eco-system peoples possess “a great deal of locality-specific knowledge of bio-diversity,” which “is significant to their lifestyle.”²⁷⁵ Gnanadason suggests that their “the intimate knowledge” of water bodies, species of fish and vegetation “should be tapped to feed into a wider process of diversity conservation.”²⁷⁶ She cites case studies done by ecologists which demonstrate how “the Dheever caste of the Bhandara district of Maharashtra never catch fish going upstream on spawning migration, although the fish are exhausted and easy to catch.”²⁷⁷ Likewise, “monkeys, peafowl, the banyan and fig trees and a variety of plants are regarded as sacred and are protected widely in many parts of India.”²⁷⁸ Other particular villages guard the safety of sacred groves and bodies of water, and others prohibit the disturbance of breeding birds.²⁷⁹

While India is her primary frame of reference, Gnanadason recognizes that traditions of prudence exist among poor women in other countries and cultures.²⁸⁰ She also shares Venezuelan Gladys Parentelli’s sentiment that Indigenous traditions “are not simply quaint, isolated habits.”²⁸¹ According to Gnanadason, these practices of women are rooted in their experiences of life-long struggles and resistance against environmental degradation, “situated in a wealth of myths, stories and religious practices from various Indigenous faith traditions and some from

²⁷⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3.

²⁷⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 3.

²⁷⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4.

²⁷⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4.

²⁷⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4.

²⁸⁰ She cites Ruether, *Women Healing Earth*.

²⁸¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 7. See Gladys Parentelli, “Latin America’s Poor Women: Inherent Guardians of Life,” in *Women Healing Earth*, 33.

interpretations and re-appropriations of an inherited Christianity,” illuminating the spiritual underpinnings of these practices.²⁸²

As noted earlier, Gnanadason is also careful not to romanticize Indigenous traditions. Applying a hermeneutic of suspicion, she affirms that “some cultural practices can be very oppressive and violent especially to women,” referring to situations in which “patriarchal power dominates in determining what cultural practices will define a community.”²⁸³ While acknowledging these aberrations, she primarily focuses on the positive attributes of marginalized Indigenous traditions of prudent care, including the practices outlined above and their deep spiritual connection to the earth.

In conjunction with an “ethic of care,” Gnanadason discusses at length how globalization issues associated with environmental degradation are beginning to make their way to the forefront of the WCC. She contends that this work challenges “churches to engage issues that normally do not come within their range of commitment,” and calls upon “feminist responses” to join in the WCC’s “political engagement for eco-justice.”²⁸⁴ Specifically, the women’s program associated with the WCC has worked toward compiling “women’s creative and practical survival strategies” to challenge globalization.²⁸⁵ This group has “built a global network of feminist economists and women’s groups from the churches” who “developed the concept of a caring economy,” which recognizes and values social reproduction as

²⁸² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 7.

²⁸³ Gnanadason, “We Have Spoken,” 20.

²⁸⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 69.

²⁸⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 69.

part of an economic system.²⁸⁶ Gnanadason does not discuss the practical impact of this initiative, but their work clearly exemplifies transnational discussion and action among feminists and ecofeminists from various disciplines. Likewise, she also discusses recent work of the WCC on developing “earth ethics” and mentions how, in 2003, “a small group of eco-feminist theologians” were asked to participate in further transnational conversation about the work of the WCC on these issues.²⁸⁷

In addition to the positive contribution outlined above, Gnanadason recognizes ongoing challenges within the ecumenical movement in regard to social justice initiatives. She notes how churches intent on preserving their particular interests are inhibited from committing to “common ecumenical positions.”²⁸⁸ As noted earlier, Christian and secular ecofeminists are not immune to these challenges.²⁸⁹

Overall, Gnanadason avers that the pressing “ecumenical task” is “an eco-feminist theology that responds to the traditions of prudence of peoples subjugated to lower social ranks and to the political resistance movements of women,”²⁹⁰ which her own theology attempts to accomplish. In addition to her approaches to theological anthropology and ethics, her ecofeminist theology helps to deepen our understanding of the relationship between spirituality and social action, as

²⁸⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 69.

²⁸⁷ See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 79. Due to the scope of this dissertation, I do not discuss her assessment of the WCC’s work here. See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 74-80.

²⁸⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 71.

²⁸⁹ Along these lines, Gnanadason differentiates between what she calls “socialist eco-feminists” and “liberal eco-feminists.” The first group promotes a “restructuring of the world order to make it more caring of the earth and its peoples,” including resisting neo-liberal development paradigms. The second group focuses on reforming globalization initiatives and systems from within, “calling for conventions and legal provisions to protect the earth and its resources,” Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 72.

²⁹⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 80.

exemplified by Indigenous women in India who participate in resistance movements against environmental degradation. We now turn to these connections.

Gnanadason's Ecofeminist Approach to Spirituality and Social Action

In the introductory paragraph to her final chapter of *Listen to the Women! Listen to the Earth!*, Gnanadason cites a poem written by an Indian, Indigenous activist which articulates a spiritual connection between humanity and Sal trees and a commitment to protect them. She observes how this poem captures the “deep spirituality that sustains the Indigenous Peoples of India and all over the world” and queries: “Is there something Christianity can learn from such a spiritual interdependence with the earth so that it too can become more earth-centered?”²⁹¹ Immediately following this question, she asks what can be reclaimed from within Christianity as well to accomplish this task.²⁹² This next section explores Gnanadason's inquiry by discussing her appropriation of (1) traditions of prudent care in world religions, (2) traditions of prudent care in Christianity, and (3) the relationship between spirituality and social action as constitutive dimensions of her ecofeminist theology.

World Religions and Traditions of Prudent Care

In addition to the biodiversity knowledge possessed by Indigenous peoples throughout India, Gnanadason describes some of the spiritual beliefs associated with their traditions of prudent care. For instance, some communities set aside

²⁹¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 81.

²⁹² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 81.

areas of protected forest land (“*sarna*”) believed to be inhabited by “spirits of the ancestors,” and often this land serves as a place for teenage initiation rites.²⁹³ In other places, “sacred groves are known as *devaranya* (God’s abode) or *nagaranya* (the abode of cobras). Here *peepal* and *mahua* trees (indigenous varieties) cannot be cut as they are considered to be the abodes of goddesses.”²⁹⁴ These brief examples demonstrate how Indigenous peoples recognize and respect a spiritual connection with the land that enjoins them to prudently care for the earth.

Along similar lines, the powerful role of the feminine possesses a long history in the spiritual life of many Indian communities. Gnanadason writes: “In pre-Aryan thought, nature was symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine *shakthi* (energy, power). *Prakriti* (nature) manifests this primordial energy from which women draw their *shakthi*. Concepts such as *Bhudevi* (Earth Goddess) and *Bhumata* (Mother Earth) that are used in people’s everyday language underline this.”²⁹⁵ Likewise, she asserts that Asian women discover God in this “*shakthi*, or spiritual energy.”²⁹⁶

Gnanadason notes that comparable ideas exist in other world religions. For instance, “Buddhist iconography gives form to the multiple sentient beings of the trees, the air, the waters, and the earth. Islam speaks of the earth as a Mother who needs periodic rest.”²⁹⁷ These concepts resonate with images, metaphors, and models of God that feminist and ecofeminist theologians seek to reclaim within the

²⁹³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 2.

²⁹⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 2.

²⁹⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 5.

²⁹⁶ Gnanadason, “A Spirituality that Sustains Us,” 32.

²⁹⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 6.

Christian tradition as well. However, Gnanadason does not engage or cite any specific sacred texts of Buddhism and Islam to support her claim.

Gnanadason also devotes attention to concepts within Hinduism that contribute to the development of traditions of prudent care. She cites political scientist O. P. Dwivedi's explanation of how "*dharmic ecology*" promotes an environmental model which encourages environmental preservation and "will not advance economic growth at the cost of greed, poverty, inequality and environmental degradation."²⁹⁸ In addition, she points out that "reverence for trees pervades Hindu literature. Laws for the protection of plants and trees can be found in ancient sacred Hindu texts."²⁹⁹ The belief that specific deities are connected with specific trees ensures their protection.³⁰⁰ In fact, she notes that "scientists assess that there are some 100,000 sacred groves in India that are being protected by communities and village government systems," with the majority "associated with female village deities."³⁰¹ Yet, she observes that the existence of female deities does not guarantee equality for women in these villages. Women face discrimination due to purity laws and are rare in number among priests who minister to these groves.³⁰²

Similarly, just as Gnanadason traces anthropocentrism in Christianity, she cites Anil Agarwal, founder of the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi,

²⁹⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4. O. P. Dwivedi, "Dharmic Ecology," in *Hinduism and Ecology*, eds. Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2000), 20.

²⁹⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 5.

³⁰⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 5.

³⁰¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4.

³⁰² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 4.

Inida, who presents similar critiques of expressions of Hinduism. She notes that Agarwal “describes the relationship of Hindus and the earth as a form of ‘utilitarian conservationism’ and not as ‘protectionist conservationism.’”³⁰³ Elaborating on this claim, he writes that Hindus “value and protect those features of nature that have gained significance within the ritual cycle of human flourishing.”³⁰⁴ Agarwal also explains that “*dharma*, or social responsibility, focuses first on oneself...The consequences of one’s behavior on others plays a secondary role; the primary concern is to do one’s own *dharma* for the sake of one’s own well-being.”³⁰⁵ As a case in point, he notes that tribal villages often have cleaner streets than those of an upper-caste neighborhood.³⁰⁶ Just as Gnanadason argues that aspects of Christianity can be reclaimed to become more of an “earth faith,” Agarwal states that the “vast reservoir of tenets, practices and beliefs” within Hinduism can be mined to reform civil society in India in order to respond to our global ecological crisis.³⁰⁷ These struggles reveal that challenges for encouraging social responsibility to the earth occur within more privileged communities in India as well as in first-world communities.

Gnanadason’s brief exploration of how religious traditions apart from Christianity influence traditions of prudent care both elucidates a deep spiritual connection with our natural environment and reveals challenges in maintaining environmental protection and care. Her inclusion of these aspects of other faith

³⁰³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 6. Anil Agarwal, “Can Hindu Beliefs and Values Help India Meet Its Ecological Crisis?” in *Hinduism and Ecology*, 172.

³⁰⁴ Agarwal, “Can Hindu Beliefs and Values Help India Meet Its Ecological Crisis?”, 172.

³⁰⁵ Agarwal, “Can Hindu Beliefs and Values Help India Meet Its Ecological Crisis?”, 172.

³⁰⁶ Agarwal, “Can Hindu Beliefs and Values Help India Meet Its Ecological Crisis?”, 173.

³⁰⁷ Agarwal, “Can Hindu Beliefs and Values Help India Meet Its Ecological Crisis?”, 178.

traditions also allows for possible connecting points for interreligious dialogue and action on environmental issues. She engages Indigenous traditions and Hinduism at more substantial levels than other world religions, and overall, her appropriation of world religions could be an area for further research.

Christianity and Traditions of Prudent Care

As noted earlier, Gnanadason strives to avoid romanticizing traditions of prudent care among Indigenous peoples and recognizes that the practice of these traditions does not apply universally. Yet, she still implores Christians to listen to their voices and learn from the ways in which they value a spiritual connection with the earth so as to become attuned to our responsibility to care for all of creation. In conjunction with her critiques, she affirms that Christianity “does contain the foundations for a liberatory ethic that would challenge all forms of oppression – for all of humanity and for the earth.”³⁰⁸ These foundations include reclaiming and expanding Biblical images of God, as discussed earlier, and, as I explore in this section, reinterpreting traditional definitions of grace which take into account traditions of prudent care.

Regarding the concept of prudence in the Bible, Gnanadason cites the brief mention of prudent people by the prophet Amos who implores them to work for social justice.³⁰⁹ She also points to the fact that Biblical women found “ways to resist death and affirm life and the truth” and can serve as sources of “power and

³⁰⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 35, 36.

³⁰⁹ She references Amos 5:11-15. Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 86.

strength” for women today.³¹⁰ However, she does not define or elaborate on the concept of prudence found in Amos, and she does not mention specific stories of women in the Bible.

Instead, Gnanadason frames her Christian appropriation of prudent care for the earth by reclaiming the Christian concept of grace. To accomplish this task, she argues that “traditional understandings” of grace need to be “deconstructed” in order to reveal “liberating possibilities” and then “reconstructed” through an ecofeminist hermeneutic.³¹¹ She begins her approach to this process by presenting several traditional definitions of grace in Christianity and briefly tracing the history of these definitions from the Bible to contemporary theology.³¹²

Some of the traditional definitions of grace outlined by Gnanadason include, “God’s mercy and power, God recovering individual persons from sin, while granting them new life,” and “God’s *free action* for the benefit of humanity.”³¹³ She highlights the fact that in Eastern theology the connection between grace and the Spirit is paramount.³¹⁴ Likewise, she acknowledges definitional debates throughout the Christian Church’s history between the East and the West, between Catholics and Protestants, and between members of the same ecclesial communities. From her perspective, this history of definitional discussions and debates about grace provides the background and opportunity for contemporary interpretations of grace that incorporate environmental concerns.³¹⁵

³¹⁰ Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” 80.

³¹¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 84.

³¹² See Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 84-91.

³¹³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 84.

³¹⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 84.

³¹⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 87.

For her own interpretation of grace, Gnanadason primarily builds upon the writings of liberation theologians who articulate grace within the context of “the struggles of the poor.”³¹⁶ Pointing out that both Gebara and Boff “speak of the ‘the earth as the new poor,’” she adds that “the rights attributed to the earth include the rights of *all* of humankind (not just some) to live and survive.”³¹⁷ Likewise, referencing Boff’s explication of “dis-grace,” Gnanadason asserts that we are faced with the challenge of “reinterpret[ing] grace to have meaning for us today in our world where we are *dis-graced* by the way we have lived with the earth.”³¹⁸ Embracing this challenge bears the possibility of opening ourselves to the grace “to become more earth caring” and to “[transform] Christianity into an earth faith.”³¹⁹ Indigenous women exemplify how the transformative power of this grace can move one to action for protection and care of our natural environment, which I discuss later in this chapter.

In addition to the sources cited above, Gnanadason draws from the works of feminist theologians Elsa Tamez, Rosetta Ross, and Sharon Welch to articulate her ecofeminist approach to grace, reiterating that an ecofeminist theology recognizes the interconnectedness between all of humanity and the earth. She argues that “grace can empower political action to ensure dignity to the earth. Grace signals the signature of the surprising and unexpected presence of God in the world – the indwelling of the divine in life and creation. God’s immanence is stressed.”³²⁰ For

³¹⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 87.

³¹⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 88.

³¹⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 88, 89. Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 4.

³¹⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 89.

³²⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 91.

Gnanadason, grace from an ecofeminist perspective is understood as “that which enables us to love the earth and to work for justice” for all humanity and all the earth.³²¹

This understanding of grace leads Gnanadason to appropriate Protestant theologian Jay McDaniel’s concepts of “green grace” and “red grace,” which focus on care of the earth, by giving these concepts “new meaning from an Indian eco-feminist theological perspective.”³²² She also adds a new category of “brown grace,” which comprises the traditions of prudent care of “eco-system peoples (Indigenous peoples and Dalits).”³²³ While Gnanadason does not offer much interpretative commentary on McDaniel’s green grace, she envisions red grace in several ways: as “an acknowledgement of the creativity and wisdom of women,” as a reclaiming of their motherhood, and as “standing for traditions of resistance” practiced by these women and their communities against harmful development paradigms.³²⁴ In particular, she points to the harm of violence against women and the earth

³²¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 91.

³²² Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 91, 92. McDaniel defines “green grace” as “the healing and wholeness that we find when we enjoy rich relations with plants, animals and the earth,” Jay McDaniel, “The Sacred Whole: An Ecumenical Protestant Approach,” in *The Greening of Faith: God, the Environment and the Good Life*, eds. John E. Carroll, Paul Brockelman, and Mary Westfall (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 115. “Red grace” is the experience of unconditional love of God through Christ’s death on the cross, and he considers “solidarity with the suffering in life, acceptance of our complicity in violence, and entering into the way of peacemaking” to be “forms of red grace” that he recognizes as “ways of being rooted in the Earth,” Jay B. McDaniel, *With Roots and Wings: Christianity in an Age of Ecology and Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995) 44.

³²³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 91.

³²⁴ Her interpretation of red grace also highlights the “creative flow of blood,” noting that “in Indian culture, blood is powerful symbol of fertility” which is celebrated by Indigenous women through various shrines. Conversely, red grace interpreted through her hermeneutic challenges harmful atonement theories that encourage women to accept violence as a way to unite with the suffering of Jesus on the cross, which she notes other feminist theologians critique as well. Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 93, 94.

expressed through “economic violence” and the Indigenous social movements that challenge this violence.³²⁵

According to Gnanadason, in the wisdom of these resistance movements lies “our hope for a sustainable future.”³²⁶ Referencing McFague, she writes that, for Christians, hope is grounded in Christ’s resurrection, “the first day of the new creation,” although, as McFague points out, it does not offer practical solutions for our environmental situation.³²⁷ Echoing McDaniel, Gnanadason writes that Christ’s resurrection also calls upon Christians to redirect their “creative energies” by living out their “responsibility to become healers” who work to redress environmental degradation.³²⁸

Related to Gnanadason’s reinterpretation of “red grace” is her conception of “brown grace.” She explains that brown grace “stands for the traditions of prudent care” of Indigenous peoples and others “who live in closest proximity to the earth and who give to the land its integrity.”³²⁹ Brown grace also “represents the courage, the grit, the hope that sustains” peoples who protest against development projects that harm the earth and their lives, naming the women of the Deomali Adivasi Mahila Society who shared their stories with her as examples.³³⁰ Gnanadason’s brown grace appears to share qualities that overlap with red grace. However, by defining these concepts through her Indian, ecofeminist hermeneutic, she

³²⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 93.

³²⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 93.

³²⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 93. Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 170.

³²⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 93. McDaniel, “The Sacred Whole,” 114.

³²⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 95.

³³⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 95.

emphatically stresses the connection between spirituality and social action, such as involvement in resistance movements.

Exploring the Relationship between Spirituality and Social Action

Gnanadason observes that traditions of prudence ground “women-centered movements of political struggles to protect the earth” and that environmental “movements of resistance” have existed throughout India’s history.³³¹ For instance, she notes that the tradition of prudence is “at the heart of” the 1970s Chipko movement in India, which was led primarily by Indigenous women.³³² She remarks that participants in the Chipko movement “used the only forms of resistance available to them; they clung to the trees defying the saws of the contractors.”³³³ As a result, the influence of Indigenous women spread beyond their own localities to other environmental movements in India, which continues today.³³⁴

Gnanadason’s interest in Indigenous resistance movements against environmental degradation in India pervades her writings from the 1980s through today. In one of her earlier articles she writes that the “still muted voices” of feminists who seek to reclaim traditions that reverence the interconnectedness between humanity and all creation remind us that “there are other possible categories for structuring the world and our relationships with nature; we need only to have the political and spiritual will to work them out.”³³⁵ She adds that “it is a

³³¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 9.

³³² Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 82.

³³³ Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 82.

³³⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 10. See her discussion of “women-centered movements of struggle” in Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 9-20.

³³⁵ Gnanadason, “Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” 79.

challenge coming out of women's lived experience, not only of weeping with nature for deliverance and freedom, but out of years of organized resistance against senseless destruction."³³⁶ The actions of these women also reflect their ability to transform their own suffering by collectively working to eradicate environmental injustices that gravely impact women and the earth.

Gnanadason draws specifically from her conversations with the Indigenous and Dalit women of the Deomali Mahila Society mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. These women "have organized themselves against the pressures of 'development,' social forestry which promotes 'foreign' tree varieties and mining operations, but also against the extra burdens they face in their families and community because they are women."³³⁷ While these women were unable to stop the industrial growth, they "brought the community together," continue to meet to discuss current issues and struggles, and work with men in their communities to "try to reclaim some of their values and to rebuild their lives."³³⁸ These activities include reintroducing traditional ways to their children and how to "live in harmony with each other and with creation," making and marketing local handicrafts, and working to "restore their traditional wisdom" of medicinal vegetation.³³⁹

Gnanadason reports additional positive strides these women are making, such as securing property rights, participating in local governance, and partnering with men in pursuing and deciding alternatives to government forestry programs that harm

³³⁶ Gnanadason, "Toward a Feminist Eco-Theology for India," 79.

³³⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 10.

³³⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 11.

³³⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 12.

the environment.³⁴⁰ These women demonstrate how they are able to claim their agency in the midst of their struggles.

Exemplifying Gnanadason's point about the relationship between Indigenous women and the earth, she documents a conversation with Narango Puri, a leader from the Deomali Advasi Mahila Association. She quotes Puri as saying "Life starts on the land for the woman, from the moment she is born...Earth is like our mother," and, although humans go through life and death, "the earth will never die, but this requires that we as women who also go through the same processes as birthing and caring for our children need to also nurture the earth."³⁴¹ This inclusion of one of the many voices of Indigenous women also reflects the way in which third-world women "do" theology, as outlined in the introduction to this dissertation.

With these experiences in mind, Gnanadason, suggests a "two-fold" transformation of our relationships with one another and the earth that is informed by Rasmussen's theology and ethics in order to respond to the environmental injustices facing our world today.³⁴² The first is to recognize the validity of the wisdom of traditions of prudent care practiced by eco-system peoples.³⁴³ She notes that the small group of ecofeminist theologians who met with the WCC in 2003 averred that future theological discourse "must be based on the documentation of 'experiences of alternative communities or the traditions of prudent care of

³⁴⁰ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 12.

³⁴¹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women*, 16, 108 25n.

³⁴² She writes: "Ecology as another derivative from *oikos* is the knowledge of life systems that is necessary for good home economics. *Oikos* members have the task of 'mutual up building of community' (St. Paul) or the *oikodomé*—which requires global citizenship and earth patriotism, with all the attendant duties of 'choosing life' (Deut. 30:19) and living in accordance with the choice," Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 104. See Gnanadason, "The Integrity of Creation," 117.

³⁴³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 104. See Gnanadason, "The Integrity of Creation," 117.

ecosystem peoples.”³⁴⁴ The second is that “faith communities” must be willing to “challenge” current environmental regulations and “dominant economic paradigms that sustain the destruction of the earth.”³⁴⁵ She charges faith communities with the “moral responsibility” to find sustainable alternatives.³⁴⁶ This two-fold transformation invites a deeper understanding of the link between Christian spirituality and social action.

Along these lines, Gnanadason points out that the WCC’s participation in the World Social Forum in recent years led to the exploration of “a *spirituality of resistance* as the theological basis for the search for alternatives” to environmental degradation.³⁴⁷ This spirituality requires a commitment by the Church and other faith communities to solidarity and social action with eco-system peoples, like the Indigenous women who practice traditions of prudent care.³⁴⁸ As quoted in the introduction to this dissertation, Gnanadason asserts: “The task is therefore before us to resist all forces, power and systems that reduce, deny or destroy life and to ‘embrace a politically engaged spirituality.’”³⁴⁹ She concludes her monograph with this challenge, without further explanation, leaving both the reader and theologians to flesh out the dimensions of this spirituality.

Gnanadason does offer glimpses of how a politically engaged, “spirituality of resistance” could be further developed from a Christian ecofeminist perspective. In another recent article, she writes that, for Asian women, “the spirituality for life that

³⁴⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 104. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 117.

³⁴⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 117.

³⁴⁶ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 118.

³⁴⁷ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 118.

³⁴⁸ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. See Gnanadason, “The Integrity of Creation,” 118.

³⁴⁹ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 105. See footnote 79n in this dissertation.

is at the heart of our struggles for justice and peace in a world of deep injustice and violence points us to the Asian/Indian Jesus who with compassion and passion empowers us to resist all that destroys us, our communities and our world.”³⁵⁰ From her perspective, Christians must return to the “liberating core of the gospel” and “become the Church of Jesus Christ in our world today, through our actions for healing and reconciliation between peoples of all faiths and in our commitment to overcome violence.”³⁵¹ As her ecofeminist theology demonstrates, this commitment to overcome violence includes violence against persons and all the earth. I discuss this concept more at length in chapters four and five.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we first explored how Gnanadason’s context profoundly shapes her approach to theology and the influence of contemporary Christian liberation and feminist theologies on the development of her ecofeminist hermeneutic. Then, we discussed her explication of the roots and implications of the theology of dominion, illuminating the link between violations against women and the earth. Next, we examined how her ecofeminist theology responds to the theology of dominion through her approaches to theological anthropology, ethics, and the relationship between spirituality and social action. We focused on how she explicates the relationship between the spirituality of Indigenous peoples and their care for the earth. In particular, she points to how their understanding of the

³⁵⁰ Gnanadason, “Jesus and the Asian Woman,” 176.

³⁵¹ Aruna Gnanadason, “Religion and Violence: A Challenge to the Unity of the Churches,” *Political Theology* 5 no. 1 (2004): 75.

interconnectedness between humanity and the earth compels Indigenous women to become involvement in social movements to protect the earth, expressing a “spirituality of resistance.” In order to engage Gnanadason’s ecofeminist theology with first-world, Catholic theology and to explore other ways to deepen our understanding of a spirituality of resistance informed by an ecofeminist approach, we now turn to the political theology of Johann B. Metz, specifically his concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity.

Chapter Three: Johann B. Metz's Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity

In the previous chapter, we explored how Aruna Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology responds to gender injustices related to environmental degradation, highlighting the relationship between spirituality and social action among Indigenous women in India. In a similar fashion, Johann B. Metz's political theology emerged in the 1960s in response to what he defines as three challenges to "neoscholastic" or "transcendental-idealist" theology: Marxism, Auschwitz, and the third world. He delineates these challenges as follows:

1. the Marxist challenge, or theology facing the end of its cognitive innocence and facing the end of a dualistic understanding of history; 2. the challenge of the catastrophe of Auschwitz, or theology confronted with the end of every subjectless, idealist system of meaning and identity; and 3. the challenge of the third world, or the challenge of a socially antagonistic and culturally polycentric world, theology at the end of Eurocentrism.³⁵²

He categorizes his theology as 'postidealist,' which he considers to be a "new paradigm" for theology that can more adequately engage these challenges.³⁵³

Metz remarks that his postidealist paradigm originated "as a corrective to situationless theologies, to all theologies that are idealistically closed-off systems or that continually barricade themselves behind theological systems."³⁵⁴ Whereas other approaches to theology shield themselves from practical realities, especially

³⁵² Metz continues: "I will refrain from pursuing whether and to what degree one can also speak of crises confronting modernity (which occur frequently today) in terms of these crises. For me the experience of these crises and my confrontation with them meant a certain shift in philosophical-theological background. I shifted from the transcendental Kant and from Heidegger to the Kant of the primacy of practical reason....," Johann B. Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," in *A Passion for God*, trans. and ed. with an introduction by J. Matthew Ashley, (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 33. These challenges are also referred to as "crises," "irruptions," or "interruptions."

³⁵³ Johann B. Metz, "The New Political Theology: The *Status Quaestionis*," in *A Passion for God*, 23.

³⁵⁴ Metz, "The New Political Theology: The *Status Quaestionis*," 23.

from the suffering of others, his postidealist, political theology intentionally examines Christianity's influence in society, including its role in the promotion of social justice.³⁵⁵ In particular, his disdain for what he sees as a Christianity that has sought to “evade the practical demands made by a radical Christianity” undergirds his theology.³⁵⁶

However, Metz clarifies that his theology is not a theology of politics. He explains that, from its very nascent stages, his political theology sought to cultivate “an awareness that theology and the church are never simply politically innocent,” which requires systematic theology “to take political implications into account” as one of its primary tasks.³⁵⁷ Metz also unequivocally distinguishes his thought from any association with Carl Schmitt's political theology.³⁵⁸ As stated in the introduction, this dissertation focuses on a particular aspect of Metz's theology, his concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity, which reflects his emphasis on theology's practical and political implications.

The emergence of the mystical-political dimension as a key concept of Metz's theology is exemplified in a 1998 collection of his more recent writings entitled, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, edited and

³⁵⁵ Metz writes: “This postidealist political paradigm for theology starts from the fact that the processes of the Enlightenment have led neither to the complete privatization of religion nor to the complete secularization of politics. Even politically enlightened societies have their political religions through which they try to legitimate and stabilize themselves. We see this, for example, in the form of *civil religion* in the United States and as *bourgeois religion* here. Clearly, both types of religion (which can in no way be equated, since they are from very different political cultures) serve to politicize religion, leading to its strict social functionalization. It is precisely this politicization of religion of religion that the new paradigm criticizes...,” Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 35.

³⁵⁶ Johann B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. and ed. J. Matthew Ashley, (New York: Crossroad, 2007), xi.

³⁵⁷ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 35.

³⁵⁸ Metz adds that “this is not because the political—as Carl Schmitt would say—is the totality, but rather because suspicion of theology and of religion has become total,” Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 35.

translated by Ashley. In Ashley's introduction to this compilation, he draws upon Friedrich von Hügel's model of "three elements" that comprise religion ("the historical, the intellectual and the experimental") in order to organize Metz's thought.³⁵⁹ Ashley also explains that Metz's "profound commitment" to grappling with the difficulties facing the Catholic Church and "the many ways [Metz] has tried to bring together the historical-institutional, intellectual and mystical-volitional (for [Metz], mystical-*political*) dimensions of Catholicism" are central to reading Metz.³⁶⁰

In addition, Ashley's monograph, *Interruptions* (1998), provides one of the most extensive and comprehensive organizations and analyses of Metz's thought. In particular, Ashley's chapter on Metz's "mystical-political structure" highlights how Metz's writings promote a deeper understanding of the relationship between spirituality and theology. Ashley notes that Metz "became explicit about the kind of spirituality that was proper to the 'mystical-political' correlation which is constitutive of Christianity" in his later essays.³⁶¹ Metz's experiences in Latin America coincided with his development of this dimension, and as Ashley explains, "the spiritual force which had been moving through his thought all along now emerged into full articulacy."³⁶² This shift gives evidence that Metz's personal encounters with base communities in Latin American and conversations with liberation theologians moved the challenge of the third world closer to the forefront of his theological discourse.

³⁵⁹ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 7.

³⁶⁰ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 8.

³⁶¹ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 57.

³⁶² Ashley affirms that "one must not underestimate the impact on Metz's work of new experiences in the last decade of his work: most powerfully his trips to Latin America," Ashley, *Interruptions*, 57. Ashley is referencing Metz's works from roughly 1985-1995.

By providing helpful strategies for appropriating Metz's works, Ashley also hints at one of the complexities in researching and analyzing Metz's theology: Metz's somewhat haphazard organization of thought.³⁶³ Even Metz's seminal work, *Faith in History and Society* (1977), is a collection of individual essays as opposed to a singular, streamlined, systematic work. Throughout his writings, Metz repeats and reiterates certain concepts and themes, but these ideas often need further definition due to inconsistencies in his terminology.

Along these lines, Ashley suggests that Metz's work can be "described in terms of a cluster of diverse elements which, like an astronomical cluster, has no one fixed star around which it revolves, but rather is constituted by the complex interactions between its many components."³⁶⁴ Using von Hügel's model, Ashley explains how Metz fleshes out his concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity in his later essays. Ashley describes this dimension in his own words as "the mysticism of suffering unto God that provokes and fructifies the political stance of hope and resistance and of the unceasing labor required to bring crucified peoples down from the cross."³⁶⁵ In addition, Ashley points out that this mysticism "defines for [Metz] the primordial, authentic way of being human in a world and church that lives inescapably after Auschwitz."³⁶⁶ This stance of hope and resistance could be expanded to include environmental justice for all the earth.

I am very much indebted to Ashley's synthesis of Metz's thought, especially the way in which Ashley's exposition of Metz's mystical-political component

³⁶³ See Ashley, *Interruptions*, 191-193.

³⁶⁴ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 8.

³⁶⁵ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 20.

³⁶⁶ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 14.

highlights Metz's "creativity fidelity" to the history of Christian spirituality and the Catholic intellectual tradition.³⁶⁷ In appropriating Metz's concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity for this dissertation, I focus on aspects of Metz's approach to mysticism that could be further developed from an ecofeminist perspective. This task requires reviewing the various ways in which Metz employs the term "mysticism" and his idea of the "mystical-political" to arrive at a working understanding of his mystical-political dimension. In doing so, I also explore components of this dimension that could be integrated with Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology in order to provide theological entry points for opening first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminist theology.

To accomplish this task, I flesh out specific aspects of Metz's concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity by mining his most recent works, primarily his essays in *A Passion for God*. My rationale for this way of proceeding is that Metz's mystical-political dimension factors more prominently in his later writings, as noted above. This narrower focus also helps to distill key elements for interfacing Metz and Gnanadason, which I discuss in my next chapter.

This current chapter is divided into four major sections. First, I briefly contextualize Metz's political theology, highlighting the impact of his own biography. Second, I discuss his appropriation of his "challenge of the Third World" and how it influenced the development of his thought. Next, I outline Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity, examining the influence of Karl Rahner,

³⁶⁷ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 16. While other scholars write on Metz's work, I focus on Ashley given that he the primary translator of Metz's works and writes on Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity, which is the aspect of Metz's theology I focus on for my dissertation.

S.J., the role of the apocalyptic, and Metz's interchangeable use of the terms "mysticism of suffering unto God" and "mysticism of open or opened eyes." I explore subsequently how the mystical-political dimension of Christianity relates to Christian social responsibility. Finally, I examine how Metz's mystical-political dimension engages religious and cultural pluralism, focusing especially on the connection to the promotion of social justice. In referring to the mystical-political, I use the terms "aspect" and "component" interchangeably with "dimension."

Contextualizing Metz: The Influence of his Autobiography

As evidenced by perusing Metz's writings, his social location and autobiography are germane to the development of his political theology, which he readily admits. Metz was born in 1928 in a small, rural Bavarian town in a predominantly Roman Catholic area of Germany. Much like other young men during this time period, he was drafted into the Nazi army as a sixteen year-old student. He recounts the effects of witnessing the "dead and empty faces" of his entire company upon returning from army headquarters on an errand in these words:

To this very day, all I can remember is a soundless cry. I suspect that all my childhood dreams, as well as what people call 'childlike trust,' disintegrated in that soundless cry. Subsequently, I did not take this experience and this memory to the psychologist but into the church, not to let myself be talked out of this experience and this memory but in order to believe and talk about God.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ Ekkehard Schuster and Reinhold Boschert-Kimmig, *Hope Against Hope*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 44. See Johann B. Metz, forward to *A Passion for God*, 1-2; Johann B. Metz, "Communicating a Dangerous Memory," in *Communicating a Dangerous Memory* (ed. Fred Lawrence, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 39.

This statement reflects his consistent interest in the memory of suffering and his ongoing attempt to relate the memory of suffering to theological discourse about God. In his forward to *A Passion for God*, he writes that “this biographical background shines through all my theological work, even to this day,”³⁶⁹ reiterating the profound influence of this personal experience of trauma on his theology.

Metz identifies this traumatic experience of war as a “dangerous memory” for him, which is a term he develops in *Faith in History and Society*. In this text he writes that dangerous memories are “memories in which earlier experiences flare up and unleash new dangerous insights for the present.”³⁷⁰ Elaborating on this definition, he explains,

For brief moments they illuminate, harshly and piercingly, the problematic character of things we made our peace with a long time ago and the banality of what we take to be ‘realism.’ They break through the canon of the ruling plausibility structures and take on a virtually subversive character. Memories of this sort are like dangerous and uncalculable [sic] visitations from the past. They are memories that one has to take into account, memories that have a future content, so to speak.³⁷¹

He connects these “dangerous memories” to the Christian tradition, contending that the consistent, ongoing task for Christian theology is “to speak about the God of Jesus by trying to make the connection between the Christian message and the contemporary world visible, and trying to articulate its tradition as an unrequited and dangerous memory in this world.”³⁷² In effect, Metz points to a connection between the dangerous memory of Christ and the dangerous memories of suffering

³⁶⁹Metz, “In Place of a Forward,” 2.

³⁷⁰ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 105. Ashley notes that Herbert Marcuse influenced Metz’s development of the category of “dangerous memories,” J. Matthew Ashley, introduction to *Faith in History and Society*, 18.

³⁷¹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 105.

³⁷² Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 88.

in the world that make demands upon Christians through their practice of discipleship.

Twenty years after the publication of *Faith in History and Society*, Metz repeatedly cites how his biography influenced his development of specific theological concepts. Affirming his point, he references the following examples: the centrality of memory, his relentless interest in “the apocalyptic metaphors of the history of faith,” his reservations about “an idealistically smoothed out eschatology,” and, of paramount importance to the entirety of his theology, “a specific sensitivity for theodicy, the question of God” as it relates to suffering in the world throughout history.³⁷³ Connected to the question of theodicy, Metz notes that, “the leitmotif of this biographical path is quite probably the *memoria passionis*, the remembrance of the suffering of others as a basic category of Christian discourse about God.”³⁷⁴ He also consistently returns to this theme of the memory of the suffering of others in his articulation of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity.

In regard to his theological discourse about God, Metz recognizes that he possesses the language but not answers for some of his questions, reflecting, “I have made them my own as a prayer: Why, God, suffering? Why sin? Why have you made no provision for evil?”³⁷⁵ His prayer manifests itself in a political theology that keeps the suffering of others central to our understanding of God, Church, faith, spirituality, theology, and Christian social responsibility. Although the suffering of

³⁷³ Metz, “In Place of a Forward,” 2. Ashley points out that “for Metz, theology as theodicy should never see its goal as ‘solving’ the question of suffering, but rather as sheltering it and clearing a space for it so irritate us, and thereby to move us to hope, to remembering the great deeds of God, to resistance, to action,” Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 18.

³⁷⁴ Metz, “In Place of a Forward,” 5.

³⁷⁵ Metz, “In Place of a Forward,” 5.

Auschwitz factors most prominently throughout all of Metz's writings, his later works deepen his understanding of and attention to the suffering of others in the third world.

Engaging Metz's "Challenge of the Third World"

Of the three challenges Metz's outlines, his "challenge of the Third World" is probably most relevant to this dissertation. He expresses that the third world "exposed the logos of theology to social suffering and misery," including the suffering of Western domination, and, as noted above, he credits his engagement with base communities in Latin America and conversations with his "friends in liberation theology" for shaping this understanding.³⁷⁶ Similarly, he maintains that the authority of those who suffer "is the only one in which the authority of the sovereign God is manifested in the world for all men and women."³⁷⁷ From his perspective, the institutional Church, too, must "always also represent, embody, and proclaim its own subordination to the undeniable authority of those who suffer."³⁷⁸ The universalism of this authority also impacts Metz's understanding of Christian social responsibility and, more broadly, his approach to social justice, which I discuss later in this chapter.

³⁷⁶ Metz, "In Place of a Forward," 4.

³⁷⁷ Metz, "In Place of a Forward," 4.

³⁷⁸ Johann B. Metz, "Under the Spell of Cultural Amnesia? An Example from Europe and Its Consequences," trans. by John K. Downey and Steven T. Ostovich, in *Missing God?* 10. See Metz's quote: "The Church too is not above, but under, the authority of those who suffer, the ones whom Jesus made the criteria at the world's judgment in the parable of the last judgment in the 'little apocalypse' of Matthew 25: 'Whatever you have done or have failed to do to the least....' No discourse and no hermeneutics can get around obedience to this authority. Neither can it be enciphered ecclesialogically. The criterion of this obedience can become practically *the* basis for a profound critique of the ways the Church conducts itself in the concrete," Johann B. Metz, "God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time," in *The End of Time?*, ed. Tiemo Rainer Peters and Claus Urban, English trans. and ed. J. Matthew Ashley, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 36.

In addition to stipulating this imperative for all people and especially the Church, Metz asks, “what does it mean for Catholic theology that the church no longer *has* a third-world church, but *is* more and more a third-world church with a constitutive history of origins in Europe?”³⁷⁹ He unequivocally answers his own question by responding that this reality requires that “the social conflicts in the world move to the center of ecclesial and theological awareness.”³⁸⁰ However, as he points out, political theology embraces the challenge of the third world “not only pastorally, but in a strictly theological sense, as a challenge to our discourse about God.”³⁸¹ Therefore, reflective of his practical, fundamental theology, he asserts that his theology engages the challenge of the third world on both intellectual and practical levels.

According to Metz, engaging in this type of theological discourse, “will direct our attention to a social and economic fault line in our world that cuts across the church itself: the so-called North-South conflict” so that “conditions that are absolutely contrary to the Gospel” become central to the Church’s “message.”³⁸² From his perspective, these conditions demand the development of “Christian discourse about God under categories of resistance and transformation,” whereby “theology, from its own logos, becomes political.”³⁸³ He lists the degradation of peoples, oppression, and racism as examples of these conditions that are contrary to

³⁷⁹ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 43.

³⁸⁰ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 43.

³⁸¹ Metz, “The New Political Theology,” 26.

³⁸² Metz, “The New Political Theology,” 27.

³⁸³ Metz, “The New Political Theology,” 27; Metz references these conditions as “directly contradictory to the Gospel” in another essay, stating that, as challenges to theology, they “demand the formulation of the faith in categories of transformation and of a resistance that is prepared to suffer,” Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 43.

the Gospel, but he makes no specific mention of gender inequalities or environmental injustices. However, Metz's suggestions of the development of "categories of resistance and transformation" bears resemblance to Gnanadason's "spirituality of resistance," which I explore in chapter four.

Metz clarifies that the type of transformation he advocates "must not lead to an apolitical romanticization, but should only remove from the processes of political change any basis for hatred and violence," although he does not clearly name specific processes or explain how this task would be accomplished.³⁸⁴ He does express his awareness of the difficulties with defining what he means by "political," referencing his first chapter of *Faith in History and Society*. In addition, he writes that theology "will always find itself in a precarious situation from an epistemic and epistemological perspective" when it depicts religion as "more than a postmodern religion of the psychological-aesthetic enchantment of souls" and maintains "discourse about God" rooted in the continuity of the Biblical tradition.³⁸⁵

Similarly, as part of his response to the challenge of the third world, Metz's political theology also acknowledges inculturation as a "new point of departure" in the Church.³⁸⁶ He writes that this approach promotes "a postidealist hermeneutical culture" of theological discourse that "strives to replace an anthropology guided by domination with an anthropology guided by acknowledgement and acceptance," that honors "the other as other," and that seeks to explore the presence of God

³⁸⁴ Metz, "The New Political Theology," 27.

³⁸⁵ Metz, "The New Political Theology," 28.

³⁸⁶ Metz, "The New Political Theology," 27.

within encounters of difference.³⁸⁷ His endorsement of a new starting point for theological anthropology resonates with Gnanadason's critique of a theology of dominion which operates as domination in Christian practice.

By recognizing the importance of the cultural and social diversity within the Church and theology, Metz insists that he is not suggesting the promotion of a "new, non-European monocentrism" or dismissing the history and ongoing role of Western Christianity.³⁸⁸ Regarding first-world, particularly European Christianity, he is deeply concerned with "*reciprocity* in the development of ecclesial and theological life."³⁸⁹ He argues that a postidealist paradigm, which his political theology reflects, cannot divide these two dimensions and presents two assertions to counter the tension between them. First, according to Metz, "European theology must reflect upon itself within the horizon of a *history of guilt*," and second, theology must engage the "the challenge posed by a *new beginning* in and from these poor churches of our world."³⁹⁰

Predicating his statement by cautioning against "neurotic self-accusation," Metz chastises the ways in which "we try to protect our ecclesial and political life from global contexts of dependency with a tactical provincialism."³⁹¹ He

³⁸⁷ Yet, in order to avoid falling into "a vague cultural relativism," he maintains that, "we cannot abandon the tension between the authenticity of these cultures and universality of reason, with the human rights that are grounded therein," Metz, "The New Political Theology," 27.

³⁸⁸ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 43.

³⁸⁹ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 44.

³⁹⁰ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 44.

³⁹¹ Metz appears to be referring to European Christians here. Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 44. In a later essay, Metz asks, "And if we in Europe think about Columbus at all during the quincentennial (1492-1992), do we not do so exclusively from our own perspective and in the light of our European interests? Is there not currently something like an intellectual [*geistige*] strategy for immunizing Europe, a tendency toward mental isolationism, a cult of new innocence in an attempt to withdraw ourselves from global challenges, a new variant of what I once

substantiates his claim by noting how use of the term “development” avoids recognizing the harm done by people in the first world to peoples in the third world.³⁹² Similar to Gnanadason, he traces the history of an “anthropology of domination” that informed colonization and Christian mission and asks the following questions:

Can we, do we want to, risk the change of perspective and see our lives as Christians, in the churches – at least for a moment - from the perspective of these faces? [The faces of the poor who have been subjected to Western ‘development’] Or do we experience and define ourselves exclusively with our backs to these faces? The temptation to do that is great and, unless I am mistaken, it is growing.³⁹³

Metz writes that these questions are relevant for both Europe and North America where there is a “mentality” that he defines as “‘everyday postmodernism’ of our hearts,” which turns away from the suffering in the third world as a form of “immunization” of first-world churches from the demands of our global community.³⁹⁴

In contrast, Metz argues that opening our eyes to the “global church will teach us to judge our history, too, with the eyes of our victims. Against the horizon of this experience our theology must become a politically sensitive theology of conversion and repentance.”³⁹⁵ While primarily directed toward European Christians, Metz’s line of thinking resonates with all first-world churches that insulate themselves from culpability through sins of omission or commission and

called ‘tactical provincialism’?,” Johann B. Metz, “A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today,” in *A Passion for God*, 168.

³⁹² Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 44.

³⁹³ Metz, “With the Eyes of a European Theologian,” 114 (see 116-117 for his discussion of European development).

³⁹⁴ Metz, “With the Eyes of a European Theologian,” 115.

³⁹⁵ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 44.

focus on development (and perhaps, one could include charitable activities as well) without examining the sources of social inequalities and injustices.

In regard to Metz's second assertion, one of the "impulses" of this new beginning called for by churches in the third world is "a new emphasis on the one, undivided discipleship. Nourished by the discipleship of the poor, homeless and obedient Jesus, there is a political spirituality with its preferential option for the poor."³⁹⁶ He emphasizes that "the one and divided following of Jesus always includes the mystical and the political (at least in the broader sense)."³⁹⁷ However, Metz does not clearly define these aspects in relation to this political spirituality.

That being said, Metz cites traditions within religious orders and "the new, always mystical-political experiences of suffering" in third-world base communities as expressions of mystical-political discipleship.³⁹⁸ Similarly, he suggests that embracing inculturation as a way forward would lead to a Church,

that is learning how to depict and call upon the grace of God as the integral liberation of human beings, is prepared to pay the price for this historical conjugation of grace and freedom, and is prepared to take on the experience of grace and of the Spirit as an experience of resistance and of suffering.³⁹⁹

Overall, he appears to be linking the mystical-political with the suffering of others, particularly the poor, (mystical) and social action (political), respectively, but he

³⁹⁶ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 44.

³⁹⁷ In his footnote to this statement, Metz cites his explication of a "discipleship Christology" in his work, *Followers of Christ*. He adds that "it is legitimate and extremely important today to bring into the foreground the synoptic way of believing, in which faith and discipleship are used more or less synonymously," Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 44, 187.

³⁹⁸ He refers to these traditions as "traditions of this dangerous Jesus in the history of religious orders," 45. Later on in this essay, Metz writes that "it is dangerous to be close to Jesus, it threatens to set us afire, to consume us. And only in the face of this danger does the vision of the Kingdom of God that has come near in him light up," 47. Likewise, the discipleship stories in the New Testament "are stories in the face of danger, dangerous stories. They do not invite one just to ponder, but to follow, and only in risking this Way do they manifest their saving mystery," Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 48.

³⁹⁹ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 46.

offers no explicit explication of this apparent connection. However, his approach to the third world and inculturation suggests that the Church must move to a practice that is willing to risk suffering and engage in resistance against actions that would further victimize humanity. I discuss this link further in the next section.

Despite strongly advocating his own approach, Metz is also cognizant of the theological climate in which his postidealist paradigm emerges. In particular, he points to the tensions within the Catholic Church related to competing visions of the implementation of the Second Vatican Council,⁴⁰⁰ which continue to marginalize liberation theologies, including feminist theologies, today. As a key aspect of Metz's political theology, the mystical-political dimension of Christianity engages these tensions and the challenge of the third world, as outlined above.

Articulating Metz's Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity

As acknowledged earlier, various ideas and definitions of mysticism and spirituality exist in Christianity alone. Therefore, exploring the influences which shape Metz's appropriation of a classic Christian concept is helpful. In addition, some of his more recent essays, primarily published during the 1990s, reveal different emphases in his exposition of the mystical-political dimension.

The different emphases which shape particular works are evidenced in essays such as, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology" (1985) and "With the Eyes of a European Theologian" (1990). In these texts Metz draws connections between the challenge of a global church, including the suffering of peoples in the third world,

⁴⁰⁰ See Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 46-47.

and the mysticism of open eyes necessary for first-world Christians and Christian theology to acknowledge the history of colonization and its effects. Whereas, in his essays entitled, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds: Notes Toward a Theological and Political Program” (1997) and “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time” (1999), Metz mentions strains of mysticism in other world religions, particularly Judaism and Buddhism. He also briefly suggests practical applications of a mysticism of open eyes. In order to adequately engage these developments in his articulation of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity, we first turn to a 1991 essay, “A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today,” based on a talk he gave to superiors of German religious orders in 1990.

In this essay, Metz presents one of his clearest explanations of the mystical-political dimension within which he identifies broader concerns facing Christians in a post-modern world.⁴⁰¹ To illustrate this key concept, Metz situates the mystical-political dimension within the context of the Beatitudes, although he does not specify which Gospel version he paraphrases and explicates. He considers the Beatitudes to be “something like guides into the passion for God in the dual sense of the word passion: as ardor for God and as an avowed suffering unto God.”⁴⁰² To expound upon his claim, Metz focuses on three specific Beatitudes: blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

⁴⁰¹ Metz writes that “what is really at stake is a fundamental theme of Christianity: a passion for God that encompasses the suffering and passion of those who will not let themselves be dissuaded from God, even when the rest of the world already believes that religion does not need God anymore.” In light of the state of Christianity in the world (Christianity being viewed as “radically problematic”), “the distinction between Christians in religious life and ordinary Christians should be considered a secondary one,” Metz, “A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today,” 151.

⁴⁰² Metz, “A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today,” 157.

In Metz's exposition of "blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice," he fleshes out how the mystical-political dimension is connected to social justice. This Beatitude confirms for Metz that the "universal justice of God," not only applies to all the living but the dead as well and "to suffering present and past."⁴⁰³ With this understanding in mind, he explicates the connection between the mystical and the political:

Passionate interest in this undivided justice of God is a constitutive part of witnessing to God. It is at the same time mystical and political: mystical, because it does not give up its interest in the salvation of past, unreconciled suffering; political, because it is precisely this interest in universal justice that continually commits it to justice among the living.⁴⁰⁴

In addition, Metz avers that "Christian witnessing to God is guided through and through by political spirituality, a political mysticism. Not a mysticism of political power and political domination, but rather—to speak metaphorically—a mysticism of open or opened eyes."⁴⁰⁵ He emphasizes that Jesus taught this mysticism of open eyes.

Regarding its practical component, this mysticism Metz describes, makes invisible suffering visible, "pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it, for the sake of a God who is a friend to human beings."⁴⁰⁶ From his perspective, Christians from the first-world often fail to practice this mysticism of open eyes. Instead of recognizing the eyes as "organs of grace," Metz suggests that, "when it comes to God and salvation, of course, we are only too glad to put our money on what is invisible

⁴⁰³ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 162.

⁴⁰⁴ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 162.

⁴⁰⁵ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 162.

⁴⁰⁶ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 163.

and imperceptible, on invisible grace,"⁴⁰⁷ as opposed to the visible grace which helps us recognize and attend to the suffering of others.

Similarly, from Metz's perspective, in contrast to a mysticism of closed eyes, "Jesus insisted on visibility and on the obligation to perceive," which he asserts is evidenced in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel.⁴⁰⁸ Returning to earlier themes in his theology, he reiterates that,

Such witnessing to God is not allowed political innocence. In the end, witness is intimately involved, with eyes that see, in that history where people are crucified and tortured, hated and miserly loved; and no mythos far-removed from history, no world-blind gnosis, can give it back the innocence that is lost in such an historical trial.⁴⁰⁹

Metz avows that, first and foremost, the God of Jesus is concerned with how we conduct ourselves in relation to others, and he avers that this is the only way to "know" our thoughts about and how we understand God.⁴¹⁰ He also insists that "the moral implication, adopted by Christianity and proclaimed in its message of the indivisible unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor, is this: There is no suffering that does not concern us," which shapes his appropriation of Christian social responsibility.⁴¹¹

This explication of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity suggests that it entails the practice of a spirituality in which our eyes are open to the suffering of others around us, recognizing and taking responsibility for how we

⁴⁰⁷ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 163.

⁴⁰⁸ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 163.

⁴⁰⁹ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 163.

⁴¹⁰ Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 163.

⁴¹¹ Metz, "Under the Spell of Cultural Amnesia?," 10. Metz acknowledges that the phrase "there is no suffering that does not concern us" is from Peter Rottländer," Johann B. Metz, notes to "Theology and the University," in *A Passion for God*, 196, 1n. He repeats this phrase in Johann B. Metz, "Monotheism and Democracy: Religion and Politics on Modernity's Ground," in *A Passion for God*, 145, citing Rottländer in the footnotes. This essay is a version of a 1995 lecture.

contribute to their suffering. Likewise, the mystical-political dimension insists that we honor the suffering of those who have gone before us through remembrance of their suffering. Thus, opening our eyes to the suffering of others shapes our discourse about God and our Christian responsibility (rooted in the Gospel) and calls us to work toward justice for all in our world today. The corporate aspect of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity also compels the Church as an institution to follow these demands of discipleship. I discuss the connection between the mystical-political and discipleship further in my section on Christian social responsibility. In the following sub-sections, I explore the influence of Karl Rahner, the role of the apocalyptic, and the connection between a mysticism of suffering and a mysticism of open or opened eyes.

Rahnerian Influence

Metz acknowledges that his thought is profoundly influenced by his teacher, Karl Rahner.⁴¹² Other dissertations and works have explored the relationship between their theologies, including Ashley's *Interruptions*, and I do not intend to repeat this study here but instead provide a brief understanding of the link between their theological approaches that recognizes Rahner's influence on Metz's theology. Metz observes that, "Rahner's theology is in some measure the mystical biography of the ordinary, the average Christian person....," and he finds Rahner's

⁴¹² Metz writes: "In my opinion, Rahner's life work has succeeded in bringing together what has long been separated, indeed set at variance: his work has brought to an end the schism between theology and life history; it has related doctrine and life, the mystical and the everyday, in the context of the irreducible complexity and anonymity of our postmodern situation," Johann B. Metz, "Do We Miss Karl Rahner?," in *A Passion for God*, 103.

“unpretentious” approach to be “exemplary,” especially for other “ordinary” Christians.⁴¹³ In contrast with a hierarchical transmission of faith, Metz reasons that Rahner’s method “worked because it was an invitation to a journey of discovery into the virtually uncharted territory of one’s own life.”⁴¹⁴ Though profoundly regarded as an erudite academician, Rahner never lost sight of the importance of the mysticism of everyday life, giving credence to one’s own spiritual journey and the practical dimensions of faith.

Along these lines, Ashley highlights the fact that Metz adopted Rahner’s starting point for theology. Ashley writes that Metz “was one of the first to express explicitly the further claim that this includes showing how spirituality or mysticism has an inherent and inalienable correlation with political commitment and action.”⁴¹⁵ Yet, Ashley also differentiates Metz’s mysticism from Rahner’s apophatic focus. He describes Metz’s spirituality as “much more engaged or irritated by the presence of evil in creation, as well as by the lack of (or perhaps better, by the still outstanding) response on the part of God.”⁴¹⁶ Similar to Ashley, I speculate that the biographies of Rahner and Metz may have contributed to the differences in their approaches.

⁴¹³ Metz continues: “...it is the attempt to spell out, in the canon of doctrines, a Christian life without great transformations and turning points, without special illuminations and conversions: in short, it is the biographical theology of an expressly antibiographical type,” Metz, “Do We Miss Karl Rahner?,” 103; Metz, “Do We Miss Karl Rahner?,” 104.

⁴¹⁴ From Metz’s perspective, “such a confluence of the world of faith and the world of life, of the mystical and the profane everyday, can less and less be prefabricated by the individual theologian. New places and new subjects for the theological endeavor must come to the fore, if this reconciliation of doctrine and life is to succeed in the future,” Metz, “Do We Miss Karl Rahner?,” 104.

⁴¹⁵ Ashley, *Interruptions*, x.

⁴¹⁶ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 14.

Rahner involved himself in parish work while he was a scholar, and he did not have a first-hand experience of being a soldier. In addition, the Ignatian principle of “finding God in all things” is reflected in an underlying optimism in Rahner’s theology. Metz, on the other hand, is haunted by his traumatic experience of war, which never seems to escape him or his theology, as noted earlier.⁴¹⁷ No theological response to suffering mitigates the lamentation in his theology, nor does he seek to “soothe” this suffering, as I discuss in the next section.

Rahner does not avoid the question of suffering, but it plays a more of a primary role in Metz’s theology. Metz proposes that central to the Christian response to suffering is never to allow the memories of the suffering of others to fade into an amnesia that forgets the past harm inflicted upon humanity by other human persons and our capacity for committing future harmful acts. This mystical remembrance of the reality of suffering, to use Underhill’s words, impels us to act, to work for universal justice for all people that preserves their integrity as persons, as women and men created in the image and likeness of God.

Despite differences in their theologies and their biographical experiences, throughout his writings Metz remains indebted to Rahner, consistently citing his influence. Metz writes: “Rahner already belongs among those classic theologians whom you continue to welcome as teachers, even when you think that you have to

⁴¹⁷ Ashley argues that Metz’s approach to mysticism reflects a tacit appropriation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ashley writes that “Rahner was too good a Jesuit not to hear the voice of the third week in the work of his student. Metz, for his part, never denied the importance of the hope and confidence engendered by the resurrection and the sense of God’s presence in all things,” Ashley, *A Passion for God*, 17.

disagree with them.”⁴¹⁸ One point of departure from Rahner’s theology includes the prominence and appropriation of the apocalyptic in Metz’s theology.

The Role of the “Apocalyptic”

Similar to how the words of the Dalit student continue to haunt Gnanadason, memories of war continue to haunt Metz, as mentioned above. Ashley purports that these memories contribute to Metz’s attention to apocalyptic spirituality and inclined him “to this form of experiencing God’s presence.”⁴¹⁹ Along these lines, Ashley proposes that Metz’s approach follows historical figures in apocalyptic spirituality including “Thomas Müntzer and Joachim of Fiore, and finally—as Metz avers—to the biblical figure of Job,” which develops Metz’s understanding of a mysticism of suffering unto God.⁴²⁰

Defining Metz’s understanding of the apocalyptic is not an easy task. He notes that the apocalyptic “is to a certain degree the hem of my theological approach,” admitting that his approach to this concept has been somewhat inconsistent.⁴²¹ He also points out how “the apocalyptic” has been “repressed and forgotten” today, as evidenced “in the ways it is used (even by theologians and preachers) as a free-floating metaphor easily projected onto the current fears of catastrophe, onto the fear of nuclear self-annihilation.”⁴²² In contrast to this understanding, he engages the apocalyptic in relation to time and questions of theodicy.

⁴¹⁸ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 33.

⁴¹⁹ Ashley, *Interruptions*, xii.

⁴²⁰ Ashley, introduction to *A Passion for God*, 14.

⁴²¹ Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 47.

⁴²² Metz, “On the Way to a Postidealist Theology,” 47.

From Metz's perspective, apocalyptic images challenge a Christianity that is "easy to bear" and practiced by one "who drifts ever more helplessly into the twilight of banality and into the long, drawn out death of boredom."⁴²³ Beyond the fear of catastrophe, he suggests that "there is a fear—more deeply rooted—that nothing comes to an end anymore," and "what has recently been named the cynicism of modernity is also fed by this secret fear of timeless time."⁴²⁴ Metz argues that the apocalyptic texts "do not contain idle speculations about the exact point in time of some catastrophe, but vivid commentaries on the catastrophic essence of time itself," despite the presence of eschatological images.⁴²⁵

Relating the apocalyptic and suffering, Metz cites contemporary theologians who have focused on the "the suffering God, suffering between God and God, and suffering in God."⁴²⁶ However, he rejects this approach, writing: "What I see in these worthy attempts is *too much* of a response, soothing the eschatological question of God."⁴²⁷ Moreover, he perceives the idea of a suffering God to be "a sublime duplication of human suffering and human powerlessness" and points out that discussion of "suffering between God and God" results in an "externalization of suffering."⁴²⁸ Rather, Metz reiterates, "the mysticism of the apocalyptically inspired traditions is at heart a mysticism of open eyes, a mysticism of an unconditional

⁴²³ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 49, 50.

⁴²⁴ Metz writes: "This is the cult of apathy, withdrawal from the danger zones of historical and political responsibility, the clever and adaptational skills of making one inconspicuous, of compartmentalized thinking, living life in discrete little pieces: a mentality, finally that can turn us into voyeurs of our own dissolution. For me these are the symptoms of a widespread weariness with history in late modernity," Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 51.

⁴²⁵ Metz, "On the Way to a Postidealist Theology," 52.

⁴²⁶ Johann B. Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?," in *A Passion for God*, 69.

⁴²⁷ Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?," 69.

⁴²⁸ Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?," 70. See Metz's statement that "even Christian hope remains accountable to an apocalyptic conscience," Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?," 71.

obligation to feel the suffering of others.”⁴²⁹ This claim underscores his attention to the connection between his understanding of the apocalyptic and his concept of a mysticism of suffering unto God, of open or opened eyes, which I discuss in the next sub-section.

The Mysticism of “Suffering unto God,” of “Open or Opened Eyes”

Throughout his writings, Metz quite often uses the terms “mysticism of suffering unto God” and “mysticism of open or opened eyes” interchangeably. As evidenced in this current exploration of his mystical-political dimension, his idea of a mysticism of suffering unto God or of open or opened eyes is a theme that pervades his theology as a whole, revealing the prominence of the theodicy question in his work. To elucidate his understanding of these concepts, he repeatedly draws from Israel’s experience of suffering in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Metz identifies Israel’s “poverty of spirit” as its “inability to let itself be consoled by myths and ideas” and its questioning cries to God in the face of suffering.⁴³⁰ Expounding on this idea, Metz asserts that “poverty of spirit is the foundation of any biblical discourse on God. It also separates biblically-inspired mysticism from that mythos which, for its part, knows only answers, but no disturbing questions.”⁴³¹ He depicts this type of mysticism with its “uneasy”

⁴²⁹ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 41.

⁴³⁰ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 66.

⁴³¹ Metz writes: “It is found particularly in Israel’s prayer traditions: in the Psalms, in Job, in Lamentations, and last but not least in many passages in the prophetic books. This language of prayer is itself a language of suffering, a language of crisis, a language of affliction and of radical danger, a language of complaint and grievance, a language of crying out and, literally, of the grumbling of the children of Israel,” Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 66.

questions as a “mysticism of suffering unto God.”⁴³² The language of “passionate questions from the midst of suffering” directed toward God contrasts with the language of a search for “consoling answers” he recognizes in other theological approaches to suffering.⁴³³

Metz further explains that the language of the mystics of the Hebrew Scriptures embraces “fear, mourning and pain,” and that “it is less a song of the soul, more a loud crying out from the depths—and not a vague, undirected wailing, but a focused crying-out-to.”⁴³⁴ He also finds continuity in the Biblical tradition between these cries of the Hebrew mystics and Jesus’ “cry from the cross,” which he understands as both a “suffering unto God” and “the cry of one forsaken by God, who for his part had never forsaken God. It is this that points inexorably into Jesus’ God-mysticism: he holds firmly to the Godhead.”⁴³⁵ This explanation reiterates that in the face of Jesus’ suffering and through his cries of forsakenness, he maintained a steadfast trust in God, who is beyond and greater than all suffering. However, this understanding of Jesus’ God-mysticism calls for further commentary on how this mysticism relates to Metz’s appropriation of Christology and Trinitarian theology. Due to the scope of this dissertation, I will not engage this task.

Along these lines, Metz develops links between Christian mysticism, suffering unto God, and a mysticism of open eyes. As stated earlier, according to Metz, Christian mysticism, rooted in the Biblical tradition, “is to be understood as a mysticism of suffering unto God,” and “is not really a mysticism of closed eyes, but

⁴³² Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 66.

⁴³³ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 67.

⁴³⁴ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 67.

⁴³⁵ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 67.

an open-eyed mysticism that obligates us to perceive more acutely the suffering of others.”⁴³⁶ Practice of this mysticism entails the passionate questioning related to suffering described above, which helps us “find true consolation.”⁴³⁷ The kind of consolation to which Metz is referring is atypical from commonly held Christian understandings of consolation as experiencing joy and peace, which can include a sense of peace even in the face of suffering.

Metz recognizes possible objections to his conception of consolation in relation to mysticism. He rhetorically asks: “Does not the biblical God want above all to be consolation for those who have collapsed in suffering, reassurance for those who are driven by the anxiety of existence?”⁴³⁸ In response, he avers that we often misunderstand the Biblical meaning of consolation. From his perspective, consolation is not about happiness, relieving anxieties, or answering our questions. Pointing to Jesus’ discourse on prayer to his disciples in Luke’s Gospel, he asserts that the purpose of religion and of its prayers is “to ask God for God,” and, likewise, “strictly speaking, he [God] has promised no other consolation.”⁴³⁹ While Metz’s mysticism of suffering unto God or of open or opened eyes is both Biblically-based and Christological, he also attempts to relate the mystical-political dimension of Christianity to mysticism in other religions, which I discuss later in this chapter. What immediately follows is my discussion of the relationship between the mystical-political dimension and Christian social responsibility.

⁴³⁶ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 68.

⁴³⁷ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 69.

⁴³⁸ Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 68.

⁴³⁹ Metz specifically cites Luke 11:1-13 “esp. vv. 11, 13,” Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?,” 68.

The Mystical-Political Dimension and Christian Social Responsibility

According to Metz's articulation of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity, the ability to perceive and respond to the suffering of others, both living and dead, compels us to respond with social and political compassion to work for social justice in our global community. His claim applies to "ordinary" Christians, religious leaders, theologians, and professed religious. For the most part, the mystical-political dimension of Christianity appears to primarily challenge first-world, privileged Christians to practice a mysticism of open eyes. Practice of this mysticism allows for the naming of the social sin of which we are a part, whether implicitly or explicitly, and committing ourselves to the promotion of universal justice, bearing in mind the axiom quoted earlier that we are compelled to be concerned with the suffering of others in the world.

In Metz's more recent works, he consistently argues that eschatology, not ethics, grounds Christianity's responsibility to attend to the suffering of others, and he avers that this task must include the first-world Church acting in solidarity with poor churches in the third world.⁴⁴⁰ In other words, the Church practices the practical dimensions of responding to the suffering of others from a place of hope and resistance. He asserts that the "burden" and "greatness" of being rooted in our

⁴⁴⁰ Metz states that "the European church must not allow itself, in a quasi-postmodern way, to be talked out of its standards or allow them to be whittled down under the pressure of circumstances. It may not remove itself from the tension between the mystical and political into an ahistorical, mythological mentality. To be sure, the church is not primarily a moral institution, but rather the bearer of hope, and its theology is not primarily an ethics, but rather an eschatology. Yet precisely therein lies the root of its power, even in powerlessness, not to surrender its standards of responsibility and solidarity, not to consign the preferential option for the poor simply to the poor churches alone," Metz, "A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today," 170. See Metz, "Theology and the University," 134.

belief in God calls upon us to engage “the social and political life of others” by challenging any foundation built on hatred and violence.⁴⁴¹

Likewise, Metz’s understanding of the Christian response to suffering is rooted in his approach to theological anthropology, particularly his understanding of sin and grace. He notes that “the biblical traditions know a particular type of universal responsibility,” which, contrary to mainstream theological approaches, is “not primarily directed toward the universalism of sin and failure, but rather toward the universalism of suffering in the world.”⁴⁴² As Metz observes, “Jesus didn’t look first to the sin of others but to the suffering of others. To him sin was above all a refusal to participate in the suffering of others, a refusal to see beyond one’s own history of suffering.”⁴⁴³ In light of the fact that the Christian community originated as “a community of memory and narrative in imitation of Jesus,” its primary task was to attend to “the suffering of others.”⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, for Metz, sin is to close one’s eyes to the suffering of our neighbors. This appropriation of sin contrasts with his understanding of the eyes as organs of grace, discussed earlier in this chapter, in which we open our eyes, and really our hearts, to the visible grace to see and respond to the suffering of others.

Pointing toward Jesus’ commands of loving one’s enemies and the inseparable connection between love of God and love of neighbor, Metz writes that “the parables of Jesus have captured the human memory in a special way,” most

⁴⁴¹ Metz, “A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today,” 170.

⁴⁴² Johann B. Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds: Notes Toward a Theological and Political Program,” trans. John Downey and Heiko Wiggers, *Cross Currents* 49, no. 2 (1999): 230.

⁴⁴³ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

⁴⁴⁴ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

notably, through the parable of the Good Samaritan.⁴⁴⁵ Metz suggests that we reframe the common question derived from this parable of “who is my neighbor?” for our contemporary context in this way: “For whom am I responsible? For whom am I to care?”⁴⁴⁶ The answer to these questions is far from limited to the persons within our small circle of people with whom we associate. Rather, “the criterion for its degree and scope is and remains the suffering of the other,” as demonstrated by the story of the Good Samaritan.⁴⁴⁷

This approach to sin and social responsibility articulated by Metz also has implications for our discourse about God. Metz states that “people who use ‘God’ the way Jesus does accept the violation of their own personal preconceived certainties by the misfortune of others. To speak of this God means to speak of the suffering of the stranger and to lament responsibility neglected and solidarity denied.”⁴⁴⁸ He also admits that “we certainly need to be more precise about all this, more exact in defining those who suffer as innocent, as suffering unjustly.”⁴⁴⁹ However, once again citing the Parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), Metz argues that, for him, the authority of those who suffer, “manifests the authority of the judging God in the world for all humanity. The moral conscience is formed by obedience to this authority, and what we call the voice of conscience is our reaction when the suffering of the other strikes home.”⁴⁵⁰ Metz expounds on the relationship between conscience formation and the suffering of others by exploring how this could lead to

⁴⁴⁵ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

⁴⁴⁶ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

⁴⁴⁷ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

⁴⁴⁸ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 230.

⁴⁴⁹ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 233.

⁴⁵⁰ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 233.

connections with other religious traditions and politics as well, which we now discuss.

The Mystical-Political Dimension and Religious Pluralism

Metz appears to imply that, while the mystical-political dimension of Christianity is rooted in a Biblical-mysticism modeled after Jesus' encounter with the "other" who suffers, the concept of the mystical-political bears the possibility of transcending theological differences across religious traditions. In fact, as I discuss below, Metz encourages people of all religious persuasions to move beyond the confines of their own theological parameters and to recognize the suffering of others in order to influence political life in a way that promotes a social and political compassion that leads to social justice. In this section I explore how Metz engages mysticism in other religious traditions and the way in which he imagines how interreligious dialogue could positively contribute to politics, peace, and the promotion of human rights.

While the memory of others' suffering is central to the mystical-political dimension of Christianity, Metz insists that this memory can be the criterion for religious and cultural dialogue as well. More specifically, he asserts that "the criterion for truth in this dialogue is bringing the suffering of others to expression."⁴⁵¹ He argues the accompanying narratives formed from this memory "can prove their power for inter-religious and inter-cultural communication by bringing to expression the diverse histories of suffering in the world," such as a

⁴⁵¹ Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds," 235.

dialogue that engages the Bible and “the ethics of compassion found in Asian religions.”⁴⁵² However, he does not list specific texts from Asian religions or elaborate on the ethics to which he is referring.

Along these lines, Metz observes that “all of humanity’s great religions are focused around a mysticism of suffering.”⁴⁵³ He reasons that this mysticism of suffering would serve as the foundation for a “coalition of religions” whose task it would be “to save and promote social and political compassion in our world.”⁴⁵⁴ In the words of Robert Bellah, this mysticism fosters “habits of the heart” that instill the compassion to which we all are called, according to Metz.⁴⁵⁵

To address this task from a place of “theological honesty,” Metz explores how Christianity and Buddhism approach the suffering of others in relation to a mysticism of suffering.⁴⁵⁶ He offers interesting comparisons between monotheistic religions and Buddhism, and Jesus and Buddha, despite the lack of modifiers relating to specific religions and strains of Buddhism. Returning to a familiar theme, Metz reiterates the importance of understanding the differences between monotheistic and Buddhist traditions. He writes:

On the one hand we have the mysticism of suffering in the biblical-monotheistic traditions, with their apocalyptic background. On the other, we have the mysticisms of suffering from the Far East, especially in the Buddhist traditions, which are also winning more and more adherents in the West after the proclamation of the ‘death of God’ and against the horizon of eternalized time, time without a finale. For in the end, Buddhism knows of

⁴⁵² Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 235.

⁴⁵³ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40.

⁴⁵⁴ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40.

⁴⁵⁵ Metz references the influence of Robert Bellah’s *Habits of the Heart* on “the American communitarianism debate” in Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 139.

⁴⁵⁶ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40. See Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 235.

nothing that corresponds even in a rough way to the thinking about the end times that has its roots in the Bible.⁴⁵⁷

His perception of differences between these religious traditions on conceptualizing the mysticism of suffering carries also over to his assertion about the discrepancy between the responses of the Buddha and Jesus to suffering.

Metz points out that an examination of “Buddhism’s foundational legends” reveals the transformational effect of others’ suffering on the Buddha.⁴⁵⁸ Despite this impact, he contends that, “in the end he [the Buddha] fled into the royal place of his interior, in order to find a mysticism of closed eyes, that landscape which is immune from all suffering and from the provocation of bounded time.”⁴⁵⁹

Conversely, he maintains that Jesus’ mysticism of open eyes “cannot lift itself up out of the landscape of suffering, its mysticism ends up in an apocalyptic cry.”⁴⁶⁰ Metz seems to suggest, from his understanding of Buddhism, that it does not connect individual contemplation with social action in a way that is apparent in Christianity. Likewise, his analysis of mysticism in Buddhism bears similarities to his critique of Christians who practice a mysticism of closed eyes. In addition, he does not engage any Buddhist texts or theologians in this discussion.

Metz’s comparative approach to Christianity and Buddhism raises questions in regard to the possible parameters for “theological honesty,” respectful

⁴⁵⁷ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 41. See Metz’s similar statement: “If I may use metaphorical abbreviation, in biblical religion it is primarily a matter of relating to the other, of a mysticism of suffering with the eyes open; in Buddhism it is primarily a matter of relating to the self, of a mysticism of suffering with the eyes closed. These two will be able to learn from each other only if they do not lose sight of their differing roots,” Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 235.

⁴⁵⁸ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 41.

⁴⁵⁹ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 41.

⁴⁶⁰ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 41.

interreligious dialogue, and social action. In contrast with his explicit incorporation of apocalyptic spirituality found in the Hebrew Scriptures and aspects of Judaic thought, his treatment of “Asian religions” is cursory and limited, and he does not engage any tenets of Islam directly in his mention of monotheistic religions. Hinduism and Indigenous traditions are not mentioned. Overall, he presents a vague, if not uninformed, understanding of world religions and interreligious dialogue, albeit likely unintentional.⁴⁶¹ Apart from its practical dimensions, he also fails to articulate the potential difficulties a dialogue of social and political compassion might entail. Perhaps if Metz were to revisit his 1997 and 1999 essays in which he discusses these topics, he would provide a more substantial treatment of comparative theology.

Beyond delineating perceived differences in the understanding of mysticism in Buddhism and Christianity and his recognition of the mysticism of suffering in world religions, Metz insists upon the possibility of shared “obedience” to the “authority of those who suffer” among not only religious adherents but all people.⁴⁶² Similarly, he argues that “if one engages in theology—that is, attempts to speak about God—one is committed to universality. Either God is a universal theme for all humanity, or is just no theme at all.”⁴⁶³ From his perspective, by taking on this task of speaking about God, the theologian must also recognize that the human person is more than what science tells us, which means honoring the “histories” each human

⁴⁶¹ Metz does recognize that Buddhism “(is, granted, quite diverse in itself),” in Johann B. Metz, “In Memory of the Other’s Suffering: Theological Reflections on the Future of Faith and Culture,” trans. Peter P. Kenney, in *The Critical Spirit*, ed. Andrew Pierce and Geraldine Smyth, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2003), 183.

⁴⁶² Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 233.

⁴⁶³ Metz, “Theology and the University,” 133.

person possesses.⁴⁶⁴ To do so, Metz suggests that one may need “a goodly portion of metaphysical civil courage” in today’s academic climate and postmodern society.⁴⁶⁵

Overall, Metz underscores the potential power of the universal experience of suffering. He champions the memory of the suffering of others as both a challenge to “a culture of amnesia in which nothing but time heals all wounds” and as a prophylactic action to prevent future conflict and suffering.⁴⁶⁶ In effect, he is reiterating the link between attending to the suffering of others and working toward social justice in our global community.

Without the memory of the suffering, Metz asks, “What would nourish resistance against the meaninglessness of suffering in the world?”⁴⁶⁷ While he sees this memory of suffering as a source of inspiration for promoting social justice, he also acknowledges that this type of remembrance is “a fragile category,” but that the alternative of amnesia “does not come free.”⁴⁶⁸ He queries:

Has not Auschwitz greatly diminished the barriers to what is shameful between one person and another? Has it not done terrible damage to the bond of solidarity between all those with a human face? There is indeed not only a surface history of the human species, but a depth history, and the latter is absolutely vulnerable. Are not the present day orgies of violence and rape unconsciously attaining for us something of the normative power of ‘the real world’? ⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁴ Metz, “Theology and the University,” 133.

⁴⁶⁵ Metz, “Theology and the University,” 133.

⁴⁶⁶ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 35. See Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 234-5.

⁴⁶⁷ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 35.

⁴⁶⁸ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 38.

⁴⁶⁹ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 38.

Likewise, he questions whether or not a “culture of amnesia” enervates “our basic trust in civilization” and leads to the loss of our humanity and ourselves in the process.⁴⁷⁰

In contrast, from a practical perspective, Metz asserts that the promotion of social and political compassion would occur “in common resistance against the causes of unjust and innocent suffering in the world: against racism and xenophobia, against a religiosity that is nationalistically or ethnically impregnated, with its hankering after civil war.”⁴⁷¹ Social and political compassion of this kind would also resist the negative effects of globalization and technology on the human person. In particular, this compassion opposes “a society in which politics is in ever greater danger of losing its primacy to a global economy with laws of the market that long ago began abstracting from men and women in the concrete.”⁴⁷² Repeating an earlier theme, Metz writes that this interreligious collaborative venture he is suggesting “would be a political event, not for the sake of pie-in-the-sky moralizing politics, not to mention a fundamentalist religious politics, but rather to support a global politics with a conscience.”⁴⁷³ He also argues that this project will “succeed only if they [world religions] do not look to their own institutional interest in survival but to a fundamental interest in the suffering of others.”⁴⁷⁴ However, he does not explain how this support would materialize practically.

⁴⁷⁰ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 38.

⁴⁷¹ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40. See Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 233.

⁴⁷² Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40.

⁴⁷³ Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” 40. See Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 233.

⁴⁷⁴ Metz, “In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds,” 234.

However, Metz's appropriation of the universality of suffering provides a frame for his discussion of universal responsibility and his concern for the erosion of "binding remembrance."⁴⁷⁵ He notes that "respecting the suffering of strangers is a precondition for every culture; articulating others' suffering is the presupposition of all claims to truth," including theology.⁴⁷⁶ He cites the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as an example in which people remembered their own suffering to the exclusion of the suffering of others, leading to further violence.⁴⁷⁷ In contrast with this situation, he cites the willingness of Rabin and Arafat to "fix [their] eyes on the suffering of [their] former enemies" as "exemplary for a universal morality."⁴⁷⁸ Along these lines, "the unconditional presupposition for any really successful politics of peace" is being attuned to the suffering of others, according to Metz.⁴⁷⁹

At the same time, Metz recognizes that monotheistic religion is often perceived as "the root of an obsolete patriarchalism, and as inspiration for political fundamentalisms."⁴⁸⁰ He emphatically states that this concern must be addressed by engaging monotheistic religions outside of Christianity as well, specifically, "the root monotheistic religion of Judaism, and also that of Islam, with its pointed cultural conflicts with European modernity."⁴⁸¹ He also observes a "looming cultural conflict between the political culture of the West and that of Islam" in his exploration of the potential compatibility between a monotheism sensitive to the suffering of others

⁴⁷⁵ Metz, "Theology and the University," 134.

⁴⁷⁶ Metz, "Theology and the University," 134.

⁴⁷⁷ Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds," 231.

⁴⁷⁸ Metz, "Theology and the University," 134. See Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds," 231.

⁴⁷⁹ Metz, "God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time," 38.

⁴⁸⁰ Metz, "Monotheism and Democracy," 136.

⁴⁸¹ Metz, "Monotheism and Democracy," 137.

and politics, adding the caveat that one must not “represent this conflict too one-sidedly in favor of the West.”⁴⁸² Given the lack of further explication, Metz leaves the reader to surmise the conflicts with which he is concerned.

Metz also categorizes the universal responsibility to respond to suffering in the world as a “moral application” of the tenet of the equality of all people protected by both “biblical traditions” and the state.⁴⁸³ Along these lines, he questions whether modernity’s strict separation of politics from “any anchoring transcendence” is the best and only option.⁴⁸⁴ Despite its challenges, he recognizes the possible, positive impact that ecumenical and interreligious dialogue could have on redressing social injustices.

For instance, Metz asserts that the memory of another’s suffering can be employed as “the criterion of a liberal politics in those cases where the purely procedural point of view does not suffice for arriving at a political decision—especially in legitimation crises for political authority.”⁴⁸⁵ He suggests that this criterion possesses the possibility of challenging “a political fundamentalism that comes to power in a procedurally correct fashion.”⁴⁸⁶ Likewise, he states that “articulating others’ suffering is the presupposition of all universalist claims, as they are formulated in the politics of human rights. Only then can there be forms of political action, new forms of solidarity, that have a universal orientation but do not become totalitarian.”⁴⁸⁷ Similar to his appropriation of human rights, he argues that

⁴⁸² Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 144.

⁴⁸³ Metz, “Theology and the University,” 134, 135.

⁴⁸⁴ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 138.

⁴⁸⁵ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 143.

⁴⁸⁶ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 143.

⁴⁸⁷ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 145.

concern for the suffering of others in the world grounds “the fundamental laws of modern constitutional states” and liberal democracies, promoting equality.⁴⁸⁸

However, in light of a global political climate in which “the basic tension between freedom and equality” is becoming a “superficial tension between freedom and security,” he questions who is guaranteeing this central tenet of democracy.⁴⁸⁹

However, Metz clarifies that in exploring new ways to negotiate the relationship between religion and politics “in no way excludes a grounding of the politics of human rights in juridical reason.”⁴⁹⁰ Yet, he is convinced that reason grounded in the memory of another’s suffering, which he calls “anamnestic reason,” can strengthen political culture in preservation of human rights.⁴⁹¹ Despite this bold claim, he does not offer specific examples to support his argument.

Metz’s concern regarding the relationship between religion and a pluralistic society and between faith and justice remain central to his definition of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity. This concept also reflects Metz’s deep concern with the practical dimension of faith, and his desire to develop ways in which a mysticism which recognizes the suffering of others can challenge the injustices and conflicts within our global community. However, as evidenced throughout this chapter and as Ashley affirms, one of the complaints leveled against Metz is that “he offers few practical guidelines as to what might count as a concrete, positive Christian response to the dilemmas of the contemporary world.”⁴⁹² This gap in his

⁴⁸⁸ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 145.

⁴⁸⁹ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 145.

⁴⁹⁰ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 145.

⁴⁹¹ Metz, “Monotheism and Democracy,” 145.

⁴⁹² Ashley, *Interruptions*, 195.

theology provides a window of opportunity for integration with Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology, which I discuss in the next chapter.

In addition, despite Metz's assertion that Christian theologians must engage "specific social and political contexts," Ashley notes that Metz's theology "is curiously devoid of social analysis, and never makes the crucial step to developing specific, theologically warranted practical steps that follow from the fundamental practical theology."⁴⁹³ Ashley recommends that political theology engage with "conversation partners in those social sciences with are open to its understanding of the human subject."⁴⁹⁴ This step provides political theology with a better way to analyze "social and political structures" and a more adequate response to the challenges of globalization and its threat to the human condition.⁴⁹⁵

Overall, in his attempt to address religious and cultural pluralism, Metz affirms key components of the Biblical traditions, promotes a universal responsibility to attend to the suffering of others, and seeks commonalities in a pluralistic society to accomplish this task. Yet, his oversimplification of world religions could hinder his quest for theological honesty and the formation of a coalition of religions that would promote social and political compassion. Not discounting these concerns, Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity does indeed include elements for engaging in interdisciplinary, ecumenical, and interreligious dialogue and possibly providing a positive contribution to global politics.

⁴⁹³ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 195.

⁴⁹⁴ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 195.

⁴⁹⁵ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 195.

Chapter Summary

Early on in this chapter, we discussed the importance of Metz's own biography, particularly his "dangerous memory" of suffering during the Second World War, as foundational to his political theology. This experience and his encounters with suffering in the third world also propelled him to develop a theology which refused to turn a blind eye to the suffering of others. Unfortunately, his attention to the suffering in the third world in his writings does not recognize the disproportionate suffering experienced by women and the inextricable link with environmental injustices.

The reverberating question of theodicy and the suffering of others consistently shape his discussion of the relationship between the mystical and the political. This approach counters a trend, especially among first-world Christians, to focus on their individual piety without opening their eyes to the suffering and injustices around them and their culpability in the suffering of others. From Metz's perspective, Christians and the Church itself bear responsibility to the authority of those who suffer. In addition, he also intentionally seeks to relate the mystical-political dimension of Christianity to the positive role world religions can play in our pluralistic society to ameliorate suffering and injustices.

As far as this dissertation is concerned, an avenue to strengthen the mystical-political dimension of Christianity in Metz's theology and to flesh out the practical application of his thought is integrating his mystical-political dimension with Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology. The orchestration of this type of dialogue could lead to a better understanding of the challenges facing the third world, particularly

gender injustices related to environmental degradation and provide ways to practically engage in ecumenical, interreligious, and interdisciplinary dialogues on these issues. Positive implications of these dialogues could include developing greater consciousness or sensitivity in global politics that recognizes the suffering of others, particularly women in the third world, and an integration of Metz's appropriation of mysticism with Gnanadason's discussion of a spirituality of resistance. I take up this task in my next chapter.

Chapter Four:
Adapting the “Boomerang Pattern of Influence” Model
for Theological Discourse:
Gnanadason and Metz in Dialogue

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this dissertation, in this chapter I present my adaptation of the “boomerang pattern of influence” model articulated by political scientists Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink which constructs a practical model for dialogue among theologians that would bring ecofeminist concerns to the forefront of theological discourse. As part of this model, I then demonstrate how an intellectual dialogue between the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz would function as part of a larger dialogue within a transnational advocacy network (TAN) of theologians. I propose that this dialogue demonstrates how the integration of the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz can open first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminism.

First, I present key characteristics of TANs in relation to the boomerang model as defined by Keck and Sikkink. Second, I review recent modifications of the boomerang model by other scholars that have relevance for this dissertation. Third, I present my rationale for modifying the boomerang model for theological discourse. Then, I explicate the dimensions of TAN of theologians and construct an adaptation of the boomerang model that would bring ecofeminist concerns to the forefront of theological discourse. Finally, as part of this modified boomerang model, I integrate dimensions of the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz in order to demonstrate how this intellectual dialogue could open first-world, Catholic theology to third-world, Christian ecofeminist theology.

Keck and Sikkink's Articulation of TANs and the Boomerang Model

In this section I first outline the key characteristics of TANs, including identifying the categories of major actors and the situations in which TANs emerge, according to Keck and Sikkink. Next, I outline how TANs function in relation to the boomerang model. I also include Keck and Sikkink's graphic depiction of this model from *Activists beyond Borders*.

Key Characteristics of TANs

As cited in the introduction to this dissertation, TANs comprise actors who collaborate on an issue internationally and "are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."⁴⁹⁶ Keck and Sikkink intentionally employ the term "networks" over "coalitions, movements, or civil society" in order to convey the "structured" way in which TANs influence politics.⁴⁹⁷ Distinguishing TANs from other networks, they point out that members of TANs promote "policy changes that cannot be easily linked to a rationalist understanding of their 'interests,'" reflecting the unique "advocacy" aspect of TANs.⁴⁹⁸

Along these lines, Keck and Sikkink assert that TANs allow for "nontraditional international actors" to strategize information exchanges that garner influence over organizations and governments that possess greater power,

⁴⁹⁶ Keck and Sikkink, 2.

⁴⁹⁷ They add that it was the actors themselves, not theory that led them to choose this term, pointing out that, "over the last two decades, individuals and organizations have consciously formed strategies and techniques, and assessed the advantages and limits of this kind of activity. Scholars have come late to the party," Keck and Sikkink, 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Keck and Sikkink, 8, 9.

exemplified by policy outcomes and shifting the parameters of debates.⁴⁹⁹ Network actors “frame” issues in new ways,⁵⁰⁰ help redefine norms, and “serve as sources of information and testimony.”⁵⁰¹ Keck and Sikkink also observe that actors simultaneously work with “shared understandings” and help “reshape certain contested meanings,” highlighting fluidity within these networks.⁵⁰² Given the communicative structure of TANs, actors often participate in “larger policy communities” to exert greater influence regarding an issue as well.⁵⁰³

As part of their articulation of TANs, Keck and Sikkink also categorize key players within them. They identify the following as possible “major actors,”

(1) international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations [INGOs or NGOs]; (2) local social movements; (3) foundations; (4) the media; (5) churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, and intellectuals; (6) parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations; and (7) parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of government.⁵⁰⁴

While the number and range of potential actors vary within each advocacy network, Keck and Sikkink observe the centrality of domestic NGOs and INGOs in all TANs, noting the pivotal role these actors play in instigating change.⁵⁰⁵

In regard to research, Keck and Sikkink assert that TANs have been marginalized by scholars due to the fact that the motivation of TANs is values-based (as opposed to “material concerns” or “professional norms”), and, therefore, TANs

⁴⁹⁹ Keck and Sikkink, 2.

⁵⁰⁰ Keck and Sikkink, 2.

⁵⁰¹ Keck and Sikkink write: “Norms, here, follows the usage given by Peter Katzenstein, ‘to describe collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity....’ They also promote norm implementation, by pressuring target actors to adopt new policies, and by monitoring compliance with international standards,” Keck and Sikkink, 3.

⁵⁰² Keck and Sikkink, 5.

⁵⁰³ Keck and Sikkink, 3.

⁵⁰⁴ Keck and Sikkink, 9.

⁵⁰⁵ Keck and Sikkink, 9.

do not fall into “accustomed categories.”⁵⁰⁶ To strengthen their own research approach, Keck and Sikkink consult sociological theories and methods.⁵⁰⁷ More specifically, they study campaigns led by TANs, which typically include a “common target” against which a campaign is directed.⁵⁰⁸

Keck and Sikkink also discuss three cases in which TANs typically materialize around issues.⁵⁰⁹ First, TANs develop around issues where blocked or feckless “channels between domestic groups and their governments” persist, engendering the boomerang model discussed below.⁵¹⁰ Second, TANs emerge where “activists or ‘political entrepreneurs’” seeking to broaden their “missions and campaigns” pursue networking as a viable option to promote their goals.⁵¹¹ Third, other opportunities for transnational contact, such as conferences, also allow for the development of current and new networks.⁵¹² With these cases in mind, we examine how the boomerang model functions in relation to TANs.

⁵⁰⁶ Keck and Sikkink, 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Keck and Sikkink explain that they “draw upon sociological traditions that focus on complex interactions among actors, on the intersubjective construction of frames of meaning, and on the negotiation and malleability of identities and interests....Rationalists will recognize the language of incentives and constraints, strategies, institutions, and rules, whereas constructivists and social constructivists will be more comfortable with our stress on norms, social relations, and intersubjective understandings,” Keck and Sikkink, 4.

⁵⁰⁸ They define campaigns as “sets of strategically linked activities in which members of a diffuse principled network (what social movement theorists would call a ‘mobilization potential’) develop explicit, visible ties and mutually recognized roles in pursuit of a common goal (and generally against a common target),” Keck and Sikkink, 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹⁰ In addition, “Boomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target is a state’s domestic policies or behavior; where a campaign seeks broad procedural change involving dispersed actors, strategies are more diffuse,” Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹¹ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹² Keck and Sikkink, 12.

Explicating the Boomerang Model

As briefly noted above, according to Keck and Sikkink, the boomerang pattern of influence model typically activates when domestic groups, like NGOs, face resistance from their domestic governments regarding an issue. This “blockage” leads actors to reach out to international allies with greater influence over their domestic governments to assist them in accomplishing their goals. By circumventing the state, NGOs or other domestic groups connect with these international allies “to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.”⁵¹³ Keck and Sikkink point toward human rights campaigns as the most typical cases, but they acknowledge that campaigns focused on environmental and Indigenous rights issues related to development often engage the boomerang model as well.⁵¹⁴

Keck and Sikkink maintain that one of the key reasons TANS focus on rights issues in their campaigns is that “governments are the primary ‘guarantors’ of rights, but also their primary violators.”⁵¹⁵ The violation of rights forces many actors and TANS to reach out to international allies as their only option, especially when their very safety is at risk.⁵¹⁶ The figure below depicts the activation of the boomerang model.

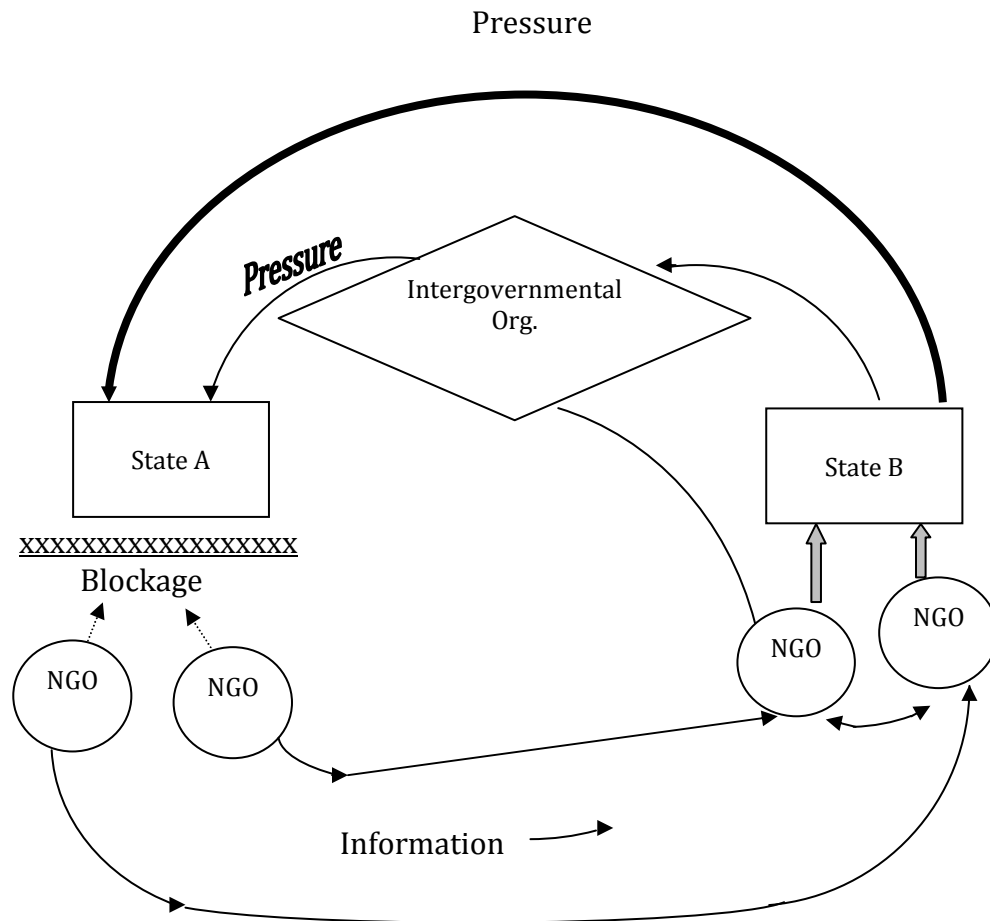
⁵¹³ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹⁴ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹⁵ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹⁶ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

The Boomerang Pattern (Keck and Sikkink)⁵¹⁷



In addition to explaining how the boomerang model functions, Keck and Sikkink elaborate on how the “linkages” involved in this model benefit first and third-world actors working together on an issue. Groups of first-world actors benefit from being able to demonstrate how “they are struggling with, and not only for, their southern partners,” and third-world actors, who typically possess less power, gain “access, leverage, and information (and often money) they could not

⁵¹⁷ This figure is taken directly from the text. They add the note that “State A blocks redress to organizations within it; they activate network, whose members pressure their own states and (if relevant) a third-party organization, which in turn pressure State A,” Keck and Sikkink, 13.

expect to have on their own” due to the power difference between these groups.⁵¹⁸ Citing the Narmada River Movement in India as an example, Keck and Sikkink show how “international contacts can amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena,” illustrating the “boomerang” dimension and potential effectiveness of the model.⁵¹⁹

Despite the mutual benefits for first and third-world actors discussed above, Keck and Sikkink remark that tensions can emerge between these groups.⁵²⁰ Likewise, recent scholarship on the boomerang model discusses difficulties with the model itself, pointing out how particular contexts and issues necessitate variations of the model. We now explore modifications of the boomerang model by other scholars as they relate to this dissertation.

Relevant, Recent Modifications of the Boomerang Model

Since the publication of *Activists beyond Borders* in 1998, other scholars have modified the boomerang model to suit particular political and cultural contexts and to incorporate shifts in receptivity to new approaches to politics and gender equality issues. In this section, I discuss three recent modifications of the boomerang model which have relevance for my dissertation. First, Kathrin Zippel articulates the concept of the “‘ping-pong’ effect” in relation to TANs redressing sexual harassment in the European Union (EU) (published in 2004). Second, Shareen Hertel discusses the impact of differences among network actors and

⁵¹⁸ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

⁵¹⁹ Keck and Sikkink, 13.

⁵²⁰ Keck and Sikkink, 12.

develops the “mechanisms” of “blocking” and “backdoor strategies” as “alternatives” to the boomerang model by focusing on the case of the 1999 World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Third Ministerial meeting in Seattle (published in 2005). Finally, Gul Aldikacti Marshall constructs the strategy of “sustained pressure” in regard to the work of Turkish feminists on women’s rights (published in 2009).

The “Ping-Pong’ Effect”

First, Zippel explains that, due to the structure of policy formation in the EU, TANs engage the boomerang model within member states as well the broader EU community, creating “cycles” of information exchange and influence between these levels.⁵²¹ She defines this pattern of influence at multiple levels by TANs as the “‘ping-pong’ effect.”⁵²² In addition, Zippel highlights the “invaluable” role of “transnational expertise” and notes its dynamic nature.⁵²³ She explores how this expertise assists in developing definitions and “providing alternative discourses” which question and shape current working environments and processes within

⁵²¹ Zippel writes, “Because of the EU’s multilevel system of governance, policy action often cycles back and forth between the EU and national levels, with each influencing the other,” Kathrin Zippel, “Transnational Advocacy Networks and Policy Cycles in the European Union: The Case of Sexual Harassment,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 59.

⁵²² Zippel explains: “TANs have proved particularly effective at using the EU’s multilevel policy-making structure. Within these recursive cycles of policy making, the classic boomerang effect becomes more of a ping-pong effect: the development and implementation of the EU law against sexual harassment creates national law and transnational expertise that come into play in creating a new wave of EU law that then also must be implemented, with further effects at the national and transnational levels to be anticipated,” Zippel, 79.

⁵²³ Zippel notes: “Because institutionalized actors—including administrators and policy makers, as well as union and party activists—have an interest in this expertise, they encourage the creation of TANs, especially around ‘new’ policy issues. Backed by soft-law measures encouraging awareness, research, and the exchange of policy expertise, the EC contributed to the emergence of an EU-wide TAN during the late 1980s and 1990s,” Zippel, 79.

institutions.⁵²⁴ Yet, along with the positive contributions of TANs, Zippel also acknowledges the difficulty TANs face “in influencing implementation and enforcement” of policies and laws.⁵²⁵

Overall, Zippel’s modifications of the original boomerang model illumine the layered nature of policy debates in particular contexts. She also highlights the role of transnational expertise in shaping not only debates themselves but the environment and institutions in which these policies emerge as well.⁵²⁶ I return to this point later on in this chapter in relation to transnational expertise among theologians.

The Mechanisms of “Blocking” and “Backdoor Strategies”

Similar to Zippel, Hertel credits the helpfulness of the boomerang model for certain situations, but she points out that the original model fails to consider cases in which network actors within TANs differ in their understanding of the “nature” of the human rights being addressed.⁵²⁷ In light of this lacuna, she presents “blocking” and “backdoor strategies” as two key “mechanisms” for comprehending how these differences shape the development of “human rights frames” in TANs.⁵²⁸ In the

⁵²⁴ She gives the example of framing the concept of sexual harassment in a European context in contrast with American appropriations of the term, Zippel, 79.

⁵²⁵ Zippel, 79.

⁵²⁶ Zippel also recognizes that “issues can be co-opted” by other groups and that, “additionally, numerous studies have shown the dangers associated with professionalization within TANs, as well as conflicts and power differentials among actors in TANs,” Zippel, 65.

⁵²⁷ Hertel explains that “this may be the case when outside actors launch a campaign to help the less fortunate—without consulting the poor or abused themselves on priorities, concerns, or perceptions of the rights at risk. The boomerang does not explain situations in which one part of a network stands to gain more (or less) political or financial capital from the success (or failure) of the campaign than does another. Nor does it account for situations in which the threat of economic sanctions pits actors on the sending and receiving-ends of a campaign against one another,” Shareen Hertel, “What Was All the Shouting About?: Strategic Bargaining and Protest at the WTO Third Ministerial Meeting,” *Human Rights Review* (April-June 2005): 104.

⁵²⁸ Hertel, 104.

mechanism of blocking, network actors challenge “the dominant framing of human rights norms.”⁵²⁹ Whereas with backdoor strategies, network actors “‘play along’ with the dominant interpretation of human rights and introduce alternative frames deftly through the backdoor.”⁵³⁰ She points out that these mechanisms can occur independently from or accompany typical actions in the original boomerang model.⁵³¹

In the case of the 1999 WTO meeting, Hertel asserts that actors employed the mechanisms of blocking and backdoor strategies due to differences among themselves regarding the articulation of goals, identification of a clear target, a lack of hierarchical structure of the movement itself, and perceptions both of the WTO as an institution and of access to the WTO itself.⁵³² Her analysis reveals a weakness in the original boomerang model which leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the variations among network actors. Hertel’s mechanisms also offer additional constructive ways for TANs to formulate and achieve goals that may be outside of the normative frames for promoting human rights.

Similarly, Hertel’s attention to differences among network actors evokes a need for caution when attempting to articulate goals and to devise strategies for reaching them among actors in TANs. For instance, differences could potentially

⁵²⁹ She adds: “They seek to stop the central human rights message from advancing. They may block and propose alternative normative interpretations, without proposing specific policy activities. They may block, propose alternative norms, and recommend corresponding activities. Or they may block, without offering an alternative definition or activities at all,” Hertel, 104.

⁵³⁰ She writes that “Blocking and backdoor moves are mechanisms that enhance the negotiating leverage of actors who—for political, economic, or social reasons—might not otherwise have the means to influence the way rights are framed in transnational advocacy campaigns or other negotiating settings. These mechanisms empower actors to frame the agenda of a campaign or negotiation in ways the boomerang does not,” Hertel, 104.

⁵³¹ Hertel, 104.

⁵³² Hertel, 112.

dilute goals to a point that very little is accomplished. Conversely, Hertel's work reveals that hierarchical structures bear the possibility of preventing a breakdown of communication, which is important to keep in mind when considering the development of a TAN among theologians.

The Concept of "Sustained-Pressure"

Likewise, Marshall, who references Zippel's modifications, also recognizes the limitations of and builds upon the original boomerang model. She constructs the concept of "sustained-pressure" to explain how Turkish feminists simultaneously put pressure on the state while connecting to the EU and the UN in order to achieve their goals regarding women's rights.⁵³³ Benefits of this strategy included being able to demonstrate organic developments within the state on these issues to parliamentary members who resisted their efforts ("ultra-nationalists") by claiming that the state was succumbing to outside pressure.⁵³⁴

Much like Zippel, Marshall recommends modifying the boomerang model to recognize a multi-level approach to policy change.⁵³⁵ She highlights how this approach became more apparent in Turkey after the 1990s, coinciding with both

⁵³³ Marshall explains: "This sustained-pressure on the state has helped feminist organizations keep their issues on the public agenda in Turkey, especially by receiving positive coverage from the secular-oriented print media. When the political opportunities emerged as a result of the European Union's gender conditionality in the late 1990s and early 2000s, feminist groups were prepared to influence the gender policy change process. Consequently, feminists have been able to assert that the changes in gender policies happened not merely because of external pressure (i.e., the pressure from the European Union), but also as a result of their internal demands," Gul Aldikacti Marshall, "Authenticating Gender Policies through Sustained-Pressure: The Strategy Behind the Success of Turkish Feminists," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 359.

⁵³⁴ Marshall, 359.

⁵³⁵ Marshall writes: The first level is whether the international pressure resulted in the successful making or changing of laws, or adoption of international agreements at the state level. The second is the ground-level implementation of new laws or international agreements," Marshall, 371.

Turkey's potential accession into the EU and Turkish feminist involvement with the EU.⁵³⁶ She notes that "sustained-pressure" on the state by Turkish feminists won them praise from a predominately male parliament and the secular media as well.⁵³⁷

Overall, Marshall argues that this case addresses a situation not taken into account by the original boomerang model: how internal pressure can counter a lack of receptivity to external pressure. In particular, she presents a strategy to address a situation in which issues and policies are framed negatively by challengers with power to influence perception of the potential policy change (i.e., ultra-nationalists).⁵³⁸ As a result of adopting the strategy of "sustained-pressure," she also points out that Turkish feminists succeeded in "establish[ing] the authenticity of amended gender policies" in the face of this resistance.⁵³⁹

Marshall's strategy of "sustained-pressure" tweaks the boomerang model in a way that describes how actors acknowledge a blockage at the internal level and continue to work toward ameliorating it at this level while seeking external pressure. Her modification of the model offers another strategy that acknowledges a multi-level approach, which is important for a TAN of theologians to consider as

⁵³⁶ She acknowledges that the possibility of EU accession put more pressure on implementation of EU gender policy laws by the Turkish parliament, Marshall, 372.

⁵³⁷ Marshall notes that "the main benefit of the sustained-pressure on the state was the power to claim; after the amendments, feminists were able to claim success. Their long-lasting political efforts prevented the successful representation of the European Union as the agent forcing gender policy changes in Turkey. No one denies the effects of conditionality on candidate states for European Union membership, but the role of feminist groups in reframing the laws during the amendment process should not be ignored. In the end it was the members of parliament, the majority of whom were men, who made the changes in gender discriminatory laws and wrote the history, but it was the feminists who were successful in writing the counter herstory," Marshall, 372.

⁵³⁸ She writes: "A significant implication of the Turkish case for the boomerang model is that external pressure on a state can backfire, especially when there are strong local forces such as staunch nationalists who oppose such pressure if there is not enough internal pressure for change at the same time," Marshall, 372.

⁵³⁹ Marshall, 372.

well. With these recent modifications by Zippel, Hertel, and Marshall in mind, we explore how the boomerang model can be modified for theological discourse.

Rationale for Modifying the Boomerang Model for Theological Discourse

As noted in the introduction, first-world Catholic theologians have increasingly engaged environmental justice concerns from various areas in theology (e.g. systematic, ethics, sacramental, etc.) in recent years. First-world, Catholic feminist and ecofeminist theologians in particular discuss the relationship between ecology and feminism and the link between the domination of women and our natural environment. Yet, even from a first-world, Catholic feminist perspective, engagement with theologies of third-world women that engage the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women and reflect an ecofeminist perspective is limited. Despite this marginalization in first-world, Catholic theology, increased attention to environmental issues and the effects of globalization, recent dialogues between first and third-world theologians at global conferences, and the ongoing work of first-world, Catholic feminists depicts a climate among Catholic theologians which may be more receptive to focusing on these concerns than in previous years.⁵⁴⁰

In addition, as I discuss below, active associations of first and third-world theologians possess internal structures that could provide ways of facilitating greater practical and intellectual dialogues among them. Specific to this dissertation, adaptation of these structures could lead to dialogues that would allow first-world,

⁵⁴⁰ See footnote nos. 17-25, 43-45.

Catholic theologians to more deeply engage broad ecofeminist concerns and the transnational expertise of third-world, Christian feminist and ecofeminist theologians on these issues. Therefore, I argue that adapting the boomerang model as a course of action possesses more viability than could have been imagined before and could open first-world, Catholic theology to these concerns in new ways. Engagement with and modification of the boomerang model provides a way to structure these possibilities, beginning with the idea of theologians as members of a TAN, which I discuss in the next section.

Modifying the Boomerang Model for Theological Discourse

Among first-world, Catholic theologians, groups within the two prominent professional associations of Catholic theologians in the U.S., the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) and the College Theology Society (CTS), referred to as “interest groups” or “sections,” respectively, form around particular research interests. Groups currently exist within both the CTSA and the CTS that discuss ecological concerns.⁵⁴¹ The CTSA also has a Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology that meets at its annual convention, and the CTS has a section entitled Women and Religion. These groups meet at the annual conventions of these societies.

⁵⁴¹ An “interest group” on “Catholic Theology and Global Warming” completed a four-year study culminating in the publication of *Confronting the Climate Crisis: Catholic Theological Perspectives* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), and another study was approved recently on “Sustainability and Discipleship.” A “section” on “Theology, Ecology, and Natural Science” exists within the CTS.

In 2011, the Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology convened a session entitled, "Who Are the Friends of God Today? Constructive Responses to Elizabeth Johnson's *Friends of God and Prophets*," which included panelist presentations on both global issues related to violence against women and an "ecofeminist ecclesiology."⁵⁴² Likewise, a session at the 2010 CTSA convention entitled, "Feminist Theologies, Catholicity and Mission in a Global Context Selected Session," comprised a panel discussion on "In Search of Global Solidarity: The Future of Catholic Scholarship in the Context of Gender Justice." This session included a presentation on "African Feminism" by Kenyan theologian Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike who discussed the struggles facing Kenyan women.⁵⁴³ In addition, at the 2011 CTSA convention, Clifford gave a presentation on Wangari Maathai and ecofeminist theology as part of the "Catholic Theology and Global Warming" interest group.⁵⁴⁴ These activities provide examples of how ecofeminist concerns have been discussed among first-world, Catholic theologians at recent CTSA annual conventions.

Turning to the CTS, in addition to the section on "Theology, Ecology, and the Natural Sciences," ecofeminist concerns would also resonate with other current CTS sections such as Ethics, Justice and Peace, and Women and Religion. A positive

⁵⁴² The report from this session notes how "Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes began the conversation by calling attention to global and ethical issues involving women and girls. Focusing on female bullying, female genital mutilation, and trafficking of women and girls, Daniels-Sykes examined cycles of gender prejudice and oppression from the perspective of women as oppressors" and that "Jane Carol Redmont explored the vision of the friends of God extending beyond a church or human community by constructing an ecofeminist ecclesiology. Redmont began with the premise that the communion of saints, as described by Johnson, included all of creation, noting the value of an ecofeminist method in unpacking the relation of saints, ethics, and ecclesial community," Katharine E. Harmon, report on Women's Consultation in Constructive Theology, *CTSA Proceedings* 66 (2011): 161, 162, <http://www.ctsa-online.org/pdf/66/0161-0163.pdf>.

⁵⁴³ Elisabeth T. Vasko, report on Women's Consultation in Constructive Theology, *CTSA Proceedings* 65 (2010): 101-102, <http://www.ctsa-online.org/pdf/66/0181-0207.pdf>.

⁵⁴⁴ Jame Schaefer, report on Catholic Theology and Global Warming interest group, *CTSA Proceedings* 66 (2011): 166-167, <http://www.ctsa-online.org/pdf/66/0166-0167.pdf>.

indication of increased sensitivity to these issues is that the theme of the CTS's annual convention in 2009 focused on "God, Grace, and Creation." Likewise, as part of subsequent CTS conventions on the themes of "Religion, Economics, and Cultures in Conflict and Conversation" and "Violence, Transformation, and the Sacred: "They Shall Be Called Children of God,"" sessions specifically addressed ecological justice. Publications from these conventions also include essays that discuss environmental concerns and challenges facing the third world, with some essays incorporating the writings of third-world liberation and ecofeminist theologians.⁵⁴⁵

Along the lines articulated above, current groups within the CTSA or CTS with overlapping ecofeminist interests could structure intentional dialogues with members of other groups within these associations. This strategy could help redress interrelated aspects of oppression, which could benefit the work of ecofeminist theologians and other theologians with shared concerns. Likewise, while these professional associations embrace ecumenism and diversity, more remains to be explored in the sharing of "transnational expertise" with third-world theologians regarding these concerns (some of whom may be professors in the U.S. and members of the CTS and/or the CTSA). Through a modification of the boomerang model, I demonstrate how a model for dialogue among theologians could be constructed on both practical and intellectual levels, beginning with the intentional formation of a TAN of theologians.

⁵⁴⁵ See Laurie M. Cassidy and Maureen H. O'Connell, eds. *Religion, Economics, and Culture in Conflict and Conversation*, College Theology Society Annual Volume 56, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011, and Margaret R. Pfeil and Tobias L. Winright, eds., *Violence, Transformation, and the Sacred: "They Shall Be Called Children of God,"* College Theology Society Annual Volume 57, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012.

Constructing a TAN of Theologians

As cited earlier, according to Keck and Sikkink, a TAN includes “those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.”⁵⁴⁶ Keck and Sikkink also recognize that churches and intellectuals fall into a category of major actors in the development of TANs. Therefore, what would a TAN of theologians who seek to bring ecofeminist concerns to the forefront of theological discourse look like?

First-world, Catholic theologians who research and write on ecofeminist concerns may or may not identify as activists in engaged in the practical application of these issues. However, at the very least, they do function as “intellectual” advocates for persons and communities facing these injustices. Rooted in theological precepts, their work reflects the “values-based” motivation of actors within a TAN and possesses a “common language” with which to begin dialogue with fellow theologians, recognizing that some theological concepts also possess “contested meanings” which actors within a TAN of theologians would have to address.

As a first step, theologians interested in promoting the discussion of ecofeminist concerns would initiate the formation of an interest group or section as part of one of the professional organizations of Catholic theologians in the U.S. By way of explicating the model, I suggest that an ecofeminist section be formed as part of CTS. This section could also function as a sub-committee of the current “Theology,

⁵⁴⁶ Keck and Sikkink, 2.

Ecology, and Natural Science” CTS section. I return to this suggestion in a later section of this chapter.

The CTS defines itself as “a professional association of college and university professors” with “roots” in Roman Catholicism and growing ecumenical efforts regarding its “membership and concerns.”⁵⁴⁷ Two of the CTS’s specific objectives relate to the concept of a TAN. One objective focuses on “foster[ing] communication and exchange of information and experience relative to the study of theology and religious studies,” which is accomplished through its publications and member meetings.⁵⁴⁸ Another objective focuses on exploration of “the relation of theology and religious studies to other academic disciplines,” which, in theory, encourages dialogue with a discipline like political science.⁵⁴⁹ While both the CTSA and the CTS provide possible structures for the adaptation of the boomerang model for theological discourse, I selected the CTS given its stated international membership, interest in expanding its ecumenical efforts, organizational objectives, and current section structure.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁷ The website states: “Founded in 1953 as a Roman Catholic organization of lay and religious teachers of undergraduate theology, the CTS today has a membership of over 900 college and university professors throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe.” See College Theology Society, “About the College Theology Society,” <http://collegetheology.org/about-the-college-theology-society/>.

⁵⁴⁸ See College Theology Society, “CTS Constitution and By-Laws,” http://collegetheology.org/docs/cts_bylaws_constitution.pdf.

⁵⁴⁹ See College Theology Society, “CTS Constitution and By-Laws.”

⁵⁵⁰ In addition, as an example of its ecumenical efforts, the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion shares overlapping sessions with the CTS. However, the Secretary’s Report from the 2010 CTSA convention also states: “Catherine Clifford gave the report for the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology. Last June DePaul University hosted the meeting of the INSeCT Network Council and International Colloquium, which included 26 representatives from various countries. She is pleased to report that DePaul University will again host the Network Council and Colloquium in 2011. The INSeCT website has been relocated to Leuven, closer to the leadership of ESCT, the European Society of Catholic Theology. She is receiving reports from INSeCT members from throughout the world. Vincent Miller, CTSA board member, has agreed to do the report on Catholic theology in the United States. INSeCT is working to build new connections with groups of

In addition, the CTS's annual convention includes numerous sections with conveners, presenters, and participants that vary from year to year. As mentioned earlier, the 2009 CTS convention theme focused on grace and creation, and subsequent convention themes have addressed issues surrounding globalization and violence. The focus on these themes for its annual convention suggests that leadership within the CTS and its current members may be open to exploring a convention theme that explores interrelated issues of oppression which could highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation facing women in the third world and possibly include invited sessions led by third-world theologians.

Second, given that actors within a TAN also concern themselves with the international dimension of the issue at hand, a TAN comprised of theologians around these issues would incorporate this dimension as well. As cited earlier, Metz argues that global social conflicts need to be central to theological awareness and discourse about God (as well as on a pastoral level) and must redress the "North-South" conflicts that persist within the Church itself, calling for transformation at both intellectual and practical levels.⁵⁵¹ Thus, political theologians who share Metz's claims and concern for the implications of doing Catholic theology in what is becoming more and more of a third-world Church would also be key actors in this

theologians in Africa and Asia, and in particular the Philippines, which is home to the second largest population of Catholics in the world today. She is pleased to report that they have recently received a request from EATWOT, The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, who would like to become a member of INSeCT. She expressed her gratitude for the continued support of the CTSA for INSeCT," Mary Theresa Moser, Secretary's Report, *CTSA Proceedings* 65 (2010): 196. <http://www.ctsa-online.org/pdf/65/0177-0197.pdf>.

⁵⁵¹ Metz, "On the Way to A Postidealist Theology," 43.

TAN. A section on mysticism and politics, which includes political theologians, already exists within the CTS, aiding in the task of identifying this group.

The third group of major actors would be third-world theologians with expertise on ecofeminist concerns. Given the limited resources discussed earlier, first-world theologians would most likely seek out predominantly, but not exclusively, third-world, Protestant ecofeminist theologians as primary interlocutors. Ideally, the majority of these theologians would be members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). As “international allies,” these theologians possess unique transnational expertise and testimony regarding gender injustices related to our natural environment.

EATWOT defines itself as “an association of men and women committed with the struggle for the liberation of Third World peoples, by promoting new models of theology for a religious pluralism, social justice and peace.”⁵⁵² Member theologians “[do] theology from the vantage point of the poor seeking liberation, integrity of creation, gender co-responsibility, racial and ethnic equality and interfaith dialogue.”⁵⁵³ Some members of EATWOT currently teach in the U.S., including a theologian who is the coordinator for the Women’s Commission referenced in the introduction to this dissertation. In light of its mission, EATWOT inherently supports a theological hermeneutic which coalesces with ecofeminist concerns. I return to the role of EATWOT in the boomerang model later in this section.

⁵⁵² See Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), “Who We Are,” http://www.eatwot.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=26.

⁵⁵³ In addition, the website states that “Third World theologies are those which offer an alternative voice to the marginalized and exploited people of the planet,” EATWOT, “Who We Are.”

Therefore, the major actors in this TAN of theologians would initially include (1) a section of the CTS comprised of theologians committed to ecofeminist concerns, (2) members of the mysticism and politics section of the CTS, and (3) third-world, theologians identified by the ecofeminist section of the CTS. Ideally, this third group of theologians would function much like a “section” affiliated with EATWOT (such as the Women’s Commission). We now discuss how these major actors could activate the boomerang model through a modification I call the “sprocket” strategy.

The “Sprocket” Strategy

Identifying the major actors above helps to elucidate how they could activate the modified boomerang model for theological discourse. In addition, it is important to recognize that members of the CTS sections of ecofeminist theologians and political theologians are concurrently members of the CTS itself. Their simultaneous roles as insiders and outsiders could also help to influence the CTS as an association, similar to Hertel’s observations with the WTO meeting.

One of the structural difficulties of the CTS is that members may participate in more than one of the sections named above that share similar concerns around justice issues. Not unlike Hertel’s point about diffuse goals, these sections often meet simultaneously at the national convention, making it difficult to redress interrelated aspects of oppression through discourse with colleagues. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to explore whether it would behoove ecofeminist theologians to begin this initiative as a new section or as a sub-committee of a current section and to explore possibilities of a special convention-wide session. For purposes of

exploring the practical application of this model, I continue to refer to this group of actors as the “ecofeminist section.”

While individual members of the CTS may be sympathetic to ecofeminist concerns and the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, I argue that an intellectual blockage exists between ecofeminist theologians and the CTS as an association due to the marginalization of their concerns as a priority for theological discourse. Likewise, as part of the boomerang model, identifying a “target actor” clarifies the goals and tasks of a TAN which would be the CTS in this case. Building upon the work of Zippel, Hertel, and Marshall, I would add what I call a “sprocket” strategy as a way of modifying the boomerang model for theological discourse and strengthening the approach of the ecofeminist section.

First, as opposed to the one-way direction of information in the original boomerang model, information in the model modified for theological discourse travels back and forth between the three groups of major actors outlined above. The primary actor, the ecofeminist section of the CTS, simultaneously initiates contact with the mysticism and politics section of the CTS (comprised of political theologians) and third-world, ecofeminist theologians (who are members of EATWOT) in order to engender dialogue between these theologians. Drawing upon Marshall’s concept of “sustained-pressure,” the ecofeminist section continues to communicate with CTS as an association and with conveners of sections that would be sympathetic to ecofeminist concerns as discussed above. Likewise, in order to enhance their transnational expertise, the ecofeminist section would encourage ongoing dialogue with scholars in other allied academic disciplines who could

contribute to the credibility of their argument for prioritizing their concerns, especially the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women.

In addition, external pressure continues to be part of this adapted model. Both the CTS and EATWOT share the designation of being associations of theologians, much like comparable “states” in the original boomerang model. Their missions differ slightly, but both share an overall commitment to the development of theology and theological discourse. One association is not necessarily more powerful than the other per se, but in this specific situation, both the mission and research of EATWOT directly coincide with the issue facing a blockage from the CTS, giving credence and testimony to prioritizing the concerns put forth by the ecofeminist section. Thus, in this modification of the model, theologians from EATWOT would pressure organizational leaders, such as key members of its executive committee or the coordinator of the Women’s Commission, to formally reach out to the CTS to further “open up” possibilities for highlighting ecofeminist concerns, such as through a special session or convention theme.

These multiple lines of communication between major actors and other minor actors articulated above form a “sprocket” strategy of information exchange, which minimizes breakdown of communication between sections and groups while simultaneously diffusing knowledge through work the of the ecofeminist section. This adaptation of the original boomerang model constructs additional opportunities for dialogue on both macro and micro levels. Yet, unlike the original model, the third-world actors in this scenario possess powerful testimony which

first-world actors have may have difficult conveying to their peers with the same effect.

As cited in the chapter on Metz's theology, his personal encounters with Latin American liberation theologians and base communities profoundly shaped the focus of his political theology. His experience reflects a similar pattern found in the writings of other first-world, liberation and ecofeminist theologians whose actual encounters with third-world theologians and/or the writings of third-world theologians influenced their writings and commitment to redressing injustices from a theological perspective on intellectual and practical levels.⁵⁵⁴ These experiences also give evidence of the impact of personal, practical encounters between first and third-world theologians.

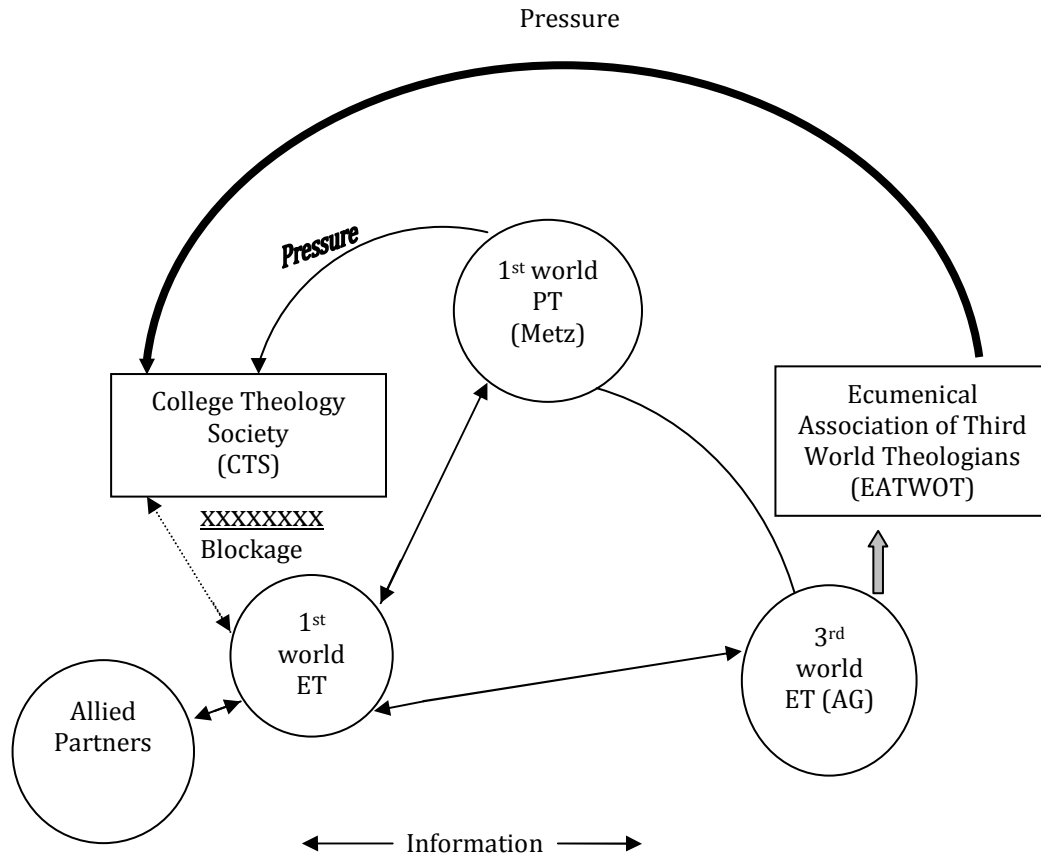
In summary, the boomerang model modified for theological discourse primarily actualizes when the ecofeminist section of the CTS engages the two other groups of major actors in dialogue: the mysticism and politics section of the CTS and the targeted group of third-world theologians. The third-world theologians connect with key organizational leaders of EATWOT. Theologians of the mysticism and politics section and EATWOT both exert pressure on the CTS to explore the possibility of engaging ecofeminist concerns on a broader level. The ecofeminist section also continues to maintain communication with sympathetic theologians in other sections and the CTS as an association (possibly through its officers and board), while also continuing to develop expertise by dialoguing with partners in

⁵⁵⁴ For example, first world, Catholic theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mary Judith Ress, and Dean Brackley, S.J., discuss the influence of their experiences of working with the poor in Latin American in their theologies. See the bibliography for their works.

allied disciplines. These patterns of communication by the ecofeminist section create the “sprocket” strategy.

An important dimension of this modified model is the orchestration of an intentional, intellectual dialogue between first-world, Catholic political theologians and third-world, Christian ecofeminist theologians. This dialogue is another avenue for challenging the intellectual blockage of the CTS regarding the priority of ecofeminist concerns, which could produce a result similar to Metz’s own experience. Given the credibility of a powerful, individual actor like Metz in first-world, Catholic theology (as the founder of the new political theology and precursor to liberation theology), member theologians of the CTS who may have hesitations around the concept of ecofeminism or doubt about its priority might be more inclined to listen to the testimony of a lesser known third-world actor like Gnanadason if one demonstrates how a dialogue between the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz functions within a “common frame of meaning” for the development of first-world, Catholic theology as a whole (see the figure below).

The Boomerang Pattern (Keck and Sikkink) Modified for Theology



Key

ET = Ecofeminist theologians

AG = Aruna Gnanadason

PT = Political theologians

I explore the intellectual dialogue between Gnanadason and Metz in the next section.

The Theologies of Gnanadason and Metz in Dialogue

As discussed in the introduction, this dissertation presents a model for opening first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminism, as articulated by third-world, Christian ecofeminist theologians. Keck and Sikkink note that one of the

ways in which network actors accomplish their goals is to help reframe issues, as cited earlier.⁵⁵⁵ In this section I reframe third-world, ecofeminist concerns by utilizing Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity as a frame for integrating Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology. In order to do so, I compare and contrast (1) their approaches to engaging the third world, (2) their approaches to theological anthropology, and (3) Metz's concept of a "mysticism of open eyes" and Gnanadason's concept of a "spirituality of resistance." My intention is to open first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminism on an intellectual level.

Approach to Engaging the Third World

As noted in the previous chapters on the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz, both scholars focus on suffering in the third world as a central theme in their writings. In fact, Metz recognizes the third world as one of the three key challenges that led him to develop a more practical, fundamental theology, which became his political theology. Referencing his encounters with liberation theologians and personal experiences in Latin America, he also clearly acknowledges the practical implications of the third world being dominated by the West in his theology. These implications lead him to assert that first-world, Catholic theology, must respond to the suffering of the third world and its ecclesial dimensions on theological and pastoral levels.

As discussed in the chapter on Metz's theology, he argues that appropriating the cultural diversity in the global Church both instructs first-world theologians to

⁵⁵⁵ Keck and Sikkink, 5.

reexamine the Church's history "with the eyes of our victims" and compels first-world theology to become attuned to themes of conversion and repentance. This theological approach to engaging the third world advocates greater sensitivity to and awareness of the suffering in the third world as a locus for theology. From this locus flows Metz's emphasis on a mysticism that recognizes the preferential option for the poor, which, he argues, Jesus practiced (citing the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel).

Metz's writings appear to be directed primarily toward first-world Christians and theologians who are blind to the situation of the poor in the third world and the culpability of the first world in their suffering. In addition, he discusses the role of religious pluralism in cultural and religious contexts as it relates to theology, but his approach lacks substance and depth. Likewise, despite his strong claims about the challenge of the third world, which includes listening to the cries of suffering in the third world, the writings of third-world theologians are strangely absent from his theology.

In contrast, Gnanadason consistently incorporates voices from various male and female, first and third-world theologians throughout her writings. Her theological approach to the third world also includes intentional interdisciplinary and interreligious sources that reflect the pluralism within her cultural context of India. Yet, one downfall of her inclusion of these various voices in her writings is that her own theological contributions appear could be further developed. However, by weaving together a diversity of voices, she reveals both the commonalities and differences among Christian theologians. In this way, she also acknowledges and

engages contested meanings of Christian concepts among theologians that relate to ecofeminist concerns, such as dominion and stewardship.

Gnanadason primarily focuses on the plight of poor, Indigenous women in India as her frame of reference for developing her ecofeminist approach to theology. She also contributes much to theology from an epistemological perspective in the way that she demonstrates how Christianity can benefit from the knowledge, experiences, practices, and wisdom of Indigenous peoples. As I discuss below, she highlights the way in which their spirituality is deeply connected to their preservation of the earth. Moreover, she presents clear, concrete examples of their actions to support her claims, as with the Chipko and Narmada River movements. Much like Metz, her theology possesses a practical dimension which intrinsically engages the political implications of theology, but she also includes concrete applications that illustrate her arguments.

Therefore, Metz's approach to engaging the third world provides a foundation for putting pressure on first-world, Catholic theologians to open the locus of theology to the suffering of the third world. By highlighting the North-South conflict within the both the Church and theology, he holds a mirror to first-world theologians who ignore the impact of globalization and lack ecclesial and theological awareness about the third world. However, he does not incorporate the transnational expertise of third-world theologians despite his acknowledgement of their influence on his theology (particularly Latin American liberation theologians).

Incorporating Gnanadason's treatment of the voices of third-world theologians with Metz's theology exemplifies how first-world theology as a whole

can be strengthened on an intellectual level by third-world theologies. Likewise, through her presentation of the lives and voices of Indigenous women in India, she offers a platform for expanding an understanding of theological epistemology that values the wisdom of Indigenous peoples in the third world. Along these lines, her various examples validate her ecofeminist perspective. Thus, the mutually informed integration of Metz and Gnanadason's approaches to the third world counters, in Metz's words, the "tactical provincialism" he argues against but fails to avoid in his own theological approach to the third world and encourages information exchange which values transnational expertise of professional colleagues.

Approach to Theological Anthropology

While this dissertation specifically engages Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity, theological anthropology is a key theme throughout his political theology. This theme becomes apparent in his argument for the "authority of those who suffer," both past and present, as cited earlier in this dissertation.⁵⁵⁶ Specific to his construction of the concept of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity, this theme of suffering is reflected in the mystical component and undergirds his promotion of universal justice and human rights for all people, which comprises the political component.

Likewise, in Metz's explication of the challenge of the third world, he writes that his political theology promotes a new anthropology that challenges the influence of domination through recognition and incorporation of the diversity

⁵⁵⁶ Metz, forward to *A Passion for God*, 4.

within the global Church. Despite his acknowledgement of oppression and racism, he fails to address the role of gender inequalities in regard to oppression in the third world. Similarly, environmental justice does not factor into his theology in an explicit way.

Along these lines, some theologians may argue that Metz's theological anthropology reflects an anthropocentric approach due to his lack of attention to other species and the intrinsic value of our natural environment.⁵⁵⁷ Due to the focus of this dissertation on the mystical-political dimension of Metz's theology, I do not discuss this aspect here. Rather, I argue that Metz's appropriation of theological anthropology, which influences his mystical-political dimension of Christianity, provides a window for further discussion of ecofeminist concerns and the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world, that has yet to be opened by Metz's theology to date.

Gnanadason's theological anthropology resonates with Metz's emphasis on the suffering of other human beings. She also acknowledges the voices of members of marginalized communities, such as the Dalits, who challenge an anti-anthropocentric approach. While Gnanadason advocates "a wider bio-centrism," her appropriation of theological anthropology does not discount these voices. Overall, through her explication of the theology of dominion and its implications, she clearly demonstrates the theological and practical links between violations against women and the earth. By doing so, she offers transnational expertise on how to draw from

⁵⁵⁷ Ashley acknowledges this assessment but argues that "*because Metz articulates his theology from the vantage point of the challenge of becoming and continuing to be a subject in solidarity with others, in God's presence, that his theology offers crucial resources to a contemporary environmental theology,*" Ashley, "Environmental Concern," 140.

the experiences and traditions of Indigenous women in the third world in order to strengthen Christian theological anthropology in a way that takes into account humanity's interconnectedness with the earth.

Along these lines, traditional Christian approaches to theological anthropology include understandings of sin and grace. As indicated in earlier chapters of this dissertation, the theologies of Metz and Gnanadason both contribute unique appropriations of these ideas. First, Metz points out that in the Bible, Jesus concerns himself more with people's suffering than with their sin. As cited earlier, Metz writes that, for Jesus, "sin was above all a refusal to participate in the suffering of others, a refusal to see beyond one's own history of suffering," and that, in imitating Jesus, the early Christian community attended to "the suffering of others."⁵⁵⁸ In effect, Metz highlights the communal aspect of sin, focusing on the failure of responsibility to one's neighbor. Conversely, he advocates a visible grace that perceives the suffering of others. His appropriation of the concepts of sin and grace could be applied to the situation of women in the third world as well. As reiterated by Metz, from a Christian perspective, our neighbors include those within and beyond our borders.

Likewise, from an ecofeminist perspective, caring for our neighbors implies caring for the natural environment in which we all reside, whether we recognize the intrinsic value of the earth or not. As noted earlier, by challenging the theology of dominion, Gnanadason advocates an understanding of sin that includes harm done to the earth and points out that the manifestation of grace abounds among

⁵⁵⁸ Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds," 230.

Indigenous communities in the third world that are committed to the preservation of the earth. She creates the concept of “brown grace” to identify Indigenous traditions of prudent care which allows for an appropriation of these traditions in Christian theological terms, despite that she does not clearly articulate her definition of prudence.

Gnanadason also observes that Indian, and more broadly, Asian women, appropriate concepts like sin and redemption differently from women in the first world. Her rationale for this difference is that their “context of struggle embraces more than individual and personal concerns. To Asian/Indian women, liberation includes the assurance of abundant life for one’s family, community, and the whole society (particularly those most oppressed) and even for one’s nation,” highlighting the social dimensions of sin and grace.⁵⁵⁹ In addition, her ability to translate the practices of Indigenous communities into Christian terms exemplifies how first-world, Catholic theology could be opened to new and deeper understandings of traditional approaches to classic Christian concepts, taking into account the experiences of God found within our global community, a position Metz affirms as well.

Therefore, Metz’s approach to theological anthropology challenges the practical implications of the domination of the first-world, including a call for conversion and repentance and practice of a mysticism that refuses to turn a blind eye to the suffering of the third world. This approach bodes well for integration with Gnanadason’s approach to theological anthropology which counters a theology of

⁵⁵⁹ Gnanadason, “Jesus and the Asian Woman,” 174.

dominion and recognizes the intrinsic value of the earth. Integrating their approaches to theological anthropology could provide theological justification for challenging first-world Christians and theologians to recognize their social responsibility to their neighbors, which includes preservation of all creation. This responsibility would also include advocating the promotion of human rights and universal justice to ameliorate the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women. Gnanadason's theology also offers theological language and practical implications which Metz's theology lacks to accomplish this task. In addition, both theologies provide creative interpretations of traditional Christian concepts that deepen our understanding of theological anthropology, which also informs their appropriations of mysticism and spirituality, which we now discuss.

Metz's "Mysticism of Open Eyes" and Gnanadason's "Spirituality of Resistance"

As previously stated, Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity comprises both a concern for the memory of suffering (the mystical) and a commitment to universal justice (the political). Connected to this mystical-political dimension of Christianity is a mysticism of open eyes lived out through Christian witnessing to God that recognizes its political implications. Metz often uses the concepts of "mysticism of open eyes" and "mysticism of suffering unto God" interchangeably, defining this mysticism as "an unconditional obligation to feel the suffering of others," cited earlier in this dissertation.⁵⁶⁰ He understands this mysticism as rooted in the practical demands of Christian discipleship to be in

⁵⁶⁰ Metz, "God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time," 41.

solidarity with and respond to the needs of the poor and to the suffering of others, whether friends or enemies.

In response to the suffering of peoples in the third world, Metz avers that the Christian theological discourse about God must be reframed “under categories of resistance and transformation,” which he thinks can influence political change, as noted in chapter three.⁵⁶¹ He suggests that world religions form a coalition to lead this type of resistance against the suffering of others and sees this collaborative venture as a way to positively influence politics, ideally leading to universal justice and the promotion of peace. Similarly, while Metz roots the concept of the mystical-political dimension within Christianity, he suggests that the mysticism of suffering can be found in other world religions, especially monotheistic traditions. He specifically compares the role of suffering in Buddhism and Christianity, but his comparison is very limited in its scope.

While Metz’s noble overtures to world religions encourage greater interreligious dialogue and social action, his treatment of mysticism within world religions is somewhat trite and unconvincing. He does not consult any specific doctrines, nor does he incorporate the works of theologians from other world religions. With this lack of depth and serious engagement of world religions themselves, Metz’s argument for greater collaboration appears platitudinous and lacking in concrete application. Therefore, his appropriation of mysticism in this area could benefit greatly from scholarship on spirituality and world religions.

⁵⁶¹ Metz, “The New Political Theology,” 27.

Similar to Metz, Gnanadason also often employs the term “spirituality” without a consistent definition of this concept. Yet, she does explore various spiritual resources which are deeply imbedded in India’s history, especially within Indigenous communities who practice traditions of prudent care of the earth. As cited earlier, the ways in which Indigenous women discover spiritual resources in their daily struggle for survival inspire and shape her work.⁵⁶²

Gnanadason reiterates that intimately related to Indigenous traditions of prudent care is a deep spirituality that recognizes the interconnectedness of humanity and our natural environment. As discussed in chapter two, she points out that these traditions of prudence provide a foundation for “women-centered movements of political struggle to protect the earth” and that “an Indigenous cosmology that respects the earth as mother, as life-giving and life-sustaining” inspires these resistance movements.⁵⁶³ From her explication of their experiences, it appears that a spirituality of resistance flows from a spirit of resistance within and among Indigenous women who continue to risk their lives to protect the environment.

The spiritual connection between humanity and the earth recognized by Indigenous women which compels them to work for environmental protection leads Gnanadason ask what Christianity can learn from their traditions and examples. In relation to this question, she seeks to rediscover resources within Christianity itself to engender this concern. She also questions why “the courage and commitment” displayed by Indigenous peoples and their wisdom for caring and protecting the

⁵⁶² Gnanadason, “Traditions of Prudence Lost,” 80, 85.

⁵⁶³ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 9, 15.

earth have failed to influence both the Church and the ecumenical movement and continue to be marginalized in theological discourse.⁵⁶⁴

Through her writings, Gnanadason demonstrates how Christianity has much to learn from Indigenous communities and traditions, especially from their deep spiritual connection with our natural environment lived out practically through involvement in resistance movements to protect the earth. As noted earlier, she concludes her monograph by charging Christians, churches, and theologians with the task of resisting actions that harm the earth and our global community. She encourages them to participate in the practice of a spirituality which is engaged with the political implications of environmental justice as a way of following through with this task. In light of the situation of our world, she concludes that “the search for a spirituality of resistance and an earth ethic can wait no longer.”⁵⁶⁵ Likewise, she argues that tenets of an ecofeminist theology, as outlined in the chapter on her theology, can assist in this search.

In contrast with Metz, Gnanadason’s theology is intrinsically ecumenical and interreligious in its approach. Although her ecumenical interlocutors far outnumber her interreligious sources, her treatment of world religions is more substantial than Metz. In addition, while her own social and cultural context lends itself to this approach, she presents a fair assessment of the contributions of both first and third-world theologies along with her critique. In related writings on religion and violence, she also draws from her practical experiences of interreligious dialogue to inform both her theological discourse and suggestions for further collaborative

⁵⁶⁴ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 43.

⁵⁶⁵ Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women!*, 106.

efforts among theologians from various world religions. Metz's theology could benefit from this model.

Therefore, integration of the concepts of a mysticism of open eyes and a spirituality of resistance allows for the development of a mysticism or spirituality which is aware of the suffering of both humanity and the earth. This awareness is accompanied by a concern for universal justice that resists forces which would do harm and violence to all of creation. The practice of this "mystical-political spirituality of resistance," while rooted in Christianity, bears the possibility of convergence with other world religions that share these concerns in order to work toward the healing and reconciliation of our global community. In my conclusion I discuss this link between spirituality and social action in more depth.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored how an adaptation of the boomerang model could be constructed to encourage practical and intellectual dialogues among theologians that could open first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminism. Ideally, apart from more research and writing, increased engagement of environmental justice issues and ecofeminist concerns by first-world theologians through their teaching, office hours, and university service could also deepen students' knowledge of these concerns as they relate to theology and subsequently demonstrate a concrete way to connect spirituality with social action. Similarly, theologians' work on these issues could result in the sharing of informed research

with actors in the CCCC, the USCCB, and other similar groups whose priorities include serving the pastoral needs of faith communities.

Likewise, comparing and contrasting Metz and Gnanadason's approaches to the third world, theological anthropology, and mysticism and spirituality demonstrates how the amalgamation of their theologies could lead to an overall stronger theological response to ecofeminist concerns, especially in the third world. Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity provides a frame for challenging first-world, Catholic theology to open its eyes to the suffering of the third world and the practical demands associated with Christian discipleship. Gnanadason's appropriation of ecofeminist theology explicates the specific, grave challenges facing both Indigenous women in the third world and our natural environment. However, she also highlights how the link between their spirituality and care for the earth leads them to become agents of social change.

A broader understanding of suffering and how the suffering of humanity is linked to the suffering of the earth also informs the political aspect of the mystical-political dimension and deepens concern for universal justice. Therefore, by giving voice to the traditions of prudent care of Indigenous women and the way in which they practice a spirituality of resistance, Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology opens the eyes of first-world, Catholic theologians to third-world ecofeminism and the practical expression of a spirituality of resistance committed to redressing environmental degradation, which we discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Potential Implications and Future Considerations

As stated in the introduction and explored throughout this project, this dissertation responds the dearth of scholarship in first-world, Catholic theology, predominantly in the U.S., that adequately and actively engages theologies of third-world women who highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, humanity's interconnectedness with all creation, and the spiritualities of third-world women that shape their relationship to and care for the earth. My adaptation of the "boomerang pattern of influence" model articulated by Keck and Sikkink constructs a model for developing a transnational network of theologians that encourages intentional dialogue on practical and intellectual levels in order to grapple with this lacuna. As part of this model, the interfacing of Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology with Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity exemplifies this dialogue.

Through my engagement with Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology in chapter two, I articulated her key interlocutors and sources, paying special attention to the way in which her social and cultural context shape her appropriation of liberation and feminist theologies from both the first and third worlds. I framed her theology as a response to a common target in her writings: the theology of dominion and its harmful, practical implications for women and the earth, especially but not exclusively in the third world. As Gnanadason recognizes herself, her voice is one among several key ecofeminist theologians from the third world. However, as I pointed out earlier, she presents unique contributions to ecofeminist theology and

theological approaches to environmental justice. In order to systematize the themes and concepts found throughout her writings, I organized her thought into three theological categories: anthropology, ethics, and the relation between spirituality and social action, accenting her appropriation of Indigenous traditions and the concept of a spirituality of resistance.

As discussed in chapter two, Gnanadason's approach to ecofeminist theology provides an explication of third-world ecofeminism that could help open first-world, Catholic theology to better understand and appropriate the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world, and the ways in which Indigenous women model a spirituality of resistance that recognizes humanity's interconnectedness with all creation. In particular, her theology demonstrates how Christian theology can maintain central underpinnings and tenets of the Christian faith while challenging harmful interpretations of the Bible and traditions regarding women and the earth. Her approach to inculturation brings the voices, wisdom traditions, and ethics of Indigenous women to the forefront of her ecofeminist theology as sources from which Christian theology and practice can benefit. By doing so, her writings highlight the intrinsic value of Indigenous experiences and traditions and then translate them into Christian terms that speak to our responsibility to our global community, which includes care for all of creation. As a key aspect of the dialogue between the theologies of Gnanadason and Metz, her appropriation of a spirituality that resists harm done to both women and our natural environment provides a way forward in redressing these wrongs from a Christian perspective.

In chapter three I focused on Metz's mystical-political dimension of Christianity, which is a key component of his political theology. After discussing how his experiences of war and interactions with the third world shaped the development of his theology, I explored key aspects of his mystical-political dimension. I showed how this dimension combines the recognition of the suffering of others, past or present (the mystical), with the responsibility to work toward universal justice for both the dead and the living (the political).

In particular, I highlighted Metz's concern for the suffering in the third world in relation to his mystical-political dimension of Christianity. His mysticism of open eyes directly calls upon first-world Christians to open their eyes to this suffering, their culpability, and their responsibility to work toward eradicating this suffering. In addition, I pointed out how he positively incorporates religious and cultural pluralism but that his attempts fall short of seriously engaging world religions and inculturation. In particular, his lack of concrete examples demonstrating his call to embrace the practical demands of Christianity minimizes the power of the mystical-political dimension.

As a way of engaging first-world Catholic theology with third-world ecofeminism and the theologies of Metz and Gnanadason, I adapted the boomerang model by constructing a transnational advocacy network (TAN) of theologians committed to ecofeminist concerns, which I explicated in chapter four. I suggested the idea of a "sprocket" strategy to encourage better communication and broader concern among theologians around these concerns. I supported my argument by outlining how current trends within major associations of first-world, Catholic

theologians suggest greater sensitivity to issues related to both environmental justice and gender providing a window for further discussion of ecofeminist concerns.

As part of my adaptation of the model, I also orchestrated an intellectual dialogue between Gnanadason and Metz which integrated their theological approaches to the third world, theological anthropology, and spirituality and mysticism. Comparing and contrasting these aspects revealed commonalities around concern for the suffering in the third world, a challenge to first-world Christians to accept greater social responsibility to attend to the suffering of their neighbors in the global community, resistance to dominant theologies that fail to redress oppression, and the development of a mystical-political spirituality of resistance that encourages an awareness of the suffering of others and leads to concrete actions for social justice. This dialogue also demonstrated how the amalgamation of aspects of their theologies could open first-world, Catholic theology to third-world ecofeminism and more deeply engage the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women, especially in the third world. In particular, I demonstrated how Indigenous third-world women can model for first-world Christians how to practice a mystical-political spirituality of resistance to redress harm done to both women and the earth.

In the next two sections I discuss the potential implications of activating my adaptation of the boomerang model and future considerations. First, I focus on specific implications for first-world, Catholic theologians. Second, I explore how this

project can deepen our understanding of the relationship between Christian spirituality and social action.

Potential Implications

As briefly mentioned in chapter three, one of the potential implications of activating the adapted boomerang model is that first-world, Catholic theologians would gain more expertise regarding ecofeminist concerns and a deeper understanding of the global effects of environmental degradation, particularly in the third world. Activation of this model would also give voice to the challenges facing the third world and explain how Christian ecofeminist theology has much to contribute by articulating and responding to these challenges on intellectual and practical levels. Broadening their understanding of environmental injustices from an ecofeminist perspective could also encourage first-world theologians to reflect upon the ways in which they may need to open their eyes to related issues on local and national levels, encouraging them to become environmental justice advocates. This could lead them to join centers, organizations, or committees within their neighborhoods, cities, or faith communities, that engage the practical dimensions of environmental justice. Their practical involvement could also inform further research and lead to the development of additional networks committed to environmental justice.

Theologians who gain more transnational expertise regarding these global dimensions of ecofeminism and environmental injustices could also be resources for their students, broader university communities, local ecclesial communities, and

perhaps to larger Catholic entities such as the USCCB. For instance, American Catholic journalist John Allen observes that many college students resonate with “hot-button” social issues, including “ecology, especially the intersection between spirituality and environmental sensitivity, including ecofeminism,”⁵⁶⁶ suggesting a favorable entry point for Catholic theologians on this issue. In effect, theologians could become valued partners in environmental justice endeavors on intellectual and academic levels.

Likewise, Catholic theologians, bishops, and the current pope remind us of our responsibility to care for the earth. However, the wisdom of Indigenous women could further deepen our understanding and practice of this responsibility, and the work of ecofeminist theologians who give voice to this wisdom continue to be marginalized in ecclesial and theological circles. Through activation of the adapted boomerang model, first-world, Catholic theologians are in a crucial position to make these concerns a priority for theological discourse.

In addition, as Gnanadason’s ecofeminist theology underscores, Indigenous women exemplify for Christians how to develop a spirituality that recognizes our interconnectedness with the earth. Gnanadason’s theology also reveals how greater ecumenical, interreligious, intercultural, and interdisciplinary dialogues can become positive avenues for deepening our Christian sensibilities to environmental concerns. Along these lines, her work encourages theologians and ecclesial leaders to examine the Christian tradition for ways in which we can challenge negative appropriations of Christian concepts that hinder our understanding of

⁵⁶⁶ John L. Allen, “Catholic Colleges & Universities: Navigating the future of theology,” *National Catholic Reporter* 14 November 2008, <http://ncronline.org/node/2488>.

environmental justice. This task includes reclaiming marginalized concepts and developing new understandings of anthropology, epistemology, ethics, and spirituality that incorporate a response to the environmental injustices facing our global community.

Similarly, as demonstrated by Gnanadason and Metz, their personal experiences with the third world led them to become greater advocates for members of our global community. Metz's mystical-political dimension provides the theological frame for the challenge to first-world, Catholic theology, and Gnanadason provides a theological response that exemplifies a link between spirituality and social action that highlights the practical dimension of ecofeminist theology from a third-world perspective. The integration of these concepts offers additional challenges to first-world, Catholic theologians in the areas of Christian practice and epistemology.

Along these lines, Metz and Gnanadason remind their readers that if we are to seriously engage theological questions we cannot avoid the practical experiences of the suffering of others. Specific to the field of ecofeminist theology, Gnanadason's work exposes a tacit, if not explicit, dismissal of knowledge that does not fit a first-world, Western model. Her theology invites Christian theologians from both the first and third worlds to acknowledge the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation experienced by Indigenous women in the third world and to give credence to the wisdom and practical solutions they can teach others as well. In light of these potential implications, I discuss the future considerations regarding the relationship between Christian spirituality and social action in the next section.

Future Considerations

When reflecting on future considerations, one cannot discount the practical and biographical dimensions of theology highlighted by both Gnanadason and Metz. As the title of his seminal work on political theology states, Metz intended to develop a practical, fundamental theology that attended to the suffering of others. Likewise, Gnanadason's monograph implores her readers to listen to the voices of wisdom of Indigenous women as she calls for a stronger intellectual and practical theological response to the effects of environmental degradation.

Both Metz and Gnanadason consistently reference how their personal experiences inform their theologies. Metz refused to allow himself to forget the suffering of Auschwitz, extending this preservation of memory to contemporary situations of suffering. Drawing from her personal experiences growing up in India and her interactions with Indigenous peoples, Gnanadason brings the suffering of Indigenous women and the earth to the forefront of theological discourse. In doing so, she also points out how communal memories passed on through oral tradition keeps alive the wisdom of Indigenous peoples, leading to further preservation of the earth through the practice of a spirituality of resistance.

However, when comparing the practical and biographical dimensions of the theologies of Metz and Gnanadason, an element of dynamism emerges in Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology that I argue is lacking in Metz's mystical-political dimension. Indeed, Metz champions the memories of those who have suffered and stresses the importance of looking beyond our own suffering to recognize the suffering of others in order to prevent global conflict. However, despite his

compelling contribution of the idea of a mysticism of open eyes to this suffering and the political component of striving for universal justice for the living and the dead, there is an element of transformation that is somewhat muted in Metz's mystical-political dimension.

Metz consistently refers to his traumatic memory of war (discussed in chapter one), which he admits is in the background of all his theology, even today. In his words, this experience is a "dangerous memory" for him that compels him to act on behalf of those who have suffered and continue to suffer. While his approach bears the possibility of inspiring others to act, he does not claim his own experience as a victim/survivor of trauma and how this relates to his appropriation of the mystical-political dimension of Christianity.⁵⁶⁷ He fails to capture the transformative power of claiming one's victimhood and understanding oneself as survivor that can move one to positive social action with communal benefits.

Conversely, Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology points to very specific examples of social movements, ecumenical conferences, and theological conversations that demonstrate how a spirituality of resistance can be practiced. She relates narratives that give evidence of the transformative power of moving from victim to survivor: the stories of Indigenous women who experience the worst effects of environmental degradation and risk their lives to protect the earth. The

⁵⁶⁷ Theologian Johann M. Vento discusses Metz's concept of "suffering unto God" in connection with trauma, specifically violence against women and sexual abuse in general. However, she does not specifically address Metz's own trauma or the relationship between the mystical-political dimension and trauma from the perspective of spirituality. See Johann M. Vento, "Violence, Trauma, and Resistance: A Feminist Appraisal of Metz's Mysticism of Suffering Unto God," *Horizons* 29, no. 1 (2002): 7-22, and Johann M. Vento, "Not in Vain: Memoria Passionis and Violence against Women," in *Missing God? Cultural Amnesia and Political Theology*, edited by John K. Downey, Jürgen Manemann, and Steve T. Ostovich (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 79-92.

concept of a spirituality of resistance is not unique to Gnanadason.⁵⁶⁸ Her particular contribution lies in her ability to demonstrate how Indigenous women are able to harness the transformative power of their own suffering and work toward ameliorating environmental injustices which impact other women and all creation.

In making this point, I do not discount the importance of past suffering and strongly advocate recognizing the suffering of others, especially in the third world. Indeed, keeping alive the memories of those who have suffered is important and a constitutive dimension of the Christian faith. As exemplified through the Eucharist, Christians keep alive the memory of Jesus' suffering through storytelling and breaking bread together. Yet, as Metz points out, Christians are also called to model themselves after his compassion, care, and concern for those who are suffering. Christians are a resurrection people. It is the transformation of Jesus' suffering that produces hope.

Gnanadason's explication of a spirituality of resistance reflects the dynamic and transformative power of a spirituality that recognizes one's victimhood but refuses to allow suffering to have the last word. As she discusses in her writings, with help of God's grace, this spirituality resists any forces that deny the intrinsic value of each person and all of creation. This spirituality also recognizes the empowering agency within each person no matter their social status while calling upon those in our global community with political and social power to resist complicit and explicit actions that negate this intrinsic value.

⁵⁶⁸ See Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. German edition originally published in 1997.

Therefore, a spirituality of resistance as described by Gnanadason and exemplified by Indigenous women in the third world comprises social action as an innate quality. Through their actions on behalf of their communities and the natural environment, these women challenge first-world Christians and theologians to reexamine a false separation of individual spirituality and social action. Future research on this topic could lead to a deeper understanding of how suffering that has been transformed into non-violent resistance could lead to a greater promotion of environmental justice and protection, especially from the perspective of victim / survivors who have found ways to transform their own “dangerous memories.” In addition, Gnanadason’s approach to these injustices provides an example of how to engage in ecumenical, interreligious, and interdisciplinary social action as well.

While this dissertation focused on the transnational expertise and wisdom of ecofeminism in the third world, we do not have to travel far to put this expertise and wisdom into practice. A mystical-political spirituality of resistance recognizes the interconnectedness of our global community and the impact our individual actions have on the collective state of our natural environment. This spirituality promotes healing and reconciliation at local, national, and international levels, but it begins with an awareness of our agency and responsibility at a micro level. We can begin to practice this spirituality by asking ourselves how our own suffering, the suffering of others, and the suffering of all creation from environmental injustices calls us to resist this harm through non-violent, social action beginning within our own communities, our own backyards, and within our own hearts.

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APPENDIX

The academic year in which I graduated with my M.Div. degree included two profound national traumas in the United States: 9/11 and the breaking of the clergy sexual abuse scandal in Boston. As a young graduate, I could not fathom at the time how these events would shape my professional ministry and my approach to theology. Since then, I have been privileged to walk with many people as they processed past and present traumas and suffering. These stories drew me to Metz's theology as I, too, struggled to make sense of trauma and suffering from a theological perspective in the lives of others and in my own life.

However, unlike Metz, I turned to both theology and psychology to process my experiences, leading to the healing of my own "dangerous memories." The transformative power of this experience propelled my research over the last few years, where I discovered Gnanadason's ecofeminist theology. I found myself inspired by the Indian, Indigenous women about whom she wrote and the way her writings provided a platform for their voices to be heard across the world. I particularly resonated with the ways in which they practiced a spirituality of resistance.

Upon further reflection, I realized that this spirituality of resistance was present among people to whom and with whom I ministered – and within my own heart. In that spirit, I conclude this dissertation with a few of my poems that I believe reflect the spirituality of resistance I have witnessed throughout my life, in gratitude to God for the opportunities to be touched by the stories of so many beautifully courageous people.

In-breaking

One might think
 the earth's grandeur alone
 would compel us
 to give you homage,
 but seldom, it seems,
 do we recognize
 the noble simplicity of it all.

No, we like to keep things complicated.

It is too uncomfortable:
 the silence,
 the stillness,
 the vulnerability...
 We much prefer:
 the cacophony,
 the drama,
 the deadbolts...

Yet, somehow, you break in.

And we catch a glimpse of you
 smiling at us
 in the high chair,
 and we are moved,
 with utter amazement
 that together
 we have created
 someone
 so precious,
 so beautiful.

Is this not how you see us?

Regardless,
 we pretend
 not like girls and boys
 with silly imaginations
 but like women and men
 who fear they have so much to lose
 and so become what they are not
 to play with other grown-ups
 afraid to change
 the rules of the game.

But you keep inviting us anyway.

Coaxing gently,
always with the hope
that someday
we just might decide
to join you
at the children's table
remembering
what it was like
before the weariness of the world
ruined our party.

And then, we'll dance...

once again,
wildly
unabashedly
arms flailing
laughter ensuing
simply enjoying
the moment,

as daughters and sons of the light.

Baggage

Zach used to say to me,
“I wonder what is in your backpack.
It seems so heavy.”
Funny.
I thought it was invisible.
Only someone with his depth of suffering would notice.

It would take me quite some time
before I would open up my backpack to anyone—
including me.

I was afraid that everything would fall out.
Eventually, everything did.
And it wasn't pretty.
It was messy,
me spilling out all over the floor.

The scariest part
was the anticipation of it all.
Sure,
there were forgotten memories,
sad stories
and unspeakable ones,
but I hadn't counted on the fact
that they wouldn't fit back in.

I haven't seen Zach in years,
but if he saw me today,
he'd notice I'm carrying a purse,
just large enough to hold what I need
to remind me of where I've been
so I won't go back there again.

Psalm 46: A Reprise

Be still, and know that I am God.

Be still,
and you'll know when it's time to share your story.

Be still,
and know that I will give you the words you need to speak.

Be still,
and know that this will get easier the more often you tell it.

Be still,
and know that I am with you now,
I have always been with you,
and I will always be with you.

Be still, and know that I am your God
who brought you out of shame and alienation
to this place of healing, of love, of understanding, of wisdom, of acceptance, of joy
so that you may help others to do the same.

Gratitude

Gratitude is
being able to look back
on the memories that
made you forget
the woman
God created you to be
discovering
that the power
you once gave them
to hold over you
is now
the power within
that allows you to
breathe into the reality
of the woman
you are becoming
remembering the Love
from whom you came.