

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF JON SOBRINO AND CONTEMPORARY MARTYRDOM

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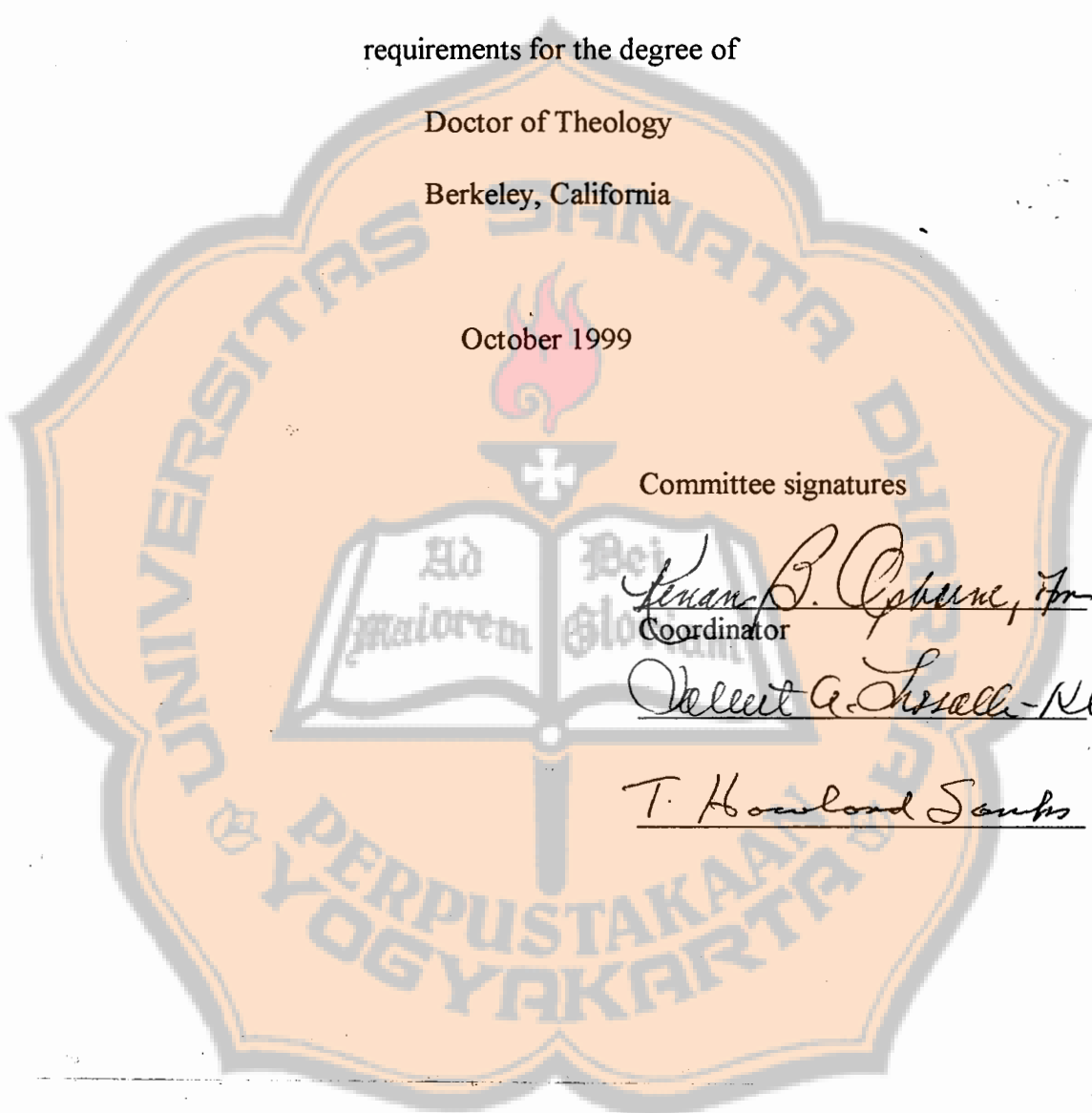
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of Jon Sobrino's christology of mercy, beginning from an hypothesis that important changes took place in Sobrino's Christology through the experience of the death of the six Jesuits of his community together with their co-workers and of the many people in El Salvador who were "martyred" such as Grande and Romero.

Chapter one explains briefly the social background and pastoral involvements of the church of El Salvador wherein Sobrino develops his christology. Chapter two explains the emerging of a christology of mercy from the womb of Latin America and El Salvador in particular. Here two main christological books of Sobrino: Christology at the Crossroads and Jesus in Latin America are discussed as well as the influential thoughts of Ignacio Ellacuría. The ultimate goal of Sobrino's christology is to participate in an act of "taking the crucified people down from the cross" with all its costs as demonstrated in the life and ministry of the "martyrs". Chapter three explains the event of the killing of the six Jesuits at the University of Central America and its significance. They also embodied the cost of discipleship, martyrdom. Chapter four demonstrates the changes and new emphases in Sobrino's christology of mercy in a more detailed explanation. Jesus the Liberator and La Fe en Jesucristo, written after the killing, are analyzed. A new definition of theology as *intellectus amoris* and at the same time as *intellectus gratiae* reflects the depth of these changes. Chapter five presents both selected criticisms and significant contributions of Sobrino's christology. This evaluation and critique eventually shows Sobrino's credibility and the continuing relevance of his christology. Sobrino's christology of mercy ends with a solid conclusion that Jesus is indeed the Good News from God, especially as seen from the perspective of the hope of the victims.

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Two extraordinary occasions to meet the Jesuits of Central and South America particularly El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Perú introduced me to their historical ministry and personal commitment. In spite of their busy schedules, they were always warm and friendly to me. There, in 1996, I met Jon Sobrino and his community as well as his co-workers at the University of Central America. Though the idea to write on his christology was not mature at that point, the experience of meeting him and my contact with the witnesses and co-workers of his murdered community gave me an unforgettable experience of joy, hope as well as an invitation to share the good news of following Jesus and loving the poor. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of them. They have made this work of analysis into a work of love.

It is important to remember that without a good committee of my dissertation, this work would have not been realized at its best. I am especially thankful to Dr. Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M. who chairs the committee and since the very beginning of the writing has been patiently directing this work with his friendly remarks, critical evaluations as well as many other edifying suggestions. I am also thankful to Dr. Robert A. Lassalle-Klein and Dr. T. Howland Sanks, S.J. who share a similar concern on the topic and have made generous and invaluable evaluations on the dissertation. Finally, I affectionately extend my deepest gratitude to my mother, father, brothers and sister whose unceasing support and best wishes have kept me going to finish this dissertation.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARENA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance)
CEB	Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (Base Ecclesial Communities)
CEHILA	Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia Latinoamericana (Comission for the study of the History of the Latin American Church)
CELAM	Conferencia Episcopal latinoamericana (Latin American Episcopal Conference)
CEDES	Conferencia Episcopal de El Salvador (Salvadoran Episcopal Conference)
FDR	Frente Democrático Revolucionario (Democratic Revolutionary Front)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation). Five political groups that formed the FMLN are
ERP	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (Revolutionary Army of the People)
FAL	Fuerzas Armadas de la Liberación (Armed Forces of the Liberation)
RN	Resistencia Nacional (National Resistance)
FPL	Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (Popular Liberation Forces)
PRTC	Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos (Central American Revolutionary Workers Party)
UGB	Unión Guerrera Blanca (White Warriors' Union)
SJ	Society of Jesus
UCA	Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" (Central American University "José Simeón Cañas")
CIDAI	Centro de Información, Documentación y Apoyo a la Investigación (Center for Information, Documentation, and Support for Research)
CRT	Centro de Reflexión Teológica (Center for Theological Reflection)
IDHUCA	Instituto de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Centroamericana (Institute of Human Rights of the UCA)
IUDOP	Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (Institute of Public Opinion)
ECA	Estudios Centroamericanos (Central American Studies)
RLT	Revista Latinoamericana de Teología (Latin American Theological Review)
UES	Universidad de El Salvador (University of El Salvador)

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PREFACE

The Latin American christology of Jon Sobrino is distinctive, since it focuses not only on Jesus but also on martyrdom and the crucified people. The "preferential option for the poor" becomes its major hermeneutical principle. In the case of Sobrino, his permanent focus on the reality of the poor or the so-called crucified people, brought him to the world of today's victims. This is demonstrated vividly in the twelve years of civil war in El Salvador that led to the martyrdom of many friends. This finally caused changes in his christology.

This dissertation argues that important changes took place in Sobrino's Christology especially through the experience of the death of the six Jesuits of his community and their co-workers but also Rutilio Grande, Monseñor Romero and the many people in El Salvador who were "martyred". Sobrino's effort to do christology from a Latin American historical reality helped him to see that European theologies/christologies are unable to respond fully to that reality. His search for the reality of the world today and God's presence and action in it led him to an insight that 1) the poor is a major *locus theologicus* and that 2) the poor is better explained as the crucified people as well as the victims. I will point out the significant moments in Sobrino's theological journey in which he developed and even radicalized his position. Accordingly, this dissertation will analyze and discuss critically Sobrino's Christology especially with its focus on the poor as a *locus theologicus*. Here, I refer to Sobrino's argument that when Christology seeks to reflect upon the Jesus event and his proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and when theology seeks to reflect upon Christian faith and salvation in its contemporary Latin

American historical concreteness, the poor become a major starting point.

My method is threefold: *first*, a critical analysis of the four main works of Sobrino in Christology namely, *Cristología Desde América Latina. Esbozo a Partir del Seguimiento del Jesús Histórico* (1976-1977), *Jesús en América Latina. Su Significado para la Fe y la Cristología* (1982), *Jesucristo Liberador. Lectura Histórica-Teológica de Jesús de Nazaret* (1991) and *La Fe en Jesucristo. Ensayo desde las Víctimas* (1999). The first two books were published before the killing of the six Jesuits and their co-workers. This section is followed by a critical analysis of his essays on the killing itself and on contemporary martyrdom. The last two books were published after the killing. *Secondly*, personal discussions with Jon Sobrino primarily through writings and interviews on my thesis and hypothesis, as a supplement to the textual analysis. *Thirdly*, a critical evaluation of Sobrino's position on Christology and the poor/the crucified people in light of contemporary scholarship and critiques of his work.

Chapter one discusses the social background and pastoral involvements of the church of El Salvador wherein Sobrino develops his christology. Two important points are: first: the civil war in El Salvador became a rich soil for Sobrino as he searched for the truth of the reality of the poor and crucified; secondly, the response and involvement of the ordinary Christians in El Salvador in fighting the massive poverty and the spreading oppression became significant especially under the leadership of Romero.

Chapter two explains the emergence of a christology of mercy from the womb of Latin America and El Salvador in particular. Sobrino's christological reflection is presented through an analysis of his two main christological books and the influence of Ignacio

crucified people; secondly, the ultimate goal of Sobrino's christology becomes the act of "taking the crucified people down from the cross" with all its costs. The 1970s and 1980s are important decades for Sobrino. The assassinations of Grande, Romero and the six Jesuits of the UCA and their co-workers were among crucial events for Sobrino. Major turning points occurred when Sobrino determined that the poor is a major theological locus and shows that his understanding of the reality of the poor has changed. The poor is the crucified people and also victims, and the unfolding reality of grace, love and hope are deeply rooted in them. Sobrino captured this in a new understanding of theology as *intellectus amoris* and at the same time as *intellectus gratiae* as especially discussed in La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las Víctimas. The chapter ends with a discussion on the resurrection from the perspective of hope by the victims and of Jesus as the Good News.

Chapter five presents selected criticisms, positive and negative, of Sobrino's christology. Two positive criticisms are that Sobrino's christology is a strong theological advocacy on behalf of the poor, and that the "theological" status of the poor is established convincingly. Two negative criticisms are: first, there are certain weaknesses in Sobrino's use of the term "historical Jesus" and the biblical hermeneutics connected to the major problem of that historicity of Jesus; secondly, Sobrino's emphasis on the poor and the victims tends to downtone the reality of other marginalized groups.

In sum, Sobrino takes martyrdom as a historical outcome and possible criterion for evaluating forms of discipleship realized through acts of solidarity with the poor and marginalized. This provides the christological significance of his understanding of these acts as "taking the crucified people down from the cross". The christology of Sobrino

starts with truthfulness about reality as its first principle. This finds that the victims are the underlying reality and a major criterion for evaluating the core reality of the world today, a reality that reflects the truth of the twentieth century world with its division into a small first world and an increasingly poor and victimized third world. Theologically speaking, Sobrino asserts that the reality of the victims is not merely an ethical reality but "theological". By this he means that the reality of so many victims is related to the revelation of God especially as manifested in the life, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death of the Jesuits, as a culminating event of several significant assassinations, such as those of Grande and Romero as well as a series of massacres, provides a powerful personal experience and finally a christological turning point (on the idea of the crucified people) and theological turning point (on the reality of grace).

Personally, the most extraordinary experience in the process of writing this dissertation was the conversations with Sobrino himself. His friendly nature, humility, passion for the reality of the victims and faith are the primary colors reflected in his affirming and supportive response both verbally and in written forms to my thesis. More than appreciating merely this work as an intellectual project, he helped me to return to its impetus, a concern for the crucified people today and a search for "a theology" that speaks to the reality of the people especially the poor. This is indeed the underlying reality of the country where I live and probably of the majority of the countries of today's world. Indeed, Sobrino's christology, enriched by his critics and especially his new insight of theology as *intellectus gratiae*, is truly convincing for me and evokes a further research from a different social reality.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT: FROM CIVIL STRUGGLE AND WAR TO CIVIL PEACE

El Salvador has not only one story of "suffering, death and resurrection". The country recorded numerous killings and massacres against the oppressed and marginalized. Economic problems, unequal land distribution, joblessness and systemic repressions have led to civil struggles, strifes and eventually to a civil war. Christians and the leaders of the Church in El Salvador responded to the situation in different ways. Yet, the Church, led by Monseñor Romero, took a bold stance on the side of the poor. Since his arrival at El Salvador in 1957, Jon Sobrino has been exposed to this critical situation and his theology and christology have been gradually growing in response to the reality of contemporary El Salvador.

This chapter will discuss briefly that unfolding reality in two parts: first, the major political events that lead to a deepening social crisis and political violence; second, the role of the Church.

I. Major Political Events that Lead to a Deepening Social Crisis and Political Violence

El Salvador is one of the most beautiful countries in the Western Hemisphere. Its land is mostly cultivable and enriched by many volcanoes. This land has given its inhabitants incredible wealth. It is reported that before the European conquest, most of its area was populated by Pipil people, the dominant group among the Nahua. Nahua (or

Nahuatl) speakers are related ethnically and linguistically to the Mexicans (Aztecs) of Central Mexico rather than to the Maya who are predominant in the rest of Central America and Southern Mexico.¹ By the time of the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century this land was still producing great harvests, yet it is also recorded that 65 percent of its population, mostly living in rural areas, lived in abject poverty. Today, El Salvador's about 8,260 square miles of land is a home for about 6 million people.²

A. Poverty and Landlessness

Poverty, linked to the situation of landlessness, has been a continuous reality of El Salvador. Throughout the colonial period and still after the independence in 1821, indigenous communities lost their right to cultivate their land for their communal use. In 1881, the government abolished their communal land. The people were displaced and land-poor peasants were gathered to work in the coffee fields.

In the twentieth century, as Montgomery shows, this situation is continuing and even worsening. "In 1986, as in 1980, 51 percent of the rural population had no land, whereas in 1961 the landless had been 11.8 percent. At the other end of the economic

¹Rodolfo Cardenal, "El Salvador" in Enrique Dussel, R. Cardenal etc. *Historia General de la Iglesia en America Latina. Tomo VI: America Central* (Spain: Cehila Ediciones Sígueme, 1985), 39-41. "The Pipil population was concentrated in what is now the province of Cuscatlán, where their agricultural production centered on maize, beans, and squash." Anna L. Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War (U.S.A.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 25.

²Segundo Montes, El Salvador 1989: Las Remesas que Envían los Salvadoreños de Estados Unidos. Consecuencias Sociales y Económicas (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990), 20. In addition, Montes noted that there are more than a million Salvadorans who lived outside the country in 1989. See also Tommie Sue Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), 23.

scale, in 1971, 3.3 percent of all landowners (3,624) held 56 percent of the arable land; in 1987, 2.9 percent of the landowners (7,190) held 46 percent of the land."³

B. Resistant Actions in Response to Massive Poverty and Landlessness

The unequally distributed land and wealth of El Salvador and the declining living conditions and political repression have caused great suffering to the majority of its people. Accordingly, throughout colonial and postcolonial history, El Salvador has been marked by many protests and uprisings especially during periods of crisis. Peterson reports that

In 1833, twelve years after independence from Spain, indigenous people attacked Spanish installments in various parts of the country to protest government repression and the tribute demanded by local authorities... That incident was followed in the 1880s and 1890s by a series of protests against the transformation of farmland to coffee plantations. These uprisings prompted a build-up of arms and security forces by both private landowners and the government, precursors of contemporary military and paramilitary squads.⁴

³Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 23-24. Montgomery also explains: "Another measure: in 1969, a World Bank report found that the bottom 40 percent of the population earned 11.2 percent of total personal income. By 1985, this percentage had been reduced to 10.9 percent. Meanwhile, the richest 10 percent of the population earned 36.4 percent of all income, whereas the poorest 70 percent earned 34 percent of the total. For 946,590 families in 1985, the average monthly income was \$ 126, but the cost of living for basic needs (food, housing, clothes, health, and transportation) was \$ 241. Rural families were far worse off than their urban cousins: Ninety-six percent versus 80 percent, respectively, did not earn enough to cover basic needs. Meanwhile, for the richest 5 percent (47,330 families), the average monthly income was \$ 610; for the richest 1 percent (9,466 families), \$ 1,078." References are to Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Economic and Social Progress in Latin America, 1988 Report (Washington, D.C.: IDB, 1988), 408 and Segundo Montes, Florentin Melendez, Edgar Palacios, Los Derechos Economicos, Sociales, y Culturales en El Salvador (San Salvador: Instituto de Derechos Humanos, UCA, May 1988), 93, 149, 159.

⁴Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 26 and Alistair White, El Salvador (London, Ernest Benn, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1973), 71-73.

Peterson observes that these events of the nineteenth century continue to shape the political situation and popular movements in the twentieth century.⁵ Montgomery concludes that there have been two persistent patterns: "(1) The distribution of resources was unequal from the beginning, and the effects were cumulative as population pressures exacerbated inequities in the extreme; (2) there was always conflict between communal lands and private property, and latter regularly gained at the expense of the former."⁶

C. Major Political Events

La Matanza. In the history of El Salvador, the so-called "La Matanza" of 1932 is one of its major tragedies. The event has been part of the memory of El Salvador's past which claimed between 15,000 and 30,000 lives or up to two percent of the population of

⁵Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 26. She concludes: "The events of the nineteenth century helped establish instruments and mechanisms of repression that continue to function today. In addition to witnessing the beginning of modern means of repression, however, the nineteenth century also provided enduring models of resistance."

⁶Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 25. Montgomery explicates her observation as follows: "The history of El Salvador can be understood in terms of an interlocking and interacting series of phenomena that took shape during three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule and continued after independence. These phenomena may be summarized as follows:

1. An economic cycle of booms and depressions that replayed itself as variations on a theme several times between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries
2. Dependence on a monocrop economy as the key to wealth, a focus that led to dependence on outside markets
3. Exploitation of the labor supply, first the Indians and later the peasants
4. Concentration of the land in the hands of an ever-decreasing number of proprietors
5. Extreme concentration of wealth in few hands, coupled with the utter deprivation of the overwhelming majority of the population
6. A laissez-faire economic philosophy and an absolute belief in the sanctity of private property
7. A classical liberal notion of the purpose of government--to maintain order
8. Periodic rebellion by exploited segments of the population against perceived injustices"

El Salvador.⁷ The underlying problem was economical "originating in the dependence on coffee and the shortage of land."⁸ A few month after president Arturo Araujo was overthrown by the military that named Hernández Martínez as president, around five thousand people, mainly indigenous, revolted. The revolt took place primarily in the western provinces of Sonsonate and Ahuachapán by the Pacific Ocean. It is reported that the government and the oligarchy reacted by a massive killings, even anyone who looked like "Indian". The victims were not only the rebels and leaders, including the famous popular leader "El Negro" or Farabundo Martí, but also numerous ordinary people with no links to the rebellion. One of the impacts of this massacre was fear of repression. This caused indigenous people to abandon native dress and the Nahua language and to adopt the customs of *mestizos* or *ladinos*.⁹ Therefore, today one hardly notices the presence of

⁷Glenn Alan Cheney, El Salvador Country in Crisis (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: An Impact Book, 1990), 40.

⁸Dunkerley explains: "In 1930 the Salvadoran economy was more narrowly based on coffee than any other in the region. During the 1920's high prices had promoted both an extension of the agricultural frontier close to its limits--90 per cent of land under coffee in 1960 was under coffee in 1930--and concentration on a single crop that was considered risky... The fall in the price of coffee--from 25 cents a pound in 1925 to 9 cents in 1935--as a result of the world depression had, therefore, a catastrophic effect and generated wider and more directly politicized social conflict than that witnessed elsewhere in Central America. Income from exports in 1932 was less than half of that in 1926, the average annual growth rate for 1930-[193]4 was 0.7 per cent, and by 1939, after several years of gradual recovery, GDP per capita was still below that of 1929." James Dunkerley, "El Salvador Since 1930" in Leslie Bethell, ed., Central America Since Independence (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 159. Cited from Robert Anthony Lassalle-Klein, "The Jesuit Martyr of the University of Central America: An American Christian University and the Historical Reality of the Reign of God" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1995), 14.

⁹Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, The Central America Fact Book (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 200. Cited from Robert Anthony Lassalle-Klein, "The Jesuit Martyr of the University of Central America: An American Christian University and the Historical Reality of the Reign of God", 14. Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 27-28.

the indigenous population and culture in El Salvador unlike, for example, Guatemala, that has preserved its indigenous majority and their cultural identity. This story of repression that has changed the face of El Salvador and popular uprisings continued. Likewise, elite resistance to even mild reforms continued in the following years. Following the 1944 coup that unseated president Hernández Martínez, "a series of military regimes ensured that unequal socioeconomic structures remained in place for the next forty years, with little organized opposition to the ruling alliance of landowning elites and military officers."¹⁰

Creating a "culture of fear". Death squads appeared in the 1960s, such as of those founded by National Guard leaders who organized peasants into anticommunist brigades. The White Warriors' Union (Unión Guerrera Blanca) and a death squad named after General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez are among the best known death squads. Roberto D'Aubuisson was the leader who was able to persuade a large number of commanding military officers to join.¹¹ They committed many killings of those who were

¹⁰Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 28. Montgomery explains further by referring to White's study: "Alastair White observed in his 1973 study of El Salvador that the years after 1932 were characterized by an erratic oscillation between 'concession and repression' with little effort to maintain a balance between the two. White noted that on the one hand, Araujo in 1931 and Menéndez in 1944 fell after making too many concessions to popular demands; on the other hand, Martínez in 1944, Castaneda in 1948, Lemus in 1960, and Sánchez Hernández in 1972 all went too far in the opposite direction.

After the aborted coup and the inauguration of Molina, it appeared for a brief time that the balance had been restored. But 1972 proved to be a watershed. The army-dominated government had increasingly infuriated most of the oligarchy by its modest reform efforts, and it had alienated many workers, peasants, and youth by the inadequacy of those reforms and by the blatant fraud that paraded as an election." Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 66. Reference is to White, El Salvador, 95. See also Rodolfo Cardenal, Manual de Historia de Centroamérica (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1996), 379-385.

¹¹United Nations, "From Madness to Hope: The 12-year War in El Salvador" Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, March 15, 1993, 134-136 and Cynthia J. Arnson, Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993 (University Park,

in opposition to the government and oligarchy. However, more than that they were intimidating activists, local leaders, dividing the opposition and therefore creating a "culture of fear" among the people. "These death squads were not random, uncontrolled groups: They were highly organized; they formed an integral part of the Armed Forces; and they were controlled by officers reaching all the way up to the highest echelons of the Salvadorean officer corps."¹² In El Salvador this political movement caused an immense political violence especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This happened not just in rural areas, and it targeted not only individuals. The massacres at the village of El Mozote in December 1980 as well as at Rio Lempa and Rio Sumpul during 1980 and 1981 were among the most known tragedies.

The massacre near El Mozote committed by the government's Atlacatl Battalion spared only one survivor by chance out of hundreds of civilians.¹³ The interesting fact is that "Residents of the village offered less support to the FMLN than people in surrounding areas, in part because many people in El Mozote were evangelical Protestants... The

Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1993), 95. Cited from Robert Anthony Lassalle-Klein, "The Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America: An American Christian University and the Historical Reality of the Reign of God", 29.

¹²Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 134. Montgomery points out to the number of mostly civilian victims and massive cruelty committed by "the death squads" and called their action as "The New Matanza" recalling the well-known massacre of 1932.

¹³Danner notes: "From this evidence and from a wealth of testimony, the Truth Commission would conclude that 'more than 500 identified victims perished at El Mozote and in other villages. Many other victims have not been identified.' To identify them would likely require more exhumations--at other sites in El Mozote, as well as in La Joya and in the other hamlets where the killing took place." Mark Danner, "The Truth about Mozote" The New Yorker (6 December 1993), 132 and Teresa Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 386.

massacre of El Mozote points to the lack of absolute security for any person or group, while underlining the special danger faced by poor people, particularly in or near 'conflicted' zones."¹⁴ The United Nations revealed that many of the victims of El Mozote massacre were children under twelve years old.¹⁵ The same "hammer-and-anvil strategy" was developed with the help of Honduran army. Honduran involvement in the Salvadoran civil war began in 1980 and a former Salvadoran vice-minister of defense, Colonel Adolfo Castillo, has said that by 1982 the Honduran army and air force had become regular collaborators in military operations near their borders. The war was supported by the U.S.¹⁶ The result was another series of massacres. In May 1980 about 250 Honduran soldiers took positions along the Rio Sumpul. At the same time, Salvadoran forces were stationed in northern Chalatenango and massacred about 600 civilians. Those who tried to escape by crossing the Rio Sumpul were turned back by the Honduran army. In March, 1981, the Salvadoran army attacked the rural area of Cabañas and between 4,500 and 8,000 farmers had to flee across the Rio Lempa to Honduras under air assaults. In May, 1982, the second Rio Sumpul massacre occurred committed by the Beloso Battalion that

¹⁴See Danner, "The Truth about Mozote" The New Yorker, 50-133, and Joe Fish and Cristina Sganga, El Salvador: Testament of Terror (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1988).

¹⁵United Nations, "From Madness to Hope: The 12-year War in El Salvador" Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, 118 and also Mark Danner, "The Truth about Mozote" The New Yorker, 53.

¹⁶Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 165. "Hammer and anvil operations" usually took this strategy. The army would trap the targeted peoples between two military units and opened fire at them.

was stationed in eastern Chalatenango. There are more than 200 deaths.¹⁷

From a broader national perspective, Montgomery indicates some patterns of behaviors of the Salvadoran Armed forces, its oligarchy and the U.S. government in early 1980 and she calls them two-track strategies.

The most right-wing sector of the oligarchy developed a political-military plan that led to the development of paramilitary death squads and a political party. More moderate sectors would not be heard from until the mid-1980s.

The Armed Forces, breaking with the oligarchy for the first time, decided they could carve out a new role for themselves by championing reforms--on their terms--that included a systematic policy of repression directed against anyone identified as or suspected of being a leftist. In this, they coincided and cooperated with the oligarchy's paramilitary apparatus.

The United States pursued a two-track strategy under the rubric of "low-intensity conflict": a counterinsurgency strategy that coupled socioeconomic reforms and a buildup and improvement of the military with a "transition to democracy" that meant cramming elections down the throat of the army.¹⁸

Formation of the FMLN and Civil War. While the government and the oligarchy maintained their repressive movements, political organizing intensified at the grassroots. Economic injustices, continued corruption and political violence triggered the demand for consolidation of popular resistant powers. In the 1960s, Cuba and Chile became a

¹⁷Renato Camarda, Forced to Move: Salvadorean Refugees in Honduras (San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985), 81-88 (Chronology of the crisis) and Tommie Sue Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 164. References are to AW-ACLU, Report on Human Rights in El Salvador (New York: AW and ACLU, January 1982), 177-178 and Yvonne Dilling, In Search of Refuge (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1984), 39-49.

¹⁸Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 127-128. Montgomery rightly explained that "These strategies did not develop in a linear fashion; rather, they were shaped by each other, by outside forces, and by dynamics that they unleashed. They produced unanticipated consequences, which had their own dialectical impact on a process that continued through the decade." Camarda explains the historical involvement and intervention in Central America and the Caribbean from 1847 to 1983 and notes that 1980 is the "Beginning of direct U.S. military intervention in the internal affairs of El Salvador." Renato Camarda, Forced to Move: Salvadorean Refugees in Honduras, 93.

promising inspiration for them. In the 1970s, Salvadoran guerilla groups were small and divided among themselves. Yet by the late 1970, they were able to develop considerable political and military strength. Amidst the growing political violence, they began to see the importance on being united. By the end of 1980, the five largest armies formed Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).¹⁹ As opponents of the death squad that was named after General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez which had been responsible for La Matanza, the FMLN was named after Farabundo Martí, a popular leader of 1932 who had been one of the victims. In January 1981, the newly united guerrilla army launched a "final offensive". The guerrilla army failed, yet this confrontation started a twelve years civil war, especially in the countryside which eventually demonstrated the people's power to resist the unjust political violence committed by the government and oligarchy.²⁰

The civil war divided El Salvador both ideologically and geographically. The

¹⁹Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 35. Peterson notes further that: "The U.S. government continued to consider the FMLN-FDR an illegitimate, 'terrorist' organization with close links to revolutionary governments in Cuba and Nicaragua and with financial backing from the Soviet Union." According to Peterson, this was not without a political motive. She continues: "This perception justified the provision of millions of dollars of U.S. military aid to the Salvadoran government throughout the 1980s, even in the face of widely documented human rights abuses, including the killings of U.S. citizens in El Salvador."

²⁰Ibid., 36. In October 1982, FMLN launched a major offensive and called for "dialogue without preconditions." It was rejected by D'Aubuisson and others and they ignored a group of field commanders who circulated a letter criticizing such an out of hand rejection of dialogue. Berryman comments: "The letter indicated the increasing demoralization of the armed forces themselves." He notes further: "The FMLN continued to increase in strength. In the 20% of the country it controlled it had organized food production and distribution, schooling, and health care. Militarily, the FMLN was operating in most of El Salvador. One indication of its self-confidence was its policy of turning captured soldiers over to the International Red Cross, as opposed to the army's practice of killing rather than taking prisoners." Philip Berryman, What's Wrong in Central America and What to Do About It (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1983), 22.

FMLN and other resistant groups demanded an end to the violence, repression and killing which in their view was rooted in the efforts of the military and the wealthy elites to hold onto their privileges by repression of the people's legitimate expression of their aspirations. Negotiation or dialogue without preconditions was their proposal. On the other hand, the articulated main concern of the El Salvadoran government, supported by the U.S. government, was the threat to national security embodied in Marxist-led revolutionary movements. This government held to the importance of an election by democratic vote. The FMLN wanted peace negotiation before any election. Despite the growing number of those who supported negotiation and dialogue from within the country and from some international communities, the military and the government of El Salvador, supported by the U.S. government, remained steadfast in their position.²¹ During this war El Salvador was divided into three territories: (1) government-dominated areas, mainly the large cities; (2) conflictive areas, where the FMLN and government armies battled for control; and (3) the so-called "liberated zones", areas under guerilla control primarily in the northern mountains and along the coast in the departments of Morazán, Chalatenango, Cabañas, and Usulután.²²

²¹Berryman reports on the many efforts and repeated proposals for negotiated solutions between 1980 to 1983 such as from Archbishop Romero, Social Democrats and General Torrijos of Panama, Sandinista commander Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, the government of Mexico, France, Venezuela, Colombia as well as from the Pope, John Paul II, etc. He comments: "...for almost three years there has been a stream of proposals for alternate approaches to policy in Central America, proposals which U.S. policy makers have either disregarded or sought to nullify by clothing their own militaristic approach in political dress." Berryman, What's Wrong in Central America and What to Do About It, 41-43.

²²See Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 36.

FMLN regular combatants totaled about 12,000 or 13,000 people yet they received great support from civilians, especially in the rural areas and in poor urban neighborhoods. About 40,000 militia members, part time soldiers joined their actions. Civilians also took a stance for the purpose of defending their communities from army attacks especially in areas under FMLN control. This became prevalent when the army concentrated more and more on civilian targets.²³ Basically, FMLN never succeeded to trigger a nation-wide insurrection or achieve a definitive military victory, yet they were able to maintain a military stalemate against the government for more than a decade. Their November 11, 1989, general offensive finally showed their military expertise, strength and popularity among the people of El Salvador. Peterson explains:

The military and political stalemate broke on November 11, 1989, when the FMLN launched a nation-wide offensive, centered in San Salvador, that paralyzed the capital for weeks and led to near-insurrection in at least one provincial city. The November offensive demonstrated the FMLN's military expertise and strength. However, it also revealed the resolve of the government, led since June 1989 by the rightist ARENA party (Republican Nationalist Alliance), to crush the insurgency at all cost. To this end, the government ordered widespread aerial bombings of densely populated urban areas and the arrests of hundreds of opposition activities, and an army battalion assassinated six internationally prominent Jesuit intellectuals at the Central American University (UCA).²⁴

²³Ibid., 37-38. This reality was detected by the U.S.- Latin American Relations. They reported in April 1990: "Given the army's vast superiority in numbers and firepower, the FMLN could not survive--let alone operate as widely and freely as it does--without a substantial civilian base of support." Reference is to Maxwell S. Peltz, El Salvador 1990: An Issues Brief (Washington, DC: Commission on U.S.-Latin American Relations, 1990), 36. It also should be remembered that El Salvador is a small country and therefore the army could send an air transport with troops in about twenty minutes to any corner of the country.

²⁴Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 38. She explains further that "Most observers cite the 1989 offensive as the turning point that made successful peace negotiations possible after years of aborted efforts. The offensive demonstrated to the Salvadoran and U.S. governments the continuing strength and popular support of the FMLN...The killings of the Jesuits also prompted international criticism of the

The United Nations, though very late, finally came onto the stage in April 1990 to mediate peace talks between the FMLN and the government. Lastly, a peace accord was signed by the two parties in Mexico City on January 1992. By the end of that year the civil war formally came to its end.

II. The Role of the Church

The Church's role in Latin American societies was a changing role. It is known that the majority of leaders of the Catholic Church had been related to the dominant elite since the earliest period of the Spanish conquest and settlement of the Americas. It is also true that in Central America the Church has played an ideological role in justifying the conquest and the creation of a political economy based on "the forced expropriation of the best land and the best conscription of labor to produce export crops for small local elites."²⁵ The dominant theology of that period in many ways legitimized the understanding that the unequal political and economic order on earth was divinely ordained and therefore unchangeable. Since earthly things are less important than heavenly things, it is even more understandable to fix one's eyes only on heavenly things, a better life in the house of God. This was clearly reflected in the ecclesial and liturgical structures which underlined those theological emphases. Yet, there were exceptions. Early on, a churchman such as

Salvadoran government and army, which helped encourage the U.S. government, after years of unwavering support for the Salvadoran army's pursuit of military victory, finally to support serious negotiations."

²⁵Ibid., 43-44. Reference is to Philip Berryman, The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 57.

Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) viewed the reality differently and was able to understand the suffering of the "victims", especially after he had personally seen how the natives were cruelly massacred and exploited by conquistadors. In the following pages, we will discuss two important ecclesial realities in El Salvador: first, reforms in Salvadoran Catholicism and second, important Salvadoran Church events.

A. Reforms in Salvadoran Catholicism

The Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council triggered many incredible changes in all parts of the Catholic Church. Its openness to the world brought the Church back to people of good will. It also urged Christians to understand "the sign of times" and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World further clarified where the Church stands: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (Gaudium et Spes no. 1). As a result, critical questions were raised on particular topics such as the role of the Church and its theological teachings that legitimize the repressive political status quo and efforts such as seeking ecclesial forms that could respond to the Latin American reality as well as the Church's concern for social justice. In the light of the Council, the meeting of the Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, marked a new beginning of the Catholic Church in Latin America. Three important things of this conference are: first, the bishops acknowledged that the Catholic Church is culpable in its involvement to support unjust social structures in the past and now they affirmed the Church's responsibility to work for

socioeconomic justice; secondly, the bishops encouraged the newly emerging grassroots Christian communities; thirdly, the bishops denounced openly institutionalized violence and poverty and defined sin as a social phenomenon, particularly embedded in unjust political and economic structures.²⁶ The emergence of the "theology of liberation" in the same decade finally rounded up the new apostolic concern of the Catholic Church in Latin America.

B. Important Salvadoran Church Events

The Church in El Salvador drew public attention and became a powerful advocate of political and economic change in Salvadoran society through an extraordinary commitment of many lay people, nuns, and priests, especially under the leadership of Monseñor Romero.²⁷ *Christian Base Communities*. Both the emergence of pastoral activity and the establishment of many Christian Base Communities throughout the archdiocese San Salvador by 1970 were notorious. Christian Base Communities became the place of implementation of the new teachings of Vatican II: to bring the laity into the life of the church and to teach that the Christian community is a community of equals before God. Therefore, all have obligations to each other and responsibilities to share. The social impact of this new ecclesial movement was tremendous. It is observable that this Christian Base Community was able (1) to bring people together and start an organization

²⁶Ibid., 48-49 and Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 83-84.

²⁷Cardenal, "El Salvador," in Dussel, Cardenal etc. Historia General de la Iglesia en America Latina. Tomo VI: America Central, 475-480.

which had been banned since the 1932 insurrection; (2) to form grassroots leadership such as lay-catechist and delegates of the Word; (3) to provide an experience of making a communal decision with participation of all members; (4) to create a place to read the Bible in community and together interpret it in the context of their own lives and experiences.²⁸ In late 1960s, pastoral activity in the Zacamil neighborhood in northern San Salvador and its nearby poor neighborhoods was a significant part of the impetus of the movement of the Christian Base Communities in El Salvador. These newly founded "Christian groups" were introduced to projects for youth groups, literacy campaigns, and gardening cooperatives.²⁹

Rutilio Grande. Amidst this new ecclesial atmosphere, Rutilio Grande and three other Jesuits came to the parish of Aguilaes in September, 1972, to take over pastoral responsibilities. They worked intensively with small groups of people to read and understand the Bible, the presence of God and the equality among God's people in the light of their everyday experience.³⁰ From the documents of Vatican II, they taught that "hierarchical clericalism" should not be re-emphasized but rather the importance of a

²⁸Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 87. Montgomery points out that this also becomes a place to exercise a participatory democracy and also where the fruits of reflection of the emerging liberation theology were communicated.

²⁹Ibid., 88-89. See also Pedro Henriquez, El Salvador: Iglesia Profética y Cambio Social (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1988), 155-197 (Zacamil: Un caso de pastoral urbana).

³⁰"Aguilaes' major product was sugar. Covering an area of 170 square kilometers around the town, the parish had a population of 30, 000. The land was divided into 35 *haciendas* dominated by three sugar plantations and the *campesinos* lived off the meager daily wage for seasonal work (around \$ 3) and whatever they could grow on the rocky scraps of land they rented from landowners." Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 62.

community of brothers and sisters committed to the construction of the Kingdom of God. From the documents of Medellín, they taught that the reality of poverty and oppression should not be faced with passive acceptance and thought as if it is "God's will". In the words of Grande: "God is not in the clouds lying in a hammock. God does things and wants you to build his Kingdom here on earth."³¹

People of Aguilares quickly responded to this "new" evangelization and found themselves capable of thinking critically and of speaking out. The Word of God spoke to their reality. Montgomery notes that only eight months after Grande's arrival, there was a peaceful strike of 1,600 workers in the La Cabaña sugar mill. Grande was not involved directly, yet many workers were members of the Christian Base Community and some of their leaders were his parish's delegates of the Word.³² Within the circumstances of the increasing political violence and repression on popular movements, Grande's pastoral activity was put in a difficult situation. However, his stance on behalf of his people was clear. Peterson asserts that "Grande makes a political point by reference to the story of Jesus' life. The narrative differs, however, from later Salvadoran stories of martyrdom. In Grande's speech, the theme of crucifixion emerges, but in a speculative way. His main concern lay with the freedom to criticize, to organize, to 'tell the truth.'³³

³¹Ibid. Reference is to UCA Editores, Rutilio Grande, Mártir de la Evangelización Rural (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1978), 67. See also William J. O'Malley, SJ., The Voice of Blood: Five Christian Martyrs of Our Time (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 25-27.

³²Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 91.

³³Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 169. Peterson further explains that "Grande's killing in March 1977 marked the beginning of the rise of narratives focused on the passion and resurrection of contemporary martyrs."

Soon, Grande and the movements in Aguilares became a threat to the government and even among some church people. In 1975, Grande and his friends were already called "subversives" by the Conservative Religious Front called *Grupo Fantasma* and President Molina made accusations against "liberationist priests". The campaign against the Jesuits in Aguilares was even stronger after the death of one of the owners of the sugar plantation during a small demonstration of 250 *campesinos*. After many accusations, intimidations and political pressures against the Jesuits in the country, Grande was assassinated in March 12, 1977. For the Jesuits, it was a hard fact for the discernment of their future apostolic stance, and in general for the Salvadoran Church, it was a challenge especially for the newly elected archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero.³⁴

Oscar Romero of San Miguel was not an outstanding figure and considered moderate before he was appointed as archbishop of San Salvador. Accordingly, he was a better candidate than Arturo Rivera Damas who had been disliked by the oligarchy and the government of El Salvador.³⁵ Yet, less than a month after his installation as archbishop, one of his priests, a friend and member of his pastoral team, Rutilio Grande was assassinated along with two peasants. This event caused a great impact on Romero and his

³⁴Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 104-105.

³⁵Montgomery explains that the auxiliary bishop since 1960, "...Rivera had too many enemies going back to the mid-1960s, when the oligarchy had accused him (erroneously) of ghosting Archbishop Chávez's pastoral letters. Then he had incensed the government when he confronted Minister of Defense Torres over the abduction of Father Alas in 1970. In the meantime he had strongly supported the pastoral line of the archdiocese and had spoken out forcefully against official repression." Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 93. It is also noted that the Vatican discouraged any candidate who will be opposing the government. See also Cardenal, "El Salvador," in Dussel, Cardenal etc. Historia General de la Iglesia en America Latina. Tomo VI: America Central, 480-493.

future apostolic stance. Romero shared his experience in an interview:

There were times when the old archbishop, Monseñor Chávez, was suffering the expulsion of priests and couldn't make himself understood with the government; they wouldn't pay attention to him. I felt we should defend this position; the following month after my arrival Father Rutilio Grande was killed, which also reinforced my decision because Father Rutilio, before his death, was with me by my side in a priests' meeting, the first one I had.

I asked them to help me carry on with the responsibility; there was much enthusiasm from the clergy to help me and I felt that I would not be alone taking care of the situation but that I could count on all of them. That union with the clergy vanquished all our fears. They had the idea that I was conservative, that I would maintain relations with the government, with the rich, and that I would ignore the people's problem, the repression and the poverty. I found here many committed clergy and communities that thought a lot about the situation in the country. Some of them feared I would stop everything and asked what I was thinking of doing. My response was that they should continue and that we should try to understand each other well, and to work in a promotion of the Church's work as Vatican II and Medellín had asked us to do. Father Grande's death and the death of other priests after his impelled me to take an energetic attitude before the government. I remember that because of Father Grande's death I made a statement that I would not attend any official acts until this situation [who had killed Grande] was clarified. I was very strongly criticized, especially by diplomats. A rupture was produced, not by me with the government but the government itself because of its attitude.³⁶

³⁶Ibid., 94-95. Reference is to his "Interview, December 14, 1979" with Monseñor Romero. Montgomery noted Berryman's suggestion that Romero's 'conversion' dated to the mid-1970s when he was bishop of Santiago de María. The event was his meeting with Father David Rodríguez. He was accused as a communist by Aparicio, his own bishop who warned Romero about him. After listening to him, Romero responded that Rodríguez was only applying the gospel to El Salvador and said "David opened my eyes and evangelized me from behind that door." Reference is to Berryman, Religious Roots of Rebellion, 124. In my opinion, probably it is better to say that Romero's "conversion" was basically a gradual process, yet there was a culminating point which was the assassination of Rutilio Grande that marked a major turning point in Romero's life and ministry. Peterson affirms: "Romero later acknowledged that Grande's assassination 'gave me the impetus to put into practice the principles of Vatican II and Medellín which call for solidarity with the suffering masses and the poor and encourage priests to live independent of the powers that be.'" Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 61. Reference is to "Oscar Romero: Archbishop of the Poor" interview by Patrick Lacefield, in Marvin Gettleman and others, eds., El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 202-203. Sobrino seconded the significant event of the killing of Grande that in many ways served a Romero's life turning point. "I believe that the murder of Rutilio Grande was the occasion of the conversion of Archbishop Romero--as well as being a source of light and courage to

Romero's clear stance sparked the rapid growth of the involvement of the Church in the political life of El Salvador especially to the direction of articulating the suffering of the poor and of ending the political repression and violence. For the neighboring countries such as Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, Romero was also the voice of the Church for the people amidst their struggle for liberation. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was able to be heard and touched the life of average Salvadorans who are mostly poor and trapped in the middle of an armed conflict and political violence. Romero's broadcasted Sunday Mass and Homily as well as his weekly interview became the most listened-to program in the country.³⁷ Facing the rupture of the Church's relationship with the government, Romero clarified that the conflict was between the government and the people and it was a social conflict. However, he made clear that the Church is with the people, the image of the suffering Christ today. The implication is that what had been happening to the people will also be the Church's story including persecution, kidnap and assassination. Refusing the government's offer for protection, Romero replied: "I wouldn't

follow his new paths. Archbishop Romero had known Rutilio, and held him in such high regard that he invited him to serve as master of ceremonies at his episcopal consecration." Jon Sobrino, Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 9.

³⁷Montgomery notes that Romero's homily usually ran an hour and half. "Each sermon had an invariable pattern: He began with a theological exposition--always with three points--on the scriptural readings of the day. Then he would relate the scripture to the reality of life in El Salvador. This was followed by church announcements, then a recitation of the events of the week just ended, including a reading of every documented case of persons who had been killed, assaulted, or tortured (regardless of perpetrator) or who had disappeared. The Salvadoran reality meant that the list of attacks at the hands of the government's security forces and right-wing terrorist groups was many times longer than the list of those by left-wing guerrillas. When an event warranted it, such as the coup of October 15 or the promulgation of the agrarian reform, Romero would conclude with a 'pastoral position' on the question." Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 96.

accept that protection, because I wanted to run the same risks that the people are running; it would be a pastoral anti-testimony if I were very secure, while my people are so insecure. I took advantage to ask him [the President] for protection for the people in certain areas where military blocks, military operations... sow so much terror."³⁸

Romero was assassinated while he was celebrating the Eucharist on March 24, 1980. Apparently, the reason behind his assassination was to silence the Church that had become so outspoken. Yet, it was mistaken since Romero did not identify himself with the Church but with the people, and these same people have kept him alive in their faith and struggle toward the future.³⁹

University of Central America José Simeón Cañas (UCA). Founded in 1966, the UCA was a new national university run by the Jesuits. The Jesuits, who formed the intellectual and administrative backbone, were soon relating themselves with the changing reality of El Salvador and the Church which was struggling to respond to it. Theologians of the university were helping in the new parochial activities, such as in Aguilares as well as in the Church of El Salvador under the leadership of Monseñor Romero who had

³⁸Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 62. Reference is to Oscar Romero, Su Diario: Del 31 de Marzo de 1978 al 20 de Marzo de 1980 (San Salvador: Archdiocese of San Salvador, 1990), 75-76.

³⁹Sobrinho concludes: "... Those who make an attempt to live as responsible human beings in this crucified, hope-filled Latin America of ours, can always turn to him. Those who seek to live their faith, their hope, and their commitment in this church of ours, will always find inspiration and encouragement in Archbishop Romero. Those who wish to practice theology responsibly on this continent of ours, will ever find inspiration in his word and his life." Sobrinho, Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections, 187. Peterson notes a beautiful line from her interview with Mirtala López. "Our people continue to live his words. We take his example and continue his work. He lives in the hearts of the people. We can't help but mention his name throughout our whole lives... All the people live with the memory of Romero." Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 101.

shown a new kind of committed evangelization on behalf of the poor and raised challenging theological and christological insights.⁴⁰ Within the university itself, there was a gradual change in its stance toward the national reality. The university supported an agrarian reform, became more critical regarding the reality of massive poverty, landlessness and political violence, and finally its political views became unambiguous by 1975.⁴¹ "Is a different kind of university possible?" This question eventually will elaborate the vision of the university, its preferential option and its political stance, especially under the leadership of its rector, Ignacio Ellacuría. Explanation on the mission and social involvement of the UCA will be continued in the discussion of Ellacuría's thought on the university in chapter four.

In sum, there are several important periods of the contemporary Church in El Salvador. Montgomery suggests that there are five important moments. (1) 1968-1977 was a period when evangelization and pastoral work were developed through Christian Base Communities; (2) February 1977-March 1980 was a period of continuation of the previous ecclesial movement but attention was focused on Monseñor Romero and his denunciation of poverty and injustice. This drew the growing governmental attack and persecution against the Church which is culminated in the killing of Romero; (3) March 1980-March 1983 was a period of maintaining important pastoral objectives: to rejuvenate

⁴⁰Sobrino recalled that in 1977, Monseñor Romero asked him to write a theological reflection on martyrdom. The theme was not new, however, the new ecclesial circumstances of El Salvador and the person who asked him to write impelled him to start a serious rethinking on the theme and provided an emerging new theological/christological perspective as well as a personal urgency. See Jon Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", San Salvador, 30 June 1999.

⁴¹Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 92.

the church's pastoral work that had been destroyed by repression, including the murder of religious and lay leaders; to promote dialogue between the government and the guerrillas; and to heal profound divisions among the Salvadoran bishops. Apostolic administrator Arturo Rivera Damas took charge; (4) March 1983-1988 was the period when pope John Paul II visited El Salvador. Two important things which he did were the publically honoring of Monseñor Romero and his statement that dialogue is the only road to peace. Rivera Damas became archbishop. It was also the time when the Lutheran, Baptist and Episcopal Churches in El Salvador took part in promoting the issue of social justice; (5) 1988-1993 was the period when those Churches joined efforts to initiate a national debate on peace and the future of the country. This effort was able to give significant pressures to parties in conflict to come to terms with the peace accord.⁴²

Conclusion

The history of El Salvador has been marked by popular resistance and protests against the continuous repressive power-holders. Its twelve years civil war was one of the ugliest form of conflicts and fightings in the history of the country. The shock waves of this war especially caused by so many systemic assassinations and massacres have surprised many international communities and added on the series of human tragedies of our century. This, eventually questions anew what it means to be human today particularly amidst the increasing number of those who died before their time because of poverty and oppression. However, the stories of struggle and solidarity, love and sacrifice especially

⁴²Ibid., 82-83.

of those who were hand in hand with the poor and oppressed trying to defend their life, had given a human face to that inhuman event.

Christological and theological questions are at stake especially since most Salvadorans are Christians. Interpretation of the conflict and popular struggle particularly from a perspective of the Christian faith unfolds an urgent need to take side of the poor. Indeed, the Church of El Salvador took side of the poor though the cost of its commitment includes severe persecution and martyrdom especially before and during the civil war. Thus, a discussion on the Church of El Salvador is inseparable from the "martyrdom" of many committed Christians, men and women, including many lay people, catechists, delegates of the Word, religious people, nuns, priests and even a bishop.⁴³

Among the manifestations of this love--one that cannot be silenced--is the unbounded generosity in self-giving that has led, so very many times, to the surrender of the life of the lover. Surely this surrender calls for an interpretation in the light of social psychology as well. There must be a certain element of "desperation" here that would help to motivate someone to leap into the jaws of death. But the love manifested in the massive fact of thousands of martyrs cannot be overlooked. The theological explanation if these deaths is simple. Many of the poor are giving their lives that others may live. They are reproducing what Jesus did, and their lives become theological. They are "corresponding" to the loving reality of God.⁴⁴

⁴³Although the leadership and participation of religious men and women of the church of El Salvador are well-known, the role and faith of the ordinary Salvadoran Christians remain determining in shaping the reality of that church. In fact, most of the victims are ordinary Christians and out of approximately 75,000 who died in the twelve years of civil war itself are civilians, the poor and the oppressed. See Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 103-110 (Martyrdom, the Church, and the People); UCA Editores, La Fe de un Pueblo: Historia de Una Comunidad Cristiana en El Salvador (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1993). Daniel Santiago, The Harvest of Justice: The Church of El Salvador Ten Years After Romero (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), 53-64 (Three portraits of the Salvadoran resistance).

⁴⁴Jon Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 168.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARD A CHRISTOLOGY FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN WOMB

From 1968 Jon Sobrino pursued his theological studies for seven years in Frankfurt, Germany and completed his doctoral studies with his dissertation on the Crucified God, a comparison and critique of the christologies of Wolfhart Pannenberg and of Jürgen Moltmann. Though this period of academic studies was one of the important stepping stones in his life, it was not the most determining important factor in the development of his theology. The true beginning of his theological and self turning point was the reality of El Salvador and Latin America in general which was marked by "under-development and oppression". Gradually, this reality, which burdened many of the people to whom he was sent to serve as a Jesuit and as a post-conciliar theologian of the Medellín church, woke him up from "the sleep of inhumanity".⁴⁵ This world of destitution forced him to rethink what he had studied and to find a christological approach that would enable him to shed light on the reality of massive poverty, systematic oppression and the struggle for liberation that had already been spreading all over Latin America in 1970's.

This major twentieth century theological movement, later called liberation theology, was another driving force for the development of Sobrino's christological thinking. Liberation theology was systematically explained in Gustavo Gutiérrez's groundbreaking work, A Theology of Liberation (1971). However its formative process had

⁴⁵Jon Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 3.

begun nearly a decade before and involved both Catholic and Protestant theologians. From the Catholic side, the role of the Second Vatican Council should be acknowledged. The council encouraged theologians to think creatively and responsibly about the pastoral problems of their countries. There had been theological movements that started to see the importance of a local setting or context for theology. However, the Second Vatican Council, representing the "whole Catholic Church", set in motion context-oriented pastoral plans and therefore, a new theological approach grounded in the reality of the contemporary world.⁴⁶ Leonardo and Clodovis Boff noted the response from Latin American theologians especially Gustavo Gutiérrez:

At a meeting of Latin American theologians held in Petrópolis (Rio de Janeiro) in March 1964, Gustavo Gutiérrez described theology as critical reflection on praxis. This line of thought was further developed at meetings in Havana, Bogotá, and Cuernavaca in June and July 1965. Many other meetings were held as part of the preparatory work for the Medellín Conference of 1968; these acted as laboratories for a theology worked out on the basis of pastoral concerns and committed Christian action. Lectures given by Gustavo Gutiérrez in Montreal in 1967 and at Chimbote, Peru, on the poverty of the Third World and the challenge it posed to the development of a pastoral strategy of liberation were a further powerful impetus toward a theology of liberation.⁴⁷

During the 1970s, Sobrino, Ellacuría, Dussel, Mesters, Comblin, Trigo and others triggered the second stage of the development of this theology from the "underside of

⁴⁶See Alfred T. Hennelly, "From Vatican II to Medellín (1962-1968)," in his Liberation Theology: A Documentary History (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 39-42 and 29-37 where he documented a talk of Juan Luis Segundo, S.J. on "The Future of Christianity in Latin America." This talk, delivered in November 1962, deliberately takes a Latin American context as starting point and then shows the requirements for evangelization in Latin America itself.

⁴⁷Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, trans. Paul Burns (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 69. This book also noted many significant theologians who emerged at different stages of the development of liberation theology. See also Hennelly, ed., and trans., Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, especially parts I and II.

history". After the presentation of liberation theology as an opening of new theological horizons and perspectives, these theologians undertook the first efforts to provide doctrinal content to this new liberation approach.⁴⁸ The need for a Latin American christology was indicated and then met in publications such as of Boff's Jesus Christ Liberator (1972), Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads (1976-1977), Hugo Echegaray's The Practice of Jesus (1980), and Juan Luis Segundo's multivolume study of Jesus in the early 1980s.⁴⁹ The main significance of these writings was the "concern to see the liberating implications of Jesus' human life, his words and deeds, set in the conflictive circumstance of the time rather than focusing simply on classical questions such as how Jesus can be both divine and human."⁵⁰

To study Sobrino's christology from the perspective of its development, the second chapter of this thesis will begin with an examination of the two main works of Sobrino in Christology namely Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach (1976) and Jesus in Latin America (1982). Special attention will be given to Sobrino's method of doing christology from a particular context and involvement especially in the Jesuit-run University of Central America (UCA). About his first christological book, Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach (originally published as Cristología desde

⁴⁸Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 71.

⁴⁹See their original publications: Leonardo Boff, Jesus Cristo Libertador: Ensaio de Cristologia Crítica Para o Nosso Tempo (Petropolis, Brazil: Editora Vozes Ltda., 1972); Echegaray, La Práctica de Jesús (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1980); Segundo, El Hombre de Hoy Ante Jesús de Nazaret (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1982), in three volumes.

⁵⁰Philip Berryman, Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 102.

America Latina: Esbozo a partir del Seguimiento del Jesús Histórico. Segunda Edición: Corregida y Aumentada, 1977) I will show how Sobrino introduced and elaborated his own christological approach in the light of the reality of Latin America in the early second half of this century. First, he took a different way of doing Christology from his predecessors especially W. Pannenberg, J. Moltmann and K. Rahner. Second, he showed the significance of the Latin American reality of "underdevelopment and oppression" as a major point of departure for a Christology that will be done from a Latin American context. Third, he employed in a major way a different starting point for his Christology which is the Jesus of history. As regards his second christological book Jesus in Latin America (originally published as Jesús en America Latina: Su Significado para la Fe y la Cristología, 1982), I will explain four main issues that Sobrino intended to clarify and, at the same time, to pin down his christological and methodological concern. These four issues paraphrased by Juan Alfaro in the "Foreword" of the book had been questioned by members of the Catholic Church's Vatican congregations.

I. A Latin American Christology

In the early development of liberation theology, Gutiérrez had introduced the systematization of this emerging theology that takes the Latin American context seriously. Juan Luis Segundo and Clodovis Boff have thought extensively through its theological method, while J. P. Miranda presented studies on its biblical resources. Together with Leonardo Boff, Sobrino provided a systematic reflection on Christology that primarily made use of Latin American resources and, above all, the reality of the poor as its

theological locus. Yet, in the case of Sobrino, it has to be noted that his first christological book, Christology at the Crossroads, still depends largely on the European sources. In this second chapter, the early formation of a christology from a Latin American perspective will be explained and gradually move to its most significant and best development of Sobrino's christological reflection that shows the basic connection between the radical historicity of Jesus and the reality of the Third World marked by poverty and oppression, as well as a life-commitment to follow Jesus up to the cross.

A. Sobrino's Review and Criticism on his Predecessors

While studying theology in Germany, Sobrino was greatly influenced by Rahner and wrote his dissertation on Pannenberg and Moltmann. Up to the time he finished his theological study and returned to El Salvador Sobrino admits that he was not awakened enough to understand the reality of El Salvador and Latin America in general. He wrote :
 "...I came to realize that while I had acquired much knowledge and gotten rid of much traditional baggage, deep down nothing had changed. I saw that my life and studies had not given me new eyes to see this world as it really is, and that they hadn't taken from me the heart of stone I had for the suffering of this world."⁵¹

Let us indicate and discuss the turn that Sobrino gradually made especially through his critical discussion on the three important German theologians from whom he had learned his theology and from whom he moved away into a Latin American Christology.

⁵¹Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 3.

1. The Christology of Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

According to Sobrino, Rahner showed to his contemporaries an urgent need to approach critically the catholic Christological teaching that restricted itself to an interpretation and re-stating conciliar texts and papal teachings concerning Christ. He "...has sought to integrate Christology within the most comprehensive horizon possible, relating it to his overall understanding of the world, humankind and history"⁵²

For Sobrino, there are three stages in the development of Rahner's Christological thinking. First, Rahner began as a Catholic dogmatic theologian to interpret the dogma of Chalcedon. His transcendental anthropology that human beings through grace are constitutively open to hearing and accepting God's self-offer. This was Rahner's point of departure. In this stage he was noticeably influenced by Kant and Hegel. Second, Rahner introduced Christ as "the absolute bearer of Salvation". Here incarnation of Christ was the point of departure. In this stage he was to some degree similar to Teilhard de Chardin's theological view that humanity is waiting and hoping for the Omega Point who will give fullness, meaning and direction. Third, Rahner emphasized Christ's resurrection. Christ already lives in the end of time, and so the openness of human beings is now considered mainly in terms of hope.⁵³

According to Sobrino, Rahner's most important insights are his ultimate presupposition of the radical historicity of divine revelation and that Christology must be

⁵²Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, trans. John Drury (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 22.

⁵³Ibid., 23.

pastoral. This means that Christological truths should be accessible to the people's understanding and mean something to their lives. However, there are several weak points. Sobrino noted that Rahner "has not shown as much interest in dealing with the second phase of the Enlightenment, that of such people as Marx. Rahner does not deal with that issue explicitly, although he does affirm in principle that theology must have social relevance and he has explored the notion that love for God is one with love for neighbor."⁵⁴

2. The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg

Sobrino pointed out that Pannenberg's primary concern is to respond to a crisis of meaningfulness. His hermeneutic focus is "to *understand* Christ in his divinity so that one may better understand the whole reality."⁵⁵ He approaches theology primarily as science. Indeed, Pannenberg has attempted to respond to existentialist theology (R. Bultmann) and to the theology of Word (Karl Barth). Sobrino observed that Pannenberg makes use of two important philosophical presuppositions. First, his anthropological view sees humanity as a being who is radically open to the future. Second, his theological presupposition sees

⁵⁴Ibid., 23-24. Sobrino holds that Kant liberated *reason* from *dogma*, "whereas the Marxist attempt to free *reality* from *oppression* did not receive theological attention in Europe until the Latin Americans made an issue of it." This reflects the aim of Latin American theology which is to "change" as possible the world of suffering and injustice rather than merely explain it. This direction was not perceived by the European theologians, either Protestant or Catholic. See Jon Sobrino, "El Conocimiento teológico en la Teología Europea y Latinoamericana," in Liberación y Cautiverio: Debates en Torno al Método de la Teología en la América Latina (Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975), 177-207 or also Jon Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 7-38.

⁵⁵Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 27.

God as the ultimate power over everything.

On the other hand, Sobrino noted that there are at least three problems with Pannenberg's approach. First, theology for Pannenberg must be strictly based on reason itself. There is no place for some authority such as inspiration, philosophy and the church's teaching. Second, he tends to overlook the important role of the history of Jesus and he gives almost no role to the Cross within his systematic christology. For Pannenberg, the historical life of Jesus is primarily anticipatory, pointing toward the resurrection. Third, the problem of sin, injustice, and evil is not viewed as the basic problem of theology since meaningfulness and explicative hermeneutic is his main concern and method.⁵⁶

3. The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann

Sobrino explains that there are two stages in the development of Moltmann's christological reflection. The first stage is embodied in his "theology of hope". The resurrection of Jesus is his main Christological concern which points toward the future. Ernst Bloch and his philosophy had influenced him greatly. The second stage is embodied in his "Crucified God". The cross of Jesus is the center of his Christology and he further explained that the following of Jesus is the way to elaborate Christology. "Christian existence is a practice. It is the following of the crucified one that transforms man himself and his situation. In that sense the theology of the cross is a practical theology".⁵⁷

Moltmann introduced a hermeneutics of praxis and claimed that theology is always

⁵⁶Ibid., 26, 28.

⁵⁷Ibid., 29.

"social-political". Therefore, there is need to make sure that this political praxis is really Christian. For him, theological thinking has always had implications for praxis. This means any "ideological orthodoxy" is radically insufficient without a further reflection on its practical implications. Accordingly, he pointed out that the task of theology is more than "depositivizing" (for example in Rahner) or "demythologizing" (for example in Bultmann), but "deidolatrizing." Evil, sin, injustice, and death become important issues in his Christology and theology. For him, "...real-life misery does not allow for any adequate synthesis in the mind so long as it continues to exist."⁵⁸ In other word, the cross does not allow for a "theory" of Christianity or for a true philosophy but demands a true liberative praxis. Moltmann, however, "does not assert emphatically that one can construct a Christology and a theology on the basis of Jesus' cross." Sobrino pointed out that Moltmann has presented his theology more ideally than concretely in contrast to what Sobrino and other Latin Americans attempted to do based on a real social-political reality in Latin America.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Ibid., 32.

⁵⁹Rosino Gibellini, "Martirio: El Nuevo Nombre del Seguimiento: Entrevista a Jon Sobrino, Teólogo de El Salvador," Sal Terrae (June 1981): 472. A. T. Hennelly affirmed that Sobrino's theology involves closely the conflictive and oppressive reality of Latin America and partiality with the poor as its point of departure and its aim. He recalled: "While reflecting on the ideas of Moltmann and Brown, I was constantly reminded of a conversation I had with Jon Sobrino... I questioned him concerning his ideas about liberation theology and its role in the United States, using a tape recorder. After over an hour, I turned off the machine, with great satisfaction and gratitude for a plethora of profound ideas.

As I walked away, Jon stopped me and stated that there was one more thing to say, really the most important thing. If the dominant classes in your country applaud your work and shower you with awards, honorary degrees, prestigious chairs, etc., beware--you can be sure you are on the wrong track. A hermeneutic of suspicion should be put into practice, since you may very well have become a tool, a weapon of the dominators. That thought, beyond all the others of Jon, has lived in the shadows of my mind for all the intervening years." See Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J., Liberation

In sum, Sobrino acknowledged that these three people whose works he really studied and analyzed, their good points and difficult points from the perspective of Latin America, are important theologians of this century who influenced his thought quite extensively. Sobrino prefers to reflect on criticisms of Pannenberg's theological approach to merely using his materials, except his epistemology of the knowledge of God: to come to doxological affirmations from a historical starting point. However, Moltmann's idea of the crucified God remains important in Sobrino's christology though it has been modified by Ellacuría's thought on the issue. Ellacuría indeed can be considered as Sobrino's main interlocutor when Sobrino is developing his christology of mercy before the reality of the crucified people. Sobrino is also still making use of Rahner's thought, especially his concept of the mystery of God and its sacramental significance in the life of human beings. With the help and pioneering thoughts of these three scholars, Sobrino continues creatively to develop his own Christology, a Latin American Christology.

B. Constructing a Latin American Christology

Sobrino pointed out that at the center of Latin American theology of liberation Christology and liberation are inseparable and correlational. "Liberation theology is concentrated in Christology... as it reflects on Jesus himself as the way to liberation."⁶⁰ Together with the majority of twentieth century scripture scholars, such as Norman Perrin, Sobrino is convinced that "the kingdom of God" is the most all-embracing theological

Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice (Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995), 262.

⁶⁰Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 37.

concept. His christology also employs a hermeneutic of praxis. To know Christ requires not only a study of his *ipsissima vox et facta* but even more important a study of his *ipsissima intentio*, since it will pave the way for an effective collaboration with him.⁶¹

Sobrino engages in dialogue with other theologies, philosophies and cultural movements. But he develops and argues that the primacy of the basic reality of Latin America of "underdevelopment and oppression" to be responded to christologically since "...real-life misery does not allow for any adequate synthesis in the mind so long as it continues to exist."⁶² Accordingly, we come to know this reality really only insofar as we come to realize the necessity of transforming it. This is also his basic *locus* of christology where faith and life meet. Christological questions are raised by involvement in the praxis of liberation. An important experiential insight of this involvement that challenges any christological reflections is "the felt need for liberation as an absolute necessity and the impossibility of achieving it in history."⁶³

C. The Significance of Latin American Reality

Sobrino's recognition of the reality of Latin America gradually became sharper and clearer. His Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach (1976) was his first systematic response to that reality or a critical reading of the Gospel within a social, political and religious context of Latin America. The reality of Latin America is twofold.

⁶¹Ibid., 35.

⁶²Ibid., 32.

⁶³Ibid., 35.

First, Sobrino wrote: "Sin is that which brought death to the Son of God. Today too, then, sin is that which brings death to the children of God, to human beings; it may be sudden, violent death, or it may be the slow, unremitting death caused by unjust structures."⁶⁴ Sobrino wrote that he was gradually awakened by the reality of extreme poverty and oppression in Latin America. Like many other liberation theologians, he came to a deeper understanding that this reality is sinful since it "brings death to the children of God". At this point Sobrino incorporated also an important perspective, a historical element of that sinful reality as well as the saving power of God in Jesus Christ, he writes:

Christ is the embodiment of universal reconciliation. The statement is true in itself, but it is not given its dialectical thrust. It is an eschatological truth that some seek to pass off as a historical truth pure and simple....Even soteriology, as normally employed, has fostered this particular kind of Christology. It affirms that Jesus died on behalf of all people in order to free them from their sins; it tends to ignore the fact that Jesus died as a direct result of historical sins.⁶⁵

Second, Sobrino observes that it is a part of the reality in Latin America that this sinful reality has been maintained and perpetuated by those who hold economic and political power. This has an implication to their christological preference as well, for their preference obviously only revealed their self-interest. Sobrino explained this critical observation and wrote:

At bottom the concern to maintain the absoluteness of Christ is bound up with a concern to maintain the absoluteness of the system that now prevails in our Latin American countries. Those who hold economic and political power do not want to see Christians affirming the essential relationship of Jesus to the kingdom of God. They would prefer to maintain the seemingly orthodox affirmation of Christ's absoluteness so that the supposed absoluteness of the prevailing capitalist system

⁶⁴Ibid., xvii.

⁶⁵Ibid.

might not be called into question.⁶⁶

At this point Sobrino has indicated some possible distortions of different kinds of Christology which could take part in perpetuating the historical sin that produced death among the children God.⁶⁷

Sobrino presents his threefold suspicion against some types of Christology. The first suspicion is that "frequently Christ has been reduced to a sublime abstraction...The practical consequences are seen in the existence of all sorts of spiritualism and pentecostalism that invoke the Spirit of Christ but do not look to the concrete Spirit of Jesus for their real-life verification."⁶⁸ The second suspicion is that christological teaching emphasizes the Christ as the embodiment of universal reconciliation. Sobrino explained that this teaching is often "...ingenuously preached by some and defended by others out of self-interest. Such an emphasis is nothing else but an attempt to exempt Jesus from the conflict-ridden toils of history, to use Christianity as a support for some sort of ideology espousing peace and order and as a weapon against any kind of conflict of subversion. It is an attempt to keep Christians strangers to the sinfulness and conflictual nature of history."⁶⁹ The third suspicion is the tendency to absolutize Christ and at the same time to ignore the absolute importance of our history. Sobrino points out that

⁶⁶Ibid., xix.

⁶⁷Sobrino presented a brief criticism against his predecessors such as W. Pannenberg and J. Moltmann. Though he is an admirer of Karl Rahner who was also a Jesuit, he did not hesitate to disagree and criticize his approach which he considered as quite abstract and too European.

⁶⁸Ibid., xvi.

⁶⁹Ibid., xvii.

...if Christ is the ultimate or the divine pure and simple, then he is functioning as someone who satisfies and fulfills the needs and wants of the oppressed masses on the ideological level while masking their wants and needs on the level of real life. Total absolutization of Christ also introjects a historical conception into the consciousness of Christians. If Christians already possess the absolute, it is not surprising that their interest in the non-absolutes of history would diminish.⁷⁰

One thing that ties these critical points together is Sobrino's concern of developing a Christology which is ecclesial, historical and trinitarian. It is ecclesial since it reflects the life and praxis of many ecclesial communities in Latin America. It is historical since it is historically conscious of our present-day reality as well as in the process of reflecting on Christ and analyzing the content of Christology. It is trinitarian since it poses the hermeneutic circle in trinitarian terms.⁷¹

D. "Historical Jesus" as its Starting Point

Sobrino's christological breakthrough is highly valuable for the post-Vatican II christology, not only for its content but also for its methodology. Sobrino deliberately and explicitly takes the historical Jesus as its point of departure. He wrote: •

When we talk about our starting point, we must keep in mind both the subjective and the objective aspect. The subjective starting point of Christology of Christology is faith as a lived experience, as I noted above. The next problem-- which shall consider further on--is how we are to live the faith so that the figure of

⁷⁰Ibid., xvii-xviii.

⁷¹Ibid., xx-xxiii. We will consider and explain extensively Sobrino's ecclesial, historical and trinitarian approach to his Christology later. One thing to be remembered is that for Sobrino a trinitarian Christology should be the major point of departure to approach our present-day reality and the life and praxis of any ecclesial communities. In other words Christian life and praxis depend in many ways on a Christological understanding involved. An un-historical Christology most likely would produce a historical indifference in the life and praxis of the Church. At this point Sobrino took a similar approach from his predecessor such as Karl Rahner, particularly on his christological approach to ecclesiology.

Jesus as the Christ may be unveiled to us through that experience...Looking for an objective starting point means looking for that aspect of the total and totalizing reality of Christ that will better enable to find access to the total Christ. Here I propose the historical Jesus as our starting point.⁷²

What Sobrino means by "historical Jesus" is "the person, teaching, attitudes, and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth insofar as they are accessible, in a more or less general way, to historical and exegetical investigation."⁷³ Sobrino did include the death of Jesus by crucifixion and was extremely aware of all the precautions imposed by critical exegesis in gathering the New Testament texts to understand the historical Jesus. To explain further his starting point, Sobrino presented seven other starting points which do not meet the requirements to develop his Christology of liberation.

The first is the dogmatic formulation of the Council of Chalcedon which affirms that Christ is a divine person with two natures, a human nature and a divine nature. One of the major problems of this approach is that "Dogma...is not only chronologically but logically posterior to the reality presented by the Gospels."⁷⁴ The second starting point focuses on the major events in Jesus' life which are already theologized in the New

⁷²Ibid., 351.

⁷³Ibid., 3. It is worth noting that later John P. Meier will take issue on Sobrino's understanding of this "historical Jesus". See the discussion of Meier's criticism in Chapter V. Sobrino understands the term "historical Jesus" to refer to certain aspects of what Meier prefers to call the "real Jesus". However, Sobrino would never claim to have access to or to have reconstructed the "real Jesus," i.e. the "total reality of Jesus of Nazareth as he lived in the first century," but only certain very limited aspects of Jesus' historical reality. See John P. Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 5-6. It is also important to understand Sobrino's definition of the "historical Jesus" from the perspective of his discussion of the *Enlightenment* as a deep human yearning for liberation, both yearning for reasonableness and for transforming praxis. Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 348, 27.

⁷⁴Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 4.

Testament: resurrection, transfiguration, baptism, virgin birth, pre-existence, and so forth.

One of the major problems of this approach is that the interpretations "...come after Jesus himself, introducing us to an already developed Christology... and the New Testament

presented not only one but several different christologies, and it is impossible to unify

them into one."⁷⁵ The third starting point is the people's experience of Christ as present in

cultic worship. The problem with this approach is "how can we differentiate that liturgical

experience from mere illusion and deceit...and that a cultic contact is open to all sorts of

interpretations."⁷⁶ The fourth starting point is the resurrection of Jesus. For Sobrino the

problem is: "Though faith in Christ does arise logically and chronologically with his

resurrection, the starting point for comprehending it is his cross and that brings us back to

the historical Jesus."⁷⁷ The fifth starting point is the Christ of *kerygma*. Christ really *does*

not exist and *is not understood* unless he poses an alternative in people's lives. The

problem here is: "It overlooks the fact that Christian praxis is not just the consequence of

an interior *metanoia* but also the way in which that *metanoia* is turned into something *real*,

as opposed to something merely felt or pondered in thought."⁷⁸ The sixth starting point

focuses on the teaching of the historical Jesus taken in isolation. Jesus is the great model

and teacher (eighteenth and nineteenth century liberal European theology) or the model of

bourgeois morality and citizenship in the nineteenth century (Harnack). The problem is

⁷⁵Ibid., 5.

⁷⁶Ibid., 6.

⁷⁷Ibid., 7.

⁷⁸Ibid., 8.

that with his *eschatological* character, Jesus created a crisis for it all.⁷⁹ The seventh point of departure is Christ as savior. The problem is that "if our interest in salvation were to serve as the starting point then... Christ would become a symbol, a value cipher, to be filled with whatever set of interests which drew people to Jesus."⁸⁰

Sobrino concluded that "the historical Jesus is the hermeneutic principle that enables us to draw closer to the totality of Christ both in terms of knowledge and in terms of real-life praxis. It is there that we will find the unity of Christology and soteriology."⁸¹ For this reason, Sobrino outlined his first Christological book, Christology at the Crossroads, in three main parts. The first part is a methodological note which includes Sobrino's Christological starting point (chapter one) and approaches and dogmas that help to identify, criticize and develop his own Christology (chapters two and ten). The second part is Sobrino's Christology which means a critical reflection on "Jesus in the service of God's Kingdom" (chapter 3), Jesus' faith (chapter 4), Jesus' prayer (chapter 5), Jesus death (chapter 6) and the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus (chapters 7 and 8). The third part is a presentation of tensions involved in aspects of Christology (chapter 9) and summary of his Christological reflection (chapter 11).

For Sobrino, there are two major reasons to choose the "historical Jesus" as a main Christological starting point in Latin America. First, "...there is a clearly noticeable

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., 9.

resemblance between the situation here in Latin America and that in which Jesus lived."⁸²

Sobrino pointed out that the resemblance lies in the social awareness and understanding in Latin America about their objective reality of poverty and exploitation as a sinful situation.

Secondly, one is dealing with the various christologies of the first Christian communities.

According to Sobrino, Jesus of Nazareth and the concrete situation of each community are the two poles on which the diverse Christologies of the New Testament were based. The first Christian communities did not have any pre-fabricated Christology or a ready-made christological dogma. Sobrino reminds us that "In today's situation the various churches are confronted with the same task--unless they rest content with reiterating the standing dogmatic formulas."⁸³ He explains:

...the total Christ is a limit-reality in this world and can be comprehended only in connection with Jesus' actual course toward fulfillment as the Christ. Second, Jesus himself demands this, insisting that the fundamental contact with him comes through following his historical life: i.e., through real praxis of faith motivated by hope and love... Third, a look at history makes it clear that things go wrong when faith focuses one-sidedly on the risen, fulfilled Christ and forgets the historical Jesus...⁸⁴

For all of these reasons Sobrino chose the historical Jesus as the starting point of his Christology and he developed a Christology which is extraordinarily conscious of the reality of the people of El Salvador and Latin America in general, and gradually his views have gained more credibility in the academic environment and even greater among those who are poor and oppressed.

⁸²Ibid., 12.

⁸³Ibid., 13.

⁸⁴Ibid., 352.

In sum, Sobrino develops his christology from within the constructive theological movements in Latin America that takes the reality of the people seriously and proclaims the liberating message of God such as told in Exodus. God has heard the cry of the poor, marginalized and oppressed such as unfolded in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Though all theologies are "contextual" and for Christian theologies, related to Jesus Christ, Sobrino shows first, the necessity for a christology to be founded upon the "historical Jesus", a term defined by Sobrino that has to be further discussed and clarified especially in confrontation with J. P. Meier's critical remarks (Chapter V), and secondly, the necessity to take seriously the evangelical preference toward the suffering, marginalized and oppressed as the Latin American context, rooted in a soteriology which involves an eschatology that is to some extent already realized in the midst of our world today. Above all, the reality of the so-called Third World, of an overwhelming poverty and oppression, found a new home for Latin American theologies to return to and restore its credibility and relevance.

II. Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach

Sobrino points out that the historical Jesus is undoubtedly important to start a christology from a Latin American perspective. Jesus' own history and the continuing faith in Christ now should stand at the center of christology, if christology will not be stranded at the crossroads with no relevance and credibility especially amidst the reality of the Third World such as Latin America. The relevance of taking seriously the historical Jesus emerges from the fact, according to Sobrino, that Jesus lived and was involved personally

in a situation which displays structural similarities to the situation of Latin America: a situation of deep-rooted social sinfulness and a similar yearning for liberation on the part of the poor and oppressed. Sobrino shows that the reality of the poor and the oppressed of Latin America has become a new context and therefore an important point of departure for his christology. From this point of departure and concern, Sobrino develops his christology from the underside of history, particularly a christology that follows a pattern "through death to life". He shows the basic connection between Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection and the suffering and death of the oppressed people. Therefore he dedicated his first christological book, a revised compilation of his writings in Christology, to the honor of the martyrs of El Salvador, especially Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J. and Fr. Alfonso Navarro. In the following pages, Sobrino's study on the historical Jesus will be presented as well as his pastoral concern with its further implications of his christological approach.

A. The Prayer of Jesus

Based on the Synoptic Gospels, Sobrino affirmed that Jesus did pray and that he prayed with a particular content and within a particular context. This is important to be recognized and restated since it reflects Jesus' life and concern, and Sobrino suggested that it becomes the model of Christian prayer.

According to Sobrino, the importance of Jesus' prayer lay in its own quality, not in any external conditioning factors such as time, place or form. In his prayer, Jesus concentrated the inner most depths of his life, and crystallized his faith in God the Father that enabled him to make an important historical decision taking up God's will completely.

He blessed the food, observed the Sabbath worship, joined communal prayers and prayed especially in concrete situations of major importance. In his prayers, Jesus rejoiced that the reign of God is being realized among the lowly. Yahweh, the Father is clearly the ultimate horizon of Jesus' prayer, person and activity.⁸⁵

The content of Jesus' prayer shows that Jesus, particularly in the garden of Gethsemani, was facing a severe crisis,⁸⁶ At this moment, he put himself before the Father and this leads to a significant historical action, Jesus' decision to be faithful to his father's will to the very end. Sobrino discovered that not-knowing is an essential feature of Jesus' prayer at this moment of supreme crisis, and this reflects his deeper knowledge of his Father. The content of Jesus' prayer also demonstrates God's partiality to the poor and the defenseless. Yet, it also shows that God is provident, who allows both the just and the unjust to grow up together in history. God can also be in silence and at times Eden seems to be absence. Eventually, Sobrino explains that the true God will renew all realities. This understanding of God resembles the prophetic tradition, the sapiential tradition, Psalms,

⁸⁵Ibid., 152-154.

⁸⁶Here it is worth remembering of the discussion on the idea of a crisis toward the middle or the end of Jesus' life. For example, John P. Meier objects the idea as an "historically dubious" biographical detail imported from John's Gospel narrative into Sobrino's very Synoptic account of the historical Jesus. Sobrino responds indirectly and notes that "Whether one calls it a 'crisis' or not, whether it can be dated and located as 'Galilean' or not, is secondary for our purposes here. The important thing is that Jesus is shown being faithful to God to the end, and this fidelity is expressed as going up to Jerusalem, where he is going to meet God, again in a new form, in his passion and cross." Therefore, I have chosen to de-emphasize Sobrino's earlier claims for a "Galilean Crisis" in the life of the historical Jesus, and have emphasized instead Sobrino's later notion of a gradually dawning realization that Jesus' message and praxis of the kingdom would involve persecution and death. See John P. Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 5 and Jon Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 152.

Lamentations as well as the Ecclesiastes tradition and apocalyptic tradition of Israel.

Sobrino concludes that Jesus indeed made use of these traditions.⁸⁷ In other words, Jesus grew out of his contemporary Jewish tradition and through a process of getting in touch with his historical reality, Jesus came to his significant understanding of God as Father and his relationship to the Father in trust and obedience that typifies his person extraordinarily.⁸⁸

B. Jesus in the Service of God's Kingdom

Sobrino is among many theologians and New Testament scholars who came to a conclusion that the "reign of God" is the central message of Jesus' preaching which ultimately determines Jesus life as a whole. He wrote "...in historical terms we can only come to know the historical Jesus in and through the notion of God's kingdom. By the same token we can only come to understand what is meant by the kingdom of God in and through Jesus."⁸⁹ Indeed, Jesus preached the reign of God in the first place and not himself or God in general. Sobrino described that Jesus was primarily a religious reformer who preached the best traditions of Israel.

Rather than referring to a static notion of the Kingdom of God, Sobrino examined the original Hebrew expression of the Reign of God, *malkuth Yahweh*, that suggests two basic notions: (1) God reigns with acts of power, (2) in order to establish or modify the

⁸⁷Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 160-161.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 41.

order of things. Sobrino points out that "the real emphasis is on the first verb, and so we would do better to talk about the sovereign 'reign' of God rather than about his 'kingdom'. The dynamic element should predominate over any static overtones."⁹⁰ This is worth noting for the upcoming discussions on the Kingdom of God in his christology. Sobrino subsequently points back to Israel's negative and painful experiences as a determining historical reality. This reality unfolds the need of a divine presence as expressed strongly in Second Isaiah who actually proclaimed the coming of the kingdom (see Isaiah 45:21). Jesus lived in this background of thinking and Jesus responded it by preaching the definitive reign of God that people are awaiting. Sobrino affirms that the actions of Jesus more than his powerful words, are meant to demonstrate the real presence of the reign of God and are not simply accompaniments to his words.⁹¹ Finally, speaking about Jesus' core message, Sobrino explains that the most crucial and controversial point he has made is: first, that the kingdom of God is the transformation of a bad situation, eliminating an oppressive situation; and secondly, that Jesus appears in the very midst of those who are despised by society and segregated from its life. Sobrino concludes that the despised are the main addressees of Jesus proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God and that the reign of God is primarily a grace since first of all it is due to God's initiative.⁹²

The reign of God preached by Jesus in this respect becomes Good News in confrontations against the sinful situation of our world. Collective sin stands against the

⁹⁰Ibid., 43.

⁹¹Ibid., 46-47.

⁹²Ibid., 46.

reign of God and becomes a self-affirmation that overlooks God and others. Therefore, Sobrino made clear that the reign of God preached by Jesus was not aiming at a universal theological truth but the presence of God in a concrete historical situation and a struggle against the power of the anti-kingdom embodied in all forms of oppression.⁹³ From this point of view and this understanding of sin, a conversion means making decisions to follow Christ in our historical concreteness and to participate in the struggle to make the reign of God present in our historical reality. This is quite different than "following Jesus" through mere cultic worship and it challenges other forms and understandings of following Jesus today.⁹⁴

C. Jesus' Own Consciousness

Sobrino discussed Jesus self-understanding and consciousness as a relational self-awareness. In order to better understand the historical Jesus, this relational self-awareness needs to be explained, especially based on Jesus general attitudes and actions. Like his contemporaries, Jesus had many life choices. As a member of a good Jewish family, he could have been a well-accepted devoted Jew and in a general way related himself to their hope of the coming of the reign of God. However, he obviously came to his own decision, based on his strong faith and extraordinary self-awareness. We can recognize this through his peculiar social and religious options. First, Jesus showed his distinctive attitudes such

⁹³Ibid., 54.

⁹⁴Ibid., 61. Sobrino emphasizes the importance of a historical praxis to come to a good understanding of the way of Jesus Christ and his preferential ministry. This means all knowledge of Jesus Christ have to be tested and clarified through an act of following him all the way to the cross.

as forgiving sins and eating with sinners. His parables of the kingdom demonstrated his awareness that the kingdom of God has arrived now in a hidden way and this gradually became his core message. Secondly, Jesus indicated that there is a relation between the kingdom of God and himself, and further proclaimed in his words and deeds that with himself salvation has already commenced.⁹⁵ Third, Jesus came to a distinctive awareness of his mission on behalf of the reign of God as well as his relationship with the Father. He established this relationship through his unconditional trust in the Father and through his unconditional obedience to the Father's will. He gave a total obedience to the mission of his Father and lived to carry it out.⁹⁶ All of these greatly indicate the very depth of Jesus personality and self-awareness, his religious sensitivity and preference, his openness and strong personal commitment to make the will of his Father historically present.

E. The Death of Jesus

Sobrino reminds us that at the very center of Christian faith is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God who died by crucifixion. Therefore, the death of Jesus holds a major importance in christology in general, though it does not mean that Christian theologians have equally presented this reality. In the midst of massive suffering and oppression in Latin America and many other places in our world, Sobrino made his hermeneutical preference to explain his christology in terms of a "mystique of a sorrow and suffering"

⁹⁵Ibid., 69.

⁹⁶Ibid., 71-72.

instead of "mystique of the cross".⁹⁷ He pointed out that christology today tends to "emasculate" the scandal of the Cross which for Sobrino is a major point of departure to better understand Jesus Christ and God amidst that continuous and worsening suffering and oppression against the poor, the marginalized. Indeed, "without the cross, the resurrection is idealistic".⁹⁸

Sobrino suggests two steps to start our theological reflection on the death of Jesus. First, theology must consider how the cross of Jesus as a real happening in history affects God, and secondly, theology must consider the implications of this particular understanding of God for Christian life. According to Sobrino, it is worth-noting that there are also two problems that will keep us away from understanding the cross of Jesus with its profundity which are: 1) the danger of isolating that cross from the concrete history of Jesus, and 2) the danger of isolating it from God.

Sobrino explains that "After the resurrection of Jesus, there was a tendency to focus on the positive benefits of the cross for humankind. That is to say, stress was placed on the salvific and soteriological aspects of the cross."⁹⁹ There are four evidences of this stress. First, in the New Testament itself, according to Sobrino's investigation, there is a strong indication of the difficulty to preserve the scandal of the cross. Sobrino asserts that the New Testament does not maintain the scandalous fact of abandonment by God that

⁹⁷Ibid., 179-180.

⁹⁸Ibid., 180.

⁹⁹Ibid., 181.

was embodied on Jesus' cross.¹⁰⁰ The elaboration of the honorific titles that the New Testament used to interpret the figure of Jesus present only Jesus' personal dignity and the nature of his mission in positive terms. The title of the suffering servant of Yahweh which is the most direct pointer to Jesus' cross disappeared as a most basic explanation of Jesus' person.¹⁰¹

Secondly, there has been a tendency to reduce Jesus' cross to a merely noetic mystery such as its explanation in terms of God's design and its salvific value of human beings. In this way Jesus' cross was prevented from producing any crisis for the knowledge of God. The resurrection of Jesus, for Sobrino, does not eliminate the scandal of the cross but elevates it to the level of a mystery: why Jesus had to die; what God was doing through the cross. Answers such as "to *expiate* sin" (Mark 10:45), "as an *expiatory* victim" (Rom. 3:25), "to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31) or "as a new covenant" (Mark 14:24, Matt. 26:28) do not really confront those questions. According to Sobrino, "the silence of God in connection with Jesus' cross tells us at once that we must break completely with the inertial human way of thinking about God.... The first thing the cross unmasks is people's selfish interest in seeking to know God."¹⁰² He indicates that seeking to know God is not in itself interest-free and points out that the cross of Jesus shows the true interest to approach God. Sobrino shows that the explanatory models above tend to interiorize salvation. "They tend to treat salvation in

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 185.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 186.

¹⁰²Ibid., 188.

terms of inner life... while neglecting to treat of salvation in relationship to the world outside and the problems of externalized injustice and sinfulness."¹⁰³

Thirdly, In the history of the Church and theology an understanding of God that does not derive from the cross and a concept of cultic worship as sacrifice that does not derive from Jesus clearly overlooks the scandal of the cross. Sobrino provides some theological interpretations that the fact of God's abandonment on the cross of Jesus tends to be understood metaphorically or tends to be refined as a hard fact. He makes use of patristic's sources and explains that Origen, Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine understood that Jesus did not feel abandoned by his Father since he was speaking in the name of sinful humanity. Epiphanius and Eusebius interpreted Psalm 22 in the Gospel as a dialogue between Jesus' human nature and his divine nature. Tertullian, Ambrose and Thomas Aquinas concluded that Jesus indeed suffered the abandonment by God that caused him anxiety but not really in despair. Anselm's theory of vicarious satisfaction also did not provide a better understanding. Sobrino points out that the ultimate flaw in these theories are that they are a-historical. Such an approach "... never gets inside the historical reality of Jesus and his cross. It never views the matter in terms of the power of real sin in history, which brings death to the Son--not in idealistic terms but in real terms."¹⁰⁴

Fourthly, the Greek metaphysical conception of God's being and perfection as well as Greek epistemology which is based on analogy and wonder make any theology of the cross impossible. For Sobrino a truly historical liberation theology views suffering as

¹⁰³Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 193.

God's mode of being. A principle of dialectics should be employed so that suffering becomes a source of knowledge, leading us to the concrete practice of transforming love.¹⁰⁵

Sobrino emphasizes the significant historical nature of christology of liberation and states that Jesus' cross is the historical consequence of his life. He points out that the cross is primarily the outcome of God's primordial option: the incarnation situated in a world of sin that is revealed to be a power working against the God of Jesus. Sobrino explained that

Jesus is faced with a contradictory situation, which ultimately comes down to a choice between two deities: either a God wielding oppressive power or a God offering and effecting liberation. Framed in this context of a basic theological conflict, Jesus' trajectory to the cross is no accident...The path to the cross is nothing else but a questioning search for the true God and for the true essence of power. Is power meant to oppress people or to liberate them?¹⁰⁶

Indeed, Jesus' journey to the cross is the outcome of a search for the true reality of God, as the true liberator and in this way he unmasked the "other god" in whose name one can subdue other human beings. Jesus proclaims the Good News about God who liberates the oppressed and loves the poor and because of that he was condemned to death for blasphemy.

Jesus' journey to the cross is a process that raises questions about the kind of power that truly mediates God. Sobrino notes that Jesus' power is that of love immersed in a concrete situation and, therefore, it is a "political" rather than an idealistic love. This love

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 198.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 203-204.

has led Jesus to be condemned as a political agitator. Jesus preached the coming of God's reign rather than simply preaching God. Jesus understood God's coming was primarily an act of grace. Religious nationalism or political theocratism was not his concern. Sobrino explained that the only true power for Jesus was the power embodied in truth and love. This is the reason why he broke down the surviving dichotomy between friend and enemy, calling for pardon and love of enemy rather than for vengeance. On the other hand, Sobrino underlined that "Jesus' love is political since it is situated in the concrete. It is proclamation and hope, denunciation and anathema. And that conception of political love led him perforce to the cross."¹⁰⁷ Because of this, for Sobrino, Christian spirituality must focus itself on the following of Jesus in a concrete situation of our life and cannot be simplified into a mystique of the cross, but must be a true acceptance of sadness, pain or sorrow and inspiration to face trials in life.¹⁰⁸

Jesus' cross reveals the most profound reality of God as indicated in the New Testament: God is love. Sobrino noted that Jesus dies in total discontinuity with his life and his cause, unlike the other religious or political martyrs before and after Jesus' time. On the cross, Jesus feels abandoned by the very God whose approach in grace he had been preaching. Therefore, according to Sobrino, Jesus resurrection did not eliminate his cross, instead it turns the cross into an ever more open question about God.¹⁰⁹

In Jesus' cross, God's transcendence is radicalized and reformulated in the

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 214.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 215.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 219.

categories of power, suffering and love. Referring to Miranda, Sobrino wrote: "It is not that God is transcendent and unable to be manipulated because he is remote, but rather that his unmanipulability appears in his summons to the human conscience and in his insistence on justice as the ultimate human value"¹¹⁰ Sobrino notes a further implication that the cross questions all knowledge of God based on natural theology which refers to any "...attempt to gain access to God on the basis of what is *positive* in existence--whether we view it as nature, history, or human subjectivity."¹¹¹ The cross criticizes every belief that we have some natural access to God. Sobrino asserted that ultimately what remains to be a privileged mediation of God is the real cross of the oppressed, not nature or history even as a totality. The radical questioning of what it means to be a human being serves as the historical mediation of our questioning of what "being God" means. Sobrino observed: "That is why those who do approach the oppressed get the real feeling that it is they who are being evangelized and converted rather than those to whom they seek to render service."¹¹²

Sobrino argues that on the cross of Jesus God himself is crucified. The Father suffers the death of the Son and takes upon himself all the pain and suffering of history. In this ultimate solidarity, God reveals Godself as the God of love and opens up a hope and a

¹¹⁰Ibid., 220.

¹¹¹Ibid., 221. Sobrino took up the major point of Karl Barth's theology of the absolute transcendence of God as well as Karl Rahner's. At the same time he re-emphasized the importance of Jesus' Cross as an outstanding historical reality as "locus theologicus" to approach that transcendent God.

¹¹²Ibid., 223.

future through the most negative side of history. Referring to Martin Luther, Sobrino writes: "No one against God except God himself." He adds that "In God's abandonment of the Son, however, we find not only God's criticism of the world but also his ultimate solidarity with it. On the cross God's love for humanity is expressed in truly historical terms rather than in idealistic ones."¹¹³

Sobrino asserts that the last word is neither Jesus' cross nor the resurrection because God is not yet "all in all". Sobrino is not only fully aware of the ultimate transcendence of God but he also makes clear that what we know ultimately about God is that we do not know a great deal about God. Yet it is important to state that Sobrino has brought up a significant starting point to ponder our questions about God which is Jesus' cross and at the same time an act of following Jesus as an important precondition of knowing. He writes:

Christians, like other human beings, have no direct insight into the reality of God. They, too, must maintain the mysteriousness of God and let God be God. But Christians do know how we may respond to this mystery and what leads to it. We must join with Jesus and do as he did. We must put everything that we have in the service of the kingdom...¹¹⁴

Sobrino concludes that Jesus' cross forces us to change our way of living as well as our way of thinking. He finalizes his observation by saying:

...there is nothing alienating about the cross. Those who are oppressed will instinctively look to it to find a response to their own lives; so long as oppression continues to exist, there is nothing necessarily alienating about that. But the cross is also more than that. It eternally calls Christian life into question, and it makes it possible for history to keep moving forward toward the kingdom of God in hope

¹¹³Ibid., 225.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 234.

and love...¹¹⁵

D. The Resurrection of Jesus

The discussion on the resurrection in Sobrino's christology does not come at the beginning of his book. Apart from the life of Jesus, his closeness to God the Father and his special relationship to the reign of God, his resurrection will be misunderstood. Therefore, sequence does matter for his christology. Sobrino understands the resurrection of Jesus primarily as an event that reveals God. It implies that

we cannot assume at the start that we already know who God is and move from there to an understanding of the resurrection. As was the case with the cross of Jesus, we can only learn who God is from the cross and resurrection of Jesus. and second, If the problem of the resurrection is the problem of God, then our hermeneutics of the resurrection will have to be one that takes in all aspects of reality.¹¹⁶

For Sobrino the most basic questions for those who are doing a theological and christological reflections on the resurrection are: what may we hope for? what can I

¹¹⁵Ibid., 235. While acknowledging the importance of the topic of Jesus' death, here it is important to remember for not isolating the death of Jesus from his whole life. This will be explained more in Sobrino's Jesus the Liberator. Roger Haight interprets this point broader and writes: "Implicitly Sobrino appeals to Rahner's theology of death, where death is considered an act which sums up and freely disposes the sum total of one's life. In going through his passion to his death Jesus was recapitulating the commitment of a lifetime and sealing it with his death. What was pleasing to God in Jesus' death was not the suffering he underwent, but the person, and precisely the person as that had been constituted by a whole life of choices for the kingdom of God. 'Jesus' life as a whole, not one of its elements, is what is pleasing to God.' The cross then remains negative when considered in itself. What is positive is Jesus' active fidelity, commitment, and obedience to the end. The cross is the situation and set of events through which the degree of Jesus' commitment is constituted and displayed." See Roger Haight, Jesus Symbol of God (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 346. Reference is to Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 229-230 and Karl Rahner, On the Theology of Death (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 51-52.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 240.

know? and what should I do?

As regards the event of the resurrection of Jesus, according to Sobrino, Christian hope is rooted in the apocalyptic tradition of Israel. Its continuation is concerned with the establishment of the justice of God. However, its discontinuation is also obvious in the scandalous fact that the one who was raised from the dead was Jesus, a man who had been condemned, executed, and abandoned.¹¹⁷ Sobrino concludes that apocalypticism is the horizon for understanding the resurrection insofar as it expresses a hope. On the other hand, Sobrino is convinced that the "basic discussion about Jesus' resurrection does not have to do with the possibility of envisioning it in physical, biological, or historical terms. It has to do with the triumph of justice. Who will be victorious, the oppressor or the oppressed?"¹¹⁸

Our understanding of the resurrection, according to Sobrino, has much to do with our understanding of history. Sobrino shared an interesting insight in saying that "The Resurrection is still unfinished reality. It is still in the process of fulfillment insofar as its saving efficacy is concerned." This agrees with his understanding of the resurrection as revelation that has to do with God and God's saving plan. Therefore Sobrino gives an additional explanation that "His resurrection cannot be comprehended by broadening the meaning of some conception of history because it is not a possibility *in* the world and *in* history but a possibility *for* the world and *for* history."¹¹⁹ For Sobrino, the most important

¹¹⁷Ibid., 243.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 244.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 252.

things in our discussion of Jesus' resurrection are first, that "The historical aspect of Jesus' resurrection is to be grasped insofar as we see it in terms of a promise that opens up a future."; and second what "can be verified historically are the person of the crucified one, the time and place where the disciples claim to have experienced apparitions, and the credibility of the disciples. The hard reality of the resurrection itself escapes all historical verification, remaining as yet unknown and hidden in obscurity."¹²⁰ Sobrino concludes, referring to Moltmann, that "we should not say that the resurrection is 'historical' because it happened *in* history. It is 'historical' because it *founds* history that can and ought to be lived out, by pointing out the channel leading toward the future as a happening. The resurrection of Christ is historical because it opens up an eschatological future."¹²¹

Finally, Sobrino underscores the importance of praxis as a hermeneutical principle for understanding Jesus' resurrection. It means that the following Jesus is required in understanding his resurrection, that "...it is possible to verify the truth of what had happened in the resurrection only through a transforming praxis based on the ideals of the resurrection."¹²²

In sum, Sobrino has presented a major christological issue: the cross with its social implication and relevance to our world today. He has defined two major methodological

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., 253. See also Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 133-136.

¹²²Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 255. Osborne concludes that "In using these questions, Sobrino indicates, in his own way, the multidimensionality of the resurrection of the Lord. Eschatology, history, and discipleship are the dimensions Sobrino utilizes." Kenan B. Osborne, The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 20.

elements for an emerging Latin American christology: the centrality of the historical Jesus and discipleship as the fundamental means to know Christ. The meaning of Jesus Christ, articulated from Latin America, Third World perspective, has confirmed the credibility of the Christian faith in our world today, precisely because it is marked by massive impoverishment and oppression. This theme is developed in his subsequent writings and is rooted in Sobrino's own struggle when he questioned his own faith in Jesus Christ by the authority of the Catholic Church and when he confronted the worsening reality of the poor and oppressed in Latin America especially in El Salvador in the late 1970s and 1980s. Let us now discuss his main christological books that portrayed this struggle, this concern and this christological development.

III. Jesus in Latin America

In the preface of Jon Sobrino's book entitled Jesus in Latin America (Jesús en América Latina: Su Significado para la Fe y la Cristología, 1982), he explained that it is mainly a collection of his previously published articles and above all it carries two theoretical purposes. In his opening article, he states: "The first seeks to remove doubts and answers questions addressed to Latin American christology and to my Christology at the Crossroads. The second is an attempt to offer a more precise theoretical explanation of the meaning of the historical Jesus for christology."¹²³ This formal questioning occasioned by the teaching authority of the Catholic church in Sobrino's case eventually serves as an

¹²³ Jon Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), xv.

opportunity to clarify and affirm his basic christological insights.¹²⁴ On the following pages, these purposes will be explained in a more direct way by making use of the four critical observations on the christological writings of Sobrino formulated by Juan Alfaro in the preface of this volume.

According to Juan Alfaro, there are four christological statements that prove the orthodoxy of Jon Sobrino's christology. First is Sobrino's repeated assertion of his faith in the divinity of Christ. Second is that "he acknowledges his belief in the normative, binding character of the christological dogmas, as defined by the magisterium of the church in the ecumenical councils." Third is Sobrino's assertion that there is in "Christian eschatology, an end-time already initiated in the historical present of today as the anticipation of its metahistorical fullness to come after death." Fourth is that "Sobrino professes his faith in Christian liberation as 'integral liberation'--that is, as human being's total salvation, in their

¹²⁴McGovern reports: "In a critique of liberation theology published a few months before the instruction [on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation] was issued, Ratzinger cited Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino as explicit targets. He also sent a list of charges against Gutiérrez to the bishops of Peru; Sobrino was investigated; Boff was called to Rome in 1984 to answer charges, and then silenced for a year..." See Arthur F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 16. One of the most recent questioning by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Catholic Church was directed at Jacques Dupuis, S.J. especially against the thought in his Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (New York: Orbis Books, 1997). He is co-editor of the lasting famous reference The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church and known "for careful theologizing, scrupulous concern for scholarship and respect for the teachings of the Church." Sometimes it is said the members of the Roman congregation are only seeking to defend the faith. Yet, as explained clearly by John W. Padberg, S.J., one of the greatest Jesuit historians today, that "does not prevent them from doing serious harm to individuals and to the Church by the way they act." He noted that "Recently the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, giving Fr. Dupuis no information on his accuser and appointing his so-called defenders itself without even consulting him, presented him with a list of particulars, 'an official document of accusations [and]...a long list of questions on alleged positions of my book.' He was forbidden to disclose both the text of the documents and the responses that he was to provide to the congregation within three month..." See John W. Padberg, S.J., "For your information," Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits 31 (January 1999): iv-v.

interiority and corporality, in their relation to God, to others, to death, and to the world."¹²⁵ Alfaro concluded that Sobrino states those points without any ambiguity. Though this discussion carries formal purposes, it is important to remember that for Sobrino the basic questions to start his christological/theological reflections remain: what may we hope for? what can I know? and what should I do?

A. The Issue of the Divinity of Christ

Sobrino reminds us that "The intent of liberation christology is more immediately pastoral....is not conceived for the purpose of making these formulas (either New Testament or magisterial formulas) understandable for those who, for contingent cultural reasons, find them doubtful."¹²⁶ For him, there is no doubt that at the very center of the faith of all Christians is always that Jesus Christ is true man and true God, that God is one in three person, and that Jesus has redeemed the human race by his death and resurrection.¹²⁷ Latin American Christology underlines the historical Jesus as the totality of Jesus' history, and its finality is to recognize the continuation of Jesus's history in the present.¹²⁸

Sobrino discussed two categories to understand the divinity of Christ. The first is the category of power. The miracles and the title "Lord" have been widely selected to

¹²⁵Juan Alfaro, "Foreword" to Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, xi.

¹²⁶Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 8.

¹²⁷Ibid. Here Sobrino quotes Juan Luis Segundo, Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina: Encuentro de El Escorial (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973), 209.

¹²⁸Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 65.

render Jesus' divinity comprehensible. However, Sobrino observed that "The miracles have generally been abandoned by exegetes and theologians for this purpose, and power...fails to correspond to the reality of Christ unless the power implied in lordship is subjected to a critique based on the actual history of Jesus."¹²⁹ The second is the category of filiation. Sobrino affirmed that this has more theological and pastoral importance within the context of Latin America. The category of son and his aspect as servant, preserve "the scandalous novelty of the divinity... and the eternal divinity of Christ can be presented pastorally in situations in which peoples are crucified."¹³⁰

Sobrino further explains his description of God as trinitarian "process" which was misunderstood through accusations that doubted Sobrino's acceptance to the reality of the trinitarian God. He writes:

My intent has been to assert in human language the specific modality of the revelation of God from the point of departure in Jesus...What I have sought to add through my terminology of 'process' with respect to the Trinity is that God not only is revealed to us in trinitarian fashion, but that God also takes on human being's history. This is certainly clear in the incarnation.¹³¹

For Sobrino it is important to keep two significant points in understanding this faith in the divinity of Christ. First that "The total reality of life is required and this includes the practice of love and hope." Sobrino calls this totality "discipleship" which includes, but is not reduced to, pure cognition. Second, learning from Peter's case (Mark

¹²⁹Ibid., 47.

¹³⁰Ibid. Sobrino presents his awareness of the danger of adoptianism or "that I deny Christ's preexistence" as was questioned.

¹³¹Ibid., 51.

8:27-38), he asserts: "The natural human being tends, in his and her concupiscence, to 'think a mystery' according to his and her own logic, and then, in the name of this mystery so thought, to reject the genuine mystery of Christ." According to Sobrino, "The alteration of the falsity of these thoughts is not actually a matter of the cognitive level alone, according to Jesus. According to Jesus, it is a matter of following him on the way of the cross."¹³²

Sobrino explains from a theological approach that the act of faith does matter in the process of professing our faith completely in the divinity of Christ. He wrote:

The person for whom Christ is such that he moves him or her to posit a like act of faith is asserting the transcendence of Christ, is asserting his divinity. He or she is asserting *that* Christ is God and *that* God is revealed in Christ. If every act of faith is a surrender, a *sacrificium intellectus*, the act of faith will be a greater one when this surrender is a *sacrificium vitae*, and when it explicitly, however unsophisticatedly, calls on Jesus' name.¹³³

Finally, in my observation, Sobrino's Christology takes seriously the way of life of Jesus Christ as portrayed by the Gospel as an integral part of our faith in his divinity. In taking into consideration to follow Jesus up to his final decision to surrender his life for others in love, one's faith in his divinity becomes complete and credible. Secondly, Sobrino's Christology is grounded in the reality of Latin America and in the love for Christ. He wrote "The ultimate language of faith is love. Those who would verify their own truth concerning the Christ will in the last resort have to question themselves about

¹³²Ibid., 17. Sobrino explained that at this point Jürgen Moltmann's basic thesis of The Crucified God and Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) has influenced liberation Christology.

¹³³Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 28, 42.

their love for Christ. Is there love for Christ in Latin America? This simple question may perhaps be the ultimate key for an understanding and interpretation of truth asserted about Christ. Only God knows the measure of this love. But it would be unjust not to recognize that in Latin America there are Christians who can make Paul's exultation their own."¹³⁴

B. The Issue of the Binding Character of Christological Dogmas

Sobrino acknowledges his belief in the normative, binding character of the christological dogmas, as defined by the magisterium of the church in the ecumenical councils. There is no doubt that Sobrino's belief is based on the christological dogmas as defined by the magisterium of the church in the ecumenical councils. However, more than that, as a theologian he goes beyond the dogmatic formulations of the truth of Jesus Christ. He reads them seriously and critically from his experience of following Jesus Christ in the midst of many witnesses and martyrs of this century, especially from within the church in Latin America, for the cause of following Jesus Christ. Sobrino underscores that "The christology of liberation rejects neither the christological mystery nor its dogmatic formulations, although it has not considered it its task to analyze these formulations speculatively."¹³⁵ He notes that like other christologies, the christology of liberation is

¹³⁴Ibid., 54. Sobrino refers to the content of the letter of St. Paul to the Romans: Rom. 8: 35-39: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As Scripture says: 'For your sake we are being slain all the day long; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered.' Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of him who has loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

¹³⁵Ibid., 44.

strongly aware of the limitations of human language for purpose of expressing the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Sobrino points out the irreplaceable role of the dogmatic formulations on Jesus Christ for liberation Christology as for any Christology. He observes that there are three main roles involved. They are first: "...dogmas set the limits of any christology, in such wise that the transgression of these limits will entail not only disobedience to the magisterium, but sooner or later the impoverishment of the figure of Christ". Secondly, "...the dogmas, in their own language and conceptuality, radically expound the mystery of Christ, and demand its maintenance as mystery, in spite of certain uses of dogma that tend to the domestication of this mystery." Third, "christological dogmas expound, at bottom, the truth of the Christian faith concerning the absolute, salvific nearness of God to a sinful, enslaved humanity--a nearness become unrepeatable, unsurpassable, in Jesus Christ."¹³⁶

Sobrino also observed that the magisterium of the church came gradually to focus on Jesus' special relationship with the poor.¹³⁷ This really shows the dynamic nature of the magisterium of the church and its preference to the historical reality of the church.

Through his critical re-thinking of these dogmatic formulations, Sobrino also indicates a pastoral problem in introducing the mystery of Christ from the dogmatic formula. He writes: "Because dogmatic statements are limit statements they cannot be understood, even at the noetic level, without retracing the steps leading to their

¹³⁶Ibid., 19.

¹³⁷Ibid., 170. Sobrino refers especially to "Lumen Gentium," no. 8; "Evangelii Nuntiandi," no. 6,12; The Document of II CELAM in Medellín on "Poverty of the Church," no. 7 and III CELAM in Puebla on "A Preferential Option for the Poor," no. 190, 1141.

formulation."¹³⁸ Therefore, while admitting the truth of the dogmatic formulations on Jesus Christ, liberation Christology "insists on re-creating the process that led to them, beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, and holds that the re-creation of this process is the best way to come to an understanding of the formulas."¹³⁹ Sobrino himself takes Jesus of Nazareth as the major point of departure of his Christological reflections. Sobrino is convinced that the return to Jesus of Nazareth has forced christologies to the discovery of a double relationality. On the one hand, they discover

...Christ's constitutive relationship to God, and more concretely, to God's ultimate will, which is the approach of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, they discover the intrinsic relationship of the content of Christ with the ecclesial practices of the communities that sprang up after the resurrection. Christ cannot be adequately understood without reference to these communities that were in the process of recalling him.¹⁴⁰

Sobrino concludes that

Through that presentation of the historical Jesus and of what is historical in Jesus, Latin American christology seeks personal access to Jesus. It does so not primarily by presenting pieces of knowledge about him, so that human beings may decide what to do and how to relate to the Jesus thus known, but by presenting his practice in order to re-create it and thus have access.¹⁴¹

This is eventually what Sobrino meant by the following of Jesus and a christological reflection that takes its dogmatic formulations seriously.

¹³⁸Ibid., 19.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 57.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 68.

C. The Issue of Eschatology

Christian eschatology is an end-time already initiated in the historical present of today as the anticipation of its metahistorical fullness to come after death. From this basic Christian faith on the fullness of life, Christian eschatology, Sobrino explains his concern for the suffering and oppression experienced unceasingly by many people and many Christians of this century, without exception by those who believe and profess their faith in Jesus Christ and act under the name of Jesus Christ. He asserts:

By way of contrast with the insistence of so many first-world theologies on the escathological reserve imposed by the absolute character of the kingdom, in Latin America the insistence is on the 'mediating concretions of the kingdom', inasmuch as the latter 'is not given in its totality, but in historical mediations, and is realized at all levels of political, economic, social, and religious reality'.¹⁴²

He points out that

Insistence on the eschatological reserve, which is necessary in its way, is not sufficient to incarnate the Christian in the world today; it has its dangerous side, since the problem of discernment does not end with de-absolutizing the particular historical context, but in meeting the particular context of what has to be done according to Paul's requirement of a love that moves us on.¹⁴³

Christian understanding of eschatology and our faith in God of the future indeed does not exempt us from our Christian responsibilities toward others especially to those in need and who are marginalized.

Sobrino focuses his explanation of eschatology on the kingdom of God and Jesus. First, Sobrino understands the kingdom of God preached by Jesus as an antithesis of the

¹⁴²Ibid., 178. See also Leonardo Boff, "Salvación en Jesucristo y Proceso de Liberación," Concilium 96 (1974): 385-387.

¹⁴³Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 131.

situation of those who are most deprived of life, and it is a working idea or invitation to participate in building the kingdom.¹⁴⁴

Sobrinho more specifically points out one major preferential starting point to understand better the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus which is the poor. He affirms that "to gain a working idea of the content of the kingdom of God, we must adopt the viewpoint of those who lack life, power, and dignity, and not pretend there can be another and better viewpoint than theirs. In this way the idea of the kingdom will not be paralyzed by the abstract universalism of its content or by a precipitate imposition of the eschatological reserve on it."¹⁴⁵ The reason behind his claim is Jesus' specific behavior toward the poor and the outcast. Sobrinho explains that Jesus' preference does not give a gnostic revelation of what the kingdom is but does reveal how the kingdom operates in practice. There is a correlation between Jesus' historical service and what the kingdom is to be and this service is understood as being for and from the poor and the outcast.¹⁴⁶

Second, Christian eschatology is closely related to the person of Jesus. Jesus is understood as a model in Christian eschatology, an eschatological human being. Sobrinho claims that

...even for the eschatologization of the figure of Christ demanded by faith, the partisan quality of poverty and impoverishment is more adequate historically and

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. On page 185 Sobrinho clarified that "This does not mean reducing the kingdom of God to the basic level of life, but it does mean that these should be borne in mind lest we forget the basic requirement of the kingdom when speaking of more abundant life and eschatological fullness in accordance with the gospel."

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 143.

leads to a better comprehension of the content of Jesus as the eschatological human being--although here too we have the leap of faith, inasmuch as this transition from the historically partisan Jesus to Jesus the eschatological human being maintains the radical novelty and scandal of what it means genuinely and truly to be a human being.¹⁴⁷

Sobrino brings back the gospel narratives as the foundation for our understanding of the historical Jesus. The gospel narratives indeed present Jesus as a human being, poor in his birth, in solidarity with the poor and sinners, whose cause he defends and to whom he proclaims the coming of the kingdom.¹⁴⁸ Sobrino continues: "After the resurrection Jesus' pro-existence is universalized. He is presented as the eschatological savior. The salvific value of Christ's death is eschatologized, for it is the historical product not only of the will of human beings, but also of the will of God, who delivers up the Son for our salvation (Rom. 8:31; John 3:16)."¹⁴⁹ Therefore, it is clear in Sobrino's Christological reflection that Christian eschatology is already initiated in the historical present of today and is the anticipation of its metahistorical fullness to come after death which is modeled in Jesus Christ.

D. The Issue of Salvation

Christian liberation is an "integral liberation". This refers to human being's total salvation, in their interiority and corporality, in their relation to God, to others, to death,

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 32.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 32-33.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 34. Sobrino does make sense when he said on page 58 that "It is more reasonable in today's world to look for the meaning of real life in a real Jesus rather than in what might be presented in mythical fashion."

and to the world. Sobrino once again turns to Jesus Christ to explain the Christian understanding of liberation. In a more specific way he points to the act of following Jesus as the most important context of our discussion of Christian liberation as integral liberation. After explaining the first element of following Jesus as incarnation, Sobrino asserts that "The second element in this following is the practice of liberation, understood as the liberation brought by Jesus, as proclamation of the kingdom of God to the poor and as the various forms of service to make this announcement become reality."¹⁵⁰ This contains a strong element of hope, faith and persistent love because of the "delays and rejections" of the kingdom in our history. Otherwise, it will turn out to be a movement to gain a "partial liberation" with a stronger social/political agenda instead of historicizing the kingdom of God as modeled by Jesus. Therefore Sobrino writes:

The first (task) is the maintaining hope, not merely the announcement, of the coming of the kingdom. Faced with the delays and rejections of the kingdom in history, maintaining faith in its coming is itself a sign of indestructible hope in the God of the kingdom: a hope that becomes the driving force of the practice of liberation. The second (task) is maintaining love as the formal motivation behind the practice of liberation.¹⁵¹

The third element of following Jesus is Jesus' aim as "set out programmatically in the Beatitudes, particularly the version in Luke, which shows them concerned with material conditions of poverty, hunger, and affliction."¹⁵² Sobrino immediately points out the equal

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 163. Sobrino explains further that "By its own historical condition, a crucified people already carries various aspects of Jesus' service to the kingdom *in actu*." Indeed Sobrino is convinced of the salvific role of "the crucified people" as it is correlated significantly to the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

concern with the spirit in which these material realities should be lived and for him this is what centers the aim of those who follow Jesus. Sobrino explains that

This spirit is utopian on account of the historical difficulty of achieving it fully and of combining it with other demands of the following of Jesus, such as clear denunciation and unmasking, with the conflict and antagonisms they generate and with the effectiveness that must be sought, as it is Jesus' will, and because, furthermore, it lends its own efficacy to the practice of historical liberation.¹⁵³

Finally, Sobrino points out one important element in this whole process of liberation which is grace, sometimes misunderstood or neglected by Latin American christology. He explains: "At all events, we hear, it must be insisted that the movement of the leap from one's 'I' in order to move to Christ is grace, and no human deed."¹⁵⁴ This means that for Sobrino Jesus Christ is the only point of departure to understand this "integral liberation" explained by liberation christology.¹⁵⁵

In sum, from the explanations above, drawn from Sobrino's book Jesus in Latin America, Sobrino has responded clearly and positively to the questions asked by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church as indicated by Alfaro in the preface of that book. Far from obscuring the fundamental christological teachings, Sobrino offers to those

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 69.

¹⁵⁵In order to understand profoundly the idea of "integral liberation" as explained by Sobrino here we should recall the writing of Gutiérrez on the three fold liberation. Gutiérrez insisted from the outset on the need for liberation in three different spheres: 1) socio-politico-economic liberation from poverty, oppression, and dependency; 2) liberation in history of all dimensions of human freedom, with humans becoming responsible for their own destiny and living in solidarity; 3) liberation from sin, which is the ultimate root of injustice. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation. Revised Edition with a New Introduction, trans. and ed., Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 24-25, 102-105, 116-120, 171-174.

traditional teachings a new depth, urgency and relevancy. He presents a new meaning of Jesus Christ in the renewal of the faith in Latin America.

Sobrino's christology starts from an historical reflection on the reality of the poor especially as it has been present overwhelmingly in Latin America and from the historical Jesus as a way to God. Accordingly Sobrino shows the importance of an act of following Jesus in a concrete historical situation marked by that poverty and oppression. Further, Sobrino's claim for the act of following Jesus as the precondition for knowing him comes from his own experience, his critical observation and his christological reflection on the life and death of many "martyrs" in El Salvador and in Latin America generally. Later, this reflection becomes more personal and urgent after the killing of his own Jesuit brothers and their co-workers with whom he thought through and tried to live true Christian discipleship. This is his main reason when he says that "Faith in Christ means, first and foremost, *following Jesus*."¹⁵⁶ and that "...knowing Christ is, in the last resort, following Christ."¹⁵⁷ At this point, to better understand his insight, Sobrino's understanding of following Jesus, discipleship amidst an historical reality of the crucified people today, it is important to review and discuss Ellacuría's idea of historicizing the Kingdom of God which was proclaimed and initiated by Jesus. Two main reasons for this are: first, that both Ellacuría and Sobrino are the main theologians of the UCA who clearly shared their vision and mission; and secondly, that for Sobrino it is clear that Ellacuría and his friends were

¹⁵⁶Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 13.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 35.

murdered "... for trying to create a truly Christian university. They were killed because they believed in the God of the poor and tried to produce this faith through the university."¹⁵⁸ For that reason, to understand deeper Sobrino's christological insights and development, we need to discuss the insights of Sobrino's co-thinker and interlocutor, Ignacio Ellacuría. Indeed, a major look to Sobrino's christological focus, terminologies and arguments will not be better explained unless we study Ellacuría's concern and writings. With Ellacuría, Sobrino deepens his reflection on the act of following Jesus and develops especially his theological reflection on the crucified people. At this point, the important role of Romero in the development of both Ellacuría and Sobrino should be kept in mind.¹⁵⁹

IV. The Influence of Ignacio Ellacuría: The Poor as Crucified People and the Act of Following Jesus

Sobrino shared a common vision and mission with Ellacuría. They knew each other well enough to share some ideas and authorships, especially in articulating the message of the emerging liberation theology in Latin America.¹⁶⁰ Sobrino himself has made use of

¹⁵⁸Jon Sobrino, "Companions of Jesus" in Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 29.

¹⁵⁹Sobrino himself addresses the reality of El Salvador and especially the moment of knowing and learning from both Ellacuría and Romero as "escuela Salvadoreña de teología". See Jon Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", 30 June 30, 2.

¹⁶⁰In writing his personal tribute to his murdered brother Jesuits, Sobrino wrote: "...I shall offer some general reflections on my friends and various important matters that their martyrdom raises. I shall speak of them as a group, especially the five who worked in Central American University, the UCA, whom I knew best. I shall say a bit more about Ignacio Ellacuría, because I lived with him for longer and it was he who most often put into words what these Jesuits accepted as

Ellacuría's theological insight and social analysis quite extensively especially after his assassination. It is his "martyrdom" that extraordinarily justified his life, ministry, thoughts as well as his partiality with the poor. Sobrino affirmed his outstanding credibility in the introduction of the English edition of Mysterium Liberationis:

It is only from amidst oppression, carried to its maximal expression in martyrdom, that the theology of liberation can be understood. A true theology of liberation, which would attempt to "take the crucified people down from the cross," in Ignacio Ellacuría's words, must be prepared to share the fate of that people. This is what Ignacio Ellacuría's martyrdom, better than any theological word, expresses, and that martyrdom is the best hermeneutics for understanding this book.¹⁶¹

The following discussion will focus on two related points. The first is Ellacuría's explanation and significance of the metaphor of the crucified people as he introduced it after the assassination of Grande and after the death of Romero. The second is Ellacuría's explanation on the act of following Jesus, especially through his idea of historicization. Following Jesus Christ is primarily an act of historicizing the Reign of God, proclaimed

fundamental in their lives and work." Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 4.

¹⁶¹ Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), viii. Sobrino concludes that ultimately Ellacuría is truly human being and Christian. "La figura de Ignacio Ellacuría es de una gran riqueza, y por ello puede ser analizada desde diversas perspectivas. Ellacuría fue, en efecto, un gran *personaje*, intelectual, filósofo y teólogo, por lo que fue conocido ya desde los años setenta. Y fue también rector de la UCA, mediador y negociador en el proceso político salvadoreño, por lo que fue conocido sobre todo en los ochenta. Pero en la base de todo ello y a través de todo ello estuvo y se hizo presente la *persona*, el hombre y el cristiano, Ignacio Ellacuría." Jon Sobrino, "Ignacio Ellacuría, el Hombre y el Cristiano: 'Bajar de la Cruz al Pueblo Crucificado' (I)," RLT XI (May-August 1994): 131. Víctor Codina notes this new and rare reality of a martyred theologian and writes "...la muerte de Ellacuría es no sólo teologal, sino 'teológica', teólogo y mártir; mártir por su misma teología profética. Ellacuría ha devuelto a la teología el carácter testimonial de los primeros siglos, la ha purificado de todo carácter mundano y ha dado a esta profesión su *status* original: saber dar razón de la esperanza al pueblo con la palabra y la vida y con palabra del Señor muerto y resucitado, anunciar al reino con todas sus consecuencias." Víctor Codina, "Ignacio Ellacuría, Teólogo y Mártir" in RLT 21 (1990): 269.

and initiated by Jesus himself. For Ellacuría, an academic or university environment was a possible and effective means to materialize that act of historicization.

Ellacuría came to El Salvador in 1949 as a part of his Jesuit formation shortly after beginning his religious formation in the Society of Jesus.¹⁶² Sobrino, who is eight years younger than he, came to El Salvador in 1957 as a novice. Since that time, they were involved in a common mission of the Jesuits in El Salvador and Central America generally. One thing should be mentioned, namely, that both Ellacuría and Sobrino shared a similar faith experience of the reality of El Salvador, especially of the poor, and both were moved by this overwhelming reality, in a way which might be named "intelligence moved by mercy".¹⁶³ This "conversional" self and intellectual development should not be looked at as something that was happening to them only, since in fact they lived and witnessed many other committed Christians, including religious men and women and even a bishop.

In Sobrino's "Letter to Ignacio Ellacuría" that was read at the Mass of the first anniversary of the killing of the six Jesuits and their co-workers, which for me summarizes

¹⁶²See a well written summary of Ellacuría's biography in Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 59-63.

¹⁶³Sobrino commented, "Perhaps the most important thing I learned from him...as a human being, a Christian, and a Jesuit, was how to look at the reality of the third world through God, and how to act on this reality with the mercy--justice in structural language--of the heart of God." See Jon Sobrino, "La Comunión Eclesial Alrededor del Pueblo Crucificado," RLT 20 (May-August 1990): 138. Whitfield reported her interview with Napoleón Alvarado, one of Ellacuría's students, who recalled: "Ellacuría was lecturing on the historical Jesus when, 'something, in all the rational structure he used even for teaching theology, just went....He was going along, saying that Jesus embodied justice and so forth, and that at the same time he embodied mercy, and had the eyes and heart of mercy to understand sin and to understand human beings, and he could do both things, and unite the dialectic of the two and so on...and then he just stopped. And his voice went very quiet, and then, overflowing with emotion, he said, 'because he was a great man.' And I thought, 'Ay, Ellacu!'" See Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 209.

the most fundamental vision of Ellacuría, two points are mentioned. First, Ellacuría was a creative intellectual person who gave priority to the service of the people, especially the poor and crucified peoples.¹⁶⁴ The aim of this service of mercy, ultimately, was "taking the crucified peoples down from the cross".¹⁶⁵ Ellacuría made himself clear about his opinion and vision and spoke out publicly for what he believed. Sobrino reports that a Salvadoran woman told him after seeing Ellacuría on television, shortly before he was murdered, that "not since they murdered Archbishop Romero has anyone spoken out so plainly in this country."¹⁶⁶ Second, Ellacuría was a philosopher and at the same time a man of faith, precisely because he continued to believe in God, though there had been fundamental God-questions such as the question of "the unjust poverty of Latin America", and though he himself had admitted to doubts. Sobrino recalls: "I remember one day in 1969, when

¹⁶⁴See John Hassett and Hugh Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 373-382 which puts together most of the publications of Ellacuría and covers full period of his life of service as a Jesuit especially from 1956-1989 and several other philosophical publications collected in Seminario Zubiri-Ellacuría, Voluntad de Arraigo: Ensayos Filosóficos, ed. Jorge Alvarado (Nicaragua: UCA Managua, December 1994), 247-255.

¹⁶⁵Sobrino writes: "Your life was not just service, then: It was the specific service of 'taking the crucified peoples down from the cross'--words very much your own, the kind of words that take not only intelligence to invent, but intelligence moved by mercy." Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from The Cross, 188. Sobrino adds that it is also true that the term "taking the crucified peoples down from the cross" will better introduce him. He writes: "Este concepto de misericordia lo hemos elaborado en *El Principio misericordia. Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados* (Santander 1992, San Salvador 1993). Si lo menciono aquí es para dejar constancia de que mucho de lo que escribo en ese libro proviene de observar a personas como Ellacuría y Monseñor Romero. Y por ello, aunque no sea habitual, repito en este escrito como subtítulo lo que me parece a mí que mejor nos introduce en la persona de Ellacuría: bajar la cruz al pueblo crucificado." Sobrino, "Ignacio Ellacuría, El Hombre y El Cristiano", RLT XI-32 (May-August 1994): 158.

¹⁶⁶Sobrino, "Companions of Jesus," in Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 5.

you told me something I've never forgotten. Here's how you put it. You were talking about your great mentor, Karl Rahner. Suddenly you remarked, 'He managed his own doubts very elegantly.' I asked you what you meant. And you explained. You meant that neither was *your* faith anything obvious. It was a victory."¹⁶⁷ To better understand these two points, let us discuss Ellacuría's idea of the crucified people and of the following of Christ amidst the real world of the poor.

A. On The Poor as Crucified People

1. Understanding the Crucified People

A new understanding of the Church as primarily people of God was presented by the Second Vatican Council, particularly in its document "Lumen Gentium". Before coming to a more specific "definition" of the crucified people, Ellacuría explained that our understanding of the people of God should be based on the reality and the world in which Jesus' followers live. For Ellacuría our understanding of the people of God carries an immediate soteriological and christological element of what the Christian presence means to its surroundings as well as how Christians understand Jesus' mission and ministry. What he found about the reality of our world today was surprising and challenging. The reality was a growing majority of the poor and the oppressed of our world that forced people and those with Christian spirit to think and to offer solutions. Ellacuría wrote:

If we are to understand what the people of God is, it is very important that we open our eyes to the reality around us, the reality of the world in which the church has existed for almost two thousand years, since Jesus announced the approach of

¹⁶⁷Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from The Cross, 188.

the Reign of God. This reality is simply the existence of a vast portion of humankind, which is literally and actually crucified by natural oppressions and especially by historical and personal oppressions.¹⁶⁸

One of the solutions is that we take seriously the new approach of liberation theology to the reality of the poor and oppressed, and that we use a different theological term to discuss this reality. Sobrino noted: "In speaking about the historical situation of the Third World, Ignacio Ellacuría used to say that it is right to speak about the 'crucified God' but just as necessary or even more so to speak about the 'crucified people'".¹⁶⁹ He pointed to Ellacuría's turning point, especially he is contrasting that term to the term "crucified God" introduced by Moltmann and elaborated in his book with the same title. Soteriological and christological reasons are the two major elements that illumine the metaphoric term, "crucified people".

Ellacuría gave a definition of the crucified people as collective body, crucified historically by the minority of powerholders who organize and exercise their power against them. Ellacuría, by saying that, was referring to the whole reality of the poor and oppressed of the Third World. This oppression of the crucified people came from actions in history that are deliberate actions and from the indifference of a few who enjoy life by depriving others of life, who possess more by dispossessing others. Ellacuría was aware of

¹⁶⁸Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 257.

¹⁶⁹Sobrino includes Ellacuría as part of the reality of the crucified people because of his martyrdom, his deep awareness of this martyrdom in everything he did as well as "...because as a theologian he was, in my opinion, a pioneer in developing the theology of Third World peoples as crucified peoples." See Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 254, 300.

those who argued for the continuous existence of the poor and oppressed and who saw the poor merely as a problem. He was also aware of those who spoke about the poor in general or claimed to be one of them. There are two important notes to be mentioned when we speak about these crucified people. First,

"... we cannot say once and for all who constitutes the collective subject that most fully carries forward Jesus' redeeming work. It can be said that it will always be the crucified people of God, but as corrected as it is, that statement leaves undefined who that people of God is, and it cannot be understood simply as the official church even as the persecuted church. Not everything called church is simply the crucified people or the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, although correctly understood this crucified people may be regarded as the vital part of the church, precisely because it continues the passion and death of Jesus."¹⁷⁰

Second, Ellacuría indicated that the reality goes beyond this basic oppressive pattern.

"While maintaining the universal pattern of people crucifying others in order to live themselves, the subsystems of crucifixion that exist in both groups, oppressors and oppressed, should also be examined."¹⁷¹

Ellacuría argued that the term "crucified people" does point to a certain group of people with a certain basic characteristics though their different historic situations might result in different traits under different aspects. For Ellacuría certain basic characteristics are nothing else than their relation and likeness to the Servant of God and to Jesus. In the word of Ellacuría:

The most basic is that it be accepted as the Servant by God; that acceptance, however, cannot be established except through its "likeness" to what happened to the Jesus who was crucified in history. Therefore, it will have to be crucified for

¹⁷⁰Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 276.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 267.

the sins of the world, it will have to have become what the worldly have cast out, and its appearance will not be human precisely because it has been dehumanized; it will have to have a high degree of universality, since it will have to be a figure that redeems the whole world; it will have to suffer this utter dehumanization, not for its sins but because it bears the sins of others; it will have to be cast out and despised as savior of the world, in such a way that this world does not accept it as its savior, but on the contrary judges it as the most complete expression of what must be avoided and even condemned; and finally, there must be a connection between its passion and the working out of the Reign of God.¹⁷²

To be more precise, Ellacuría provided some examples of what can be identified as the crucified people. Again this is important for his theological approach which is grounded in history and which portrays his passion of the historical reality.

To mention some examples with two sides: the First World is not in this line and the Third World is; the rich and oppressive classes are not and the oppressed classes are; those who serve oppression are not, no matter what they undergo in that service, and those who struggle for justice, *insofar* as they are Third World, oppressed class and people who struggle for justice, are in the line of the Suffering Servant, even though not everything they do is necessarily done in the line of the Servant. Indeed, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, these three levels must by necessity develop--although we cannot here go into studying the ways this takes place--into some embodiments that are strictly political and others that are not formally political, though they are engaged in history.¹⁷³

This identification of those who can be referred to as the crucified people is obviously still somewhat broad, beyond any particular group or list of names.¹⁷⁴ Yet it is reasonably clear and understandable. Ellacuría explained that his recognition of the crucified people has always been closely related to the figure of the Servant of Yahweh

¹⁷²Ibid., 276-277.

¹⁷³Ibid., 277.

¹⁷⁴Ellacuría admitted that "The crucified people thus remains somewhat imprecise insofar as it is not identified, at least formally, with a specific group in history--at least in all the specific features of a group in history. Nevertheless, it is precise enough so as *not to be confused* with what cannot represent the historic role of the Servant of Yahweh." Ibid.

and Jesus of Nazareth and he emphasized that

This likening of the crucified people to the Servant of Yahweh is anything but gratuitous. If we can see common basic features in both, there is moreover the fact that Jesus identified himself with those who suffer--or that was the view of the early Christian community. That is, of course, true of those who suffer for his name or for the Reign, but it is also true of those who suffer unaware that their suffering is connected to the name of Jesus and the proclamation of his Reign. This identification is expressed most precisely in Matthew 25:31-46, and indeed, that passage appears just before a new announcement of his passion (Matthew 26:1-2).¹⁷⁵

Though there had been efforts to indicate clearly what he meant by the crucified people, it should be acknowledged that Ellacuría was also aware of the possibility of a confusing and misleading discussion on who they are. Indeed, these crucified people should not be confused with any particular organization whose purpose is to achieve political power. Though they are real people, and therefore historical, and through the Reign of God entails the achievement of a social/political order, the crucified people transcends any embodiment in history without isolating it from the history. The reason is that "...this transcending is due to the fact that it is the continuation in history of a Jesus who did not carry out his struggle for the Reign through political power."¹⁷⁶ Ellacuría concluded that "...the crucified people has a twofold thrust: it is the victim of the sin of the world, and it is also bearer of the world's salvation."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 278.

2. Understanding of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh

How did Ellacuría develop and elaborate his discussion about the Crucified People? Ellacuría had always been a philosopher and a theologian of the historical reality whose primary concern was contemporary reality, particularly marked by the overwhelming poverty, impoverishment and oppression. There are two realities, of the Suffering Servant and Jesus of Nazareth, that helped him to understand and come to faith in them.

a. On The Suffering and Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth

The Christian standpoint is still narrating and believing in the scandalous event of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and, at the same time, the life that comes from the death of Jesus in history. There are two important factual reasons that have to be kept in focus. The first is the present reality of the crucified people and those who stand for them. The second is the scandalous fact of Jesus' crucifixion and the wide-spread persecution of the early church. Ellacuría noted that "In any case, the gospels as a whole seek to give theological weight to two facts that are part of a single reality: the fact of Jesus' failure in the scandal of his death, and the fact of the persecution that early communities soon undergo."¹⁷⁸ It is indeed difficult and scandalous for those who witnessed Jesus' death and had to proclaim it.

Ellacuría argued that the reality of crucified people and Jesus' cross are mutually illuminating and therefore to know them well is extremely important for Jesus' followers

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 261.

who suffer persecution and death and those who witness it and are called on to proclaim it. In general, there has been discussion on the saving power of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and further to recognize it in our world today, especially among those who suffer and die in a way like Jesus. According to Ellacuría, it should be emphasized that "...both the saving character of the salvation of Jesus and the saving character of the history of crucified humankind are clarified, once it is accepted that salvation is present in Jesus and this salvation must be worked out within humankind."¹⁷⁹ It means that our discussion on salvation has to shed light to its historical presence here and now. In other words, there should be a historical embodiment of God's salvation as narrated vividly in the Bible, such as in Exodus and in the life and ministry of Jesus.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, there is an extremely strong tendency to think that the poor and oppressed are people to be saved and liberated; they are not to be seen as "saviors" and "liberators".

Jesus' resurrection is a powerful act of God, and this event claims that Jesus' death did not prevent the coming of salvation. Jesus himself does not remain imprisoned by death forever. A second important thing to be mentioned as fundamental in the Christian

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 258. Christopher Seitz's study on the possible relationships between the Jesus of the New Testament and the Suffering servant of Isaiah concludes: "Did the NT read Isaiah as do modern historical-critical readers? No. Is this decisive for understanding the theological significance of the earthly Jesus? Yes. Is this significance a matter of Jesus' perception of his mission, as this is revealed in the Scriptures of Israel? Yes." Christopher Seitz, "Of Mortal Appearance. Earthly Jesus and Isaiah as a Type of Christian Scripture" in Ex Auditu: An International Journal of Theological Interpretation of Scripture 14 (1998): 38.

¹⁸⁰Ignacio Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church (New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 15-16. See also a brief discussion of Richard J. Clifford on the three moments in biblical history which were interpreted in terms of the exodus: the exodus from Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C., the exile and restoration of the sixth century B.C., and the ministry of Jesus in the first century A.D. "Scripture and the Exercises: Moving from the Gospel and Psalms to Exodus and Proverbs," Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits 31 (January 1999): 1-25.

faith is that Jesus struggled for the coming of the Reign of God and that he had an unbreakable conviction that the Reign of God would triumph definitively. Yet, Ellacuría explained, these did not prevent Jesus from "'seeing' the connection between his personal days of tears, between the momentary failure of the coming of the Kingdom, and the glory of final victory."¹⁸¹ This is exemplary and consoling, especially for the crucified people in history, for those "...who look more like the wretched of the earth than like its saviors."¹⁸²

Another important point from the perspective of our world today is that the on-going suffering of the crucified people has kept the cross and the hope of the resurrection of Jesus in history. The suffering of the crucified people today reveals the historic reign of sin. As a result, their reality has maintained the importance and significance of Jesus' struggle and his unbending faith that the Reign of God would triumph definitively. Otherwise, it would no longer make sense to continue and follow within history the life and mission of Jesus who announced the Reign of God or to remain in history and to maintain the faith of the resurrection through death as proclaimed by the first followers of Jesus and the early church. Finally, Ellacuría observed that the reality of the suffering and persecution of the crucified people and those who struggle with them for Jesus' cause have shown the fulfillment of Jesus' message which predicted persecutions and death for those who continue his work.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 260.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Ellacuría showed that the death of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus are realities of history and the result of actions in history. There are two interrelated points under this claim. The first is a historic commitment to the crucified people today that leads us to a question of meaning of the death of Jesus and his redeeming passion. The second is a "historic necessity" of the death of Jesus that sheds light over the reality of what has been happening in history and has been converted into a transforming history.

Ellacuría referred to Luke 24:26 to begin his claim of a historic necessity of the death of Jesus: "Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into his glory?". Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Reign of God, and he also immediately realized its opposition, the oppressive power that was also present actively. The resistance of that oppressive power, the denunciations on behalf of the poor, marginalized during Jesus' ministry, brought him persecution and death. For Ellacuría this only shows the fact that sin is obviously a reality in history. Therefore, he concluded, "The reason could not be clearer: If the Reign of God and the reign of sin are two opposed realities, and human beings of flesh and blood are the standard bearers of both, then those who wield the power of oppressive domination cannot but exercise it against those who have only the power of their word and their life, offered for the salvation of many."¹⁸⁴

The historic character of the death of Jesus explains that Jesus' death took place for historic reasons. Jesus was killed because of "...the historic life he led, a life of deeds and words that those who represented and held the reigns of the religious, socioeconomic

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 262. This historical explanation of the death of Jesus criticizes the approach of natural theology that holds the primacy of God's revelation through nature.

and political situation could not tolerate."¹⁸⁵ Secondly, Jesus followed a particular direction in history that for him would serve best his mission to proclaim the coming of the Reign of God. Because of this conscious decision, Jesus gradually saw that his action was leading him to direct opposition with those who could take his life, and he realized why this was so. Yet, he did not change his mind, withdraw or escape from his conflict with those power holders. The implication of this view is its historic continuity or a trans-historic dimension of Jesus' activity. Somehow Ellacuría explained and emphasized that this continuity cannot be purely mystical or sacramental.

In other words, worship, including the celebration of the Eucharist, is not the whole of the presence and continuity of Jesus; there must be a continuation in history that carries out what he carried out in his life and as he carried it out. We should acknowledge a trans-historic dimension in Jesus' activity, as we should acknowledge it in his personal biography, but this trans-historic dimension will only be real if it is indeed trans-historic, that is, if it goes through history. Hence we must ask who continues to carry out in history what his life and death was about.¹⁸⁶

b. The Suffering Servant of Yahweh

The reality of Jesus' crucifixion and death forces the early Christian community to think and to find ways to understand it. Where is the place of the cross of Jesus in the Good News he shared powerfully? How does the crucifixion fit into the Good News proclaimed by his disciples especially regarding Jesus Christ himself?. The reality of Jesus' crucifixion was scandalous for the early Christian community even though it shed light on their experience of persecution. According to Ellacuría, one approach used by this early

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 264.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 265.

Christian community to help them understand the crucifixion and death of Jesus was the figure of the Servant of Yahweh as described in second Isaiah. Ellacuría asserted that "The theology of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, along lines of suffering and oblation for sins, is of prime importance in the New Testament for the attempt undertaken there to present a theological explanation of the historical fact of Jesus' death."¹⁸⁷ On the other hand, however, it is interesting to know that there are not very many explicit references to the Servant of Yahweh in the New Testament. Ellacuría argued that these references are very limited due to adaptation to the Hellenistic environment.¹⁸⁸ Yet, for Christians today who live surrounded by the overwhelming reality of the crucified people, the figure of the Servant of Yahweh sheds light as to the meaning of Jesus' death.

Ellacuría suggested that we make our analysis of the servant of Yahweh from the perspective of the reality of the crucified people of our time. He does this for two methodological reasons. First, epistemologically it is reasonable to say that no one can do a "nonconditioned" reading. Second, that the crucified people is a *locus theologicus*, since they are the principal addressees.¹⁸⁹ Let us follow closely Ellacuría's analysis on the story

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 274.

¹⁸⁸Ellacuría explained that "The almost complete disappearance of the term may be attributed to the fact that the Hellenistic communities very soon began to prefer the title, 'Son of God,' to that of 'servant of God,' which they less readily assimilated. For Joachim Jeremias, the christological interpretation of the Servant of Yahweh of Second Isaiah belongs to the earliest Christian communities, and corresponds to the Palestinian, pre-Hellenistic stage. Cullman maintains that the christology of the Servant is probably the oldest christology of all." Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ellacuría explains: "Any reading is done from a situation--more than from a pre-understanding, which is in some sort determined by the situation;" he also notes that the addressee is different from time to time, "and the hypothesis with which we are working is that at this particular moment of ours the addressee of the Songs of the Servant is the crucified people--a hypothesis that will be confirmed if indeed the text sheds light on what the crucified people are, and if, conversely,

of the suffering Servant of Yahweh in the book of Isaiah.

Ellacuría explained that in the First Song (see Isaiah 42: 1-7), the Servant is proclaimed as a chosen one, a favorite of Yahweh. The finality of this election is that "He shall bring forth justice to the nations." It is God who has chosen the Servant in order to cause justice and to do justice. In the Second Song (see Isaiah 49:4,7-8,13 and 26), this election is re-emphasized. God has chosen someone whom the mighty despise; nevertheless, the Servant has God's backing and support. The purpose of the election is the building of a new land and a new people. Therefore, God is revealed to be on the side of the oppressed and against the oppressor. The Third Song (see Isaiah 50:7; 51:11) takes a new step proclaiming that the Lord means to support the suffering of the Servant, in order to put an end to it and to give victory to the Servant after a long experience of being crushed. The Fourth Song (Isaiah 52:13-15) develops the theme of the Servant's passion and glory explicitly and extensively. Ellacuría saw that this song describes the persecution of the Servant in his mission of "implanting right" with characteristics similar to those of the suffering people today (see Isaiah 53:2-12).¹⁹⁰

Ellacuría came to his theological view that the description of the suffering Servant of the Isaiah 53:2-12 has brought up certain "historico-theological" moments. When we are faced with the reality of the crucified people, our reading of the Fourth Song, that has become traditional for seeing a prefiguration of Jesus' passion and death, comes alive in a

the text is enriched, and endowed with currency, by the reality that is this historical addressee." See Ibid., 268.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 269-272.

new way. There are characteristics of the suffering Servant that could illuminate as well as challenge our theological study of the crucified people today in the light of the cross of Jesus. It is obvious that we are dealing with a figure shattered by the concrete, historical intervention of other human beings. This figure is regarded both as a potential savior of humankind and as someone with a disease condemned by human beings and even wounded by God. This figure appears as a sinner because of the burden of sin of so many others, and is reckoned among sinners and is finally buried with the evildoers. Yet, the believers see that this figure was crushed for the crimes of others, wounded for the sins of the people. It is sin which has carried him off to death. This Servant accepts this destiny. The Servant will justify many and take their crimes and sins on himself. Soon the Servant himself triumphs. Others see themselves justified, and he will see his offspring and will live long years. Finally, the Lord adopts his condition. Precisely because someone burdened with the sins of others and crushed by their consequences, God must necessarily attribute a fully salvific value to this act of absolute injustice. "This attribution is possible because the Servant himself accepts his destiny to save, by his own suffering, those who are actually the cause of it."¹⁹¹ Ellacuría concludes: "...the Suffering Servant of Yahweh will be anyone unjustly crucified for the sins of human beings, because all of the crucified form a single unit, one sole reality, even though this reality has a head and members with different functions in the unity of expiation."¹⁹²

At this point we have three parties involved, Jesus, the Suffering Servant of

¹⁹¹Ibid., 273.

¹⁹²Ibid., 274.

Yahweh and the crucified people. The three are closely related in a historical reality and God's plan of salvation, since with them God revealed the promise of resurrection, the glorious victory over death. This is the key proclamation of the New Testament, the center of our faith in Jesus Christ who suffered and died crucified. Ellacuría asserts that the historical continuation of the Suffering Servant is observable and positively arguable. He explains:

Obviously, the crucified people is not explicitly conscious of being the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, but as in the case of Jesus, that is not a reason to deny that it is.

Nor would the fact that Jesus is the Suffering Servant be such a reason, since the crucified people would be his continuation in history, and thus, we would not be talking of "another" servant. Hence, it would be sufficient to show that the crucified people combines some essential conditions of the Suffering Servant to show that the people constitute the most adequate site for the embodiment of the Servant, even if that is not true in all its fullness.¹⁹³

c. Theological/Christological Importance

In our discussion above, we have implicitly indicated the theological and christological significance of Ellacuría's explanation on the crucified people and its relation to the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus as well as to the suffering Servant of Yahweh. Ellacuría has enabled us to understand that there is still something revelatory in the historic Christian faith, especially as Christians face the reality of the crucified people today. Somehow, what is more important and significant is that Ellacuría has brought us to a stage of "theological suspicion" and to a new dimension of the Christian faith that takes seriously the historical reality of our world today. Ellacuría explains, "What

¹⁹³Ibid., 276.

Christian faith adds after it is really clear that there is a crucified people is the suspicion that, besides being the main object of the effort of salvation, it might also in its very crucified situation be the principle of salvation for the whole world."¹⁹⁴ He indicated that the saving mystery of God remains true, powerful and intact as it is attached to the scandalous reality of the suffering of God's chosen people and is revealed through it. From this reality Ellacuría explains what it means to the Christian teaching of salvation history and what it says to christology that has the crucified Jesus at its center.¹⁹⁵

The reality of the crucified people becomes the starting point, philosophical and theological *locus*, and criticism for any Christian theology, especially for its fundamental soteriological aspect. Ecclesiology and christology obviously have as one of their major characteristics historic soteriology. Ellacuría raises the question: "How is the salvation of humankind achieved starting from Jesus? Who continues in history this essential function, this saving mission that the Father entrusted to the Son? More specifically, which historically oppressed humankind it is that preeminently continues the saving work of

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 266.

¹⁹⁵Ellacuría wrote: " Salvation history is a salvation in history: This statement is the theme of this whole book. We cannot uncover its whole import until we turn our attention to history--specifically, to some of the basic steps in the history of revelation, and particularly its culminating moment: the historical life of Jesus.

At this point I simply want to frame the problem in general terms. If salvation is historical, then two things follow: 1) It will differ according to the time and place in which it is fleshed out; 2) it must be realized and brought about in the historical reality of human beings, in their total concrete reality. Hence one should not be scandalized to find that the Church is continually learning what its concrete mission is by taking fresh readings of revelation in the changing reality of human history; and that it proclaims salvation in different ways, depending on different situations..." Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church, 15.

Jesus, and the extent to which it does so?"¹⁹⁶ The answer to these questions will be Ellacuría's primary concern and primary involvement to the very end of his life.

"In speaking about the historical situation of the Third World, Ellacuría used to say that it is right to speak about the 'crucified God' but just as necessary or even more so to speak about the 'crucified people'."¹⁹⁷ This was a theological insight after a long process of reflection on the reality of the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering, the crucifixion of Jesus. Though Ellacuría shows that they are mutually illuminating, he immediately notes that this approach will also be facing a serious problem, since it seems "making sense of the seeming failure involved in the crucifixion of a people after the definitive proclamation of salvation. Involved here is not only the failure of history, but also the direction and meaning in history for the vast majority of humankind, and even more important, the historic task of saving it."¹⁹⁸

Ellacuría was clearly focusing his theological reflection primarily on its soteriological dimension, on a question of what Jesus and the crucified people represent for the salvation of humankind. This means his analysis and reflection are directed to all people. Therefore, Ellacuría emphasized that our historical and theological reflection should be understandable and credible to all, including nonbelievers since the case in

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 257.

¹⁹⁷Sobrino continued that therefore Ellacuría "...gave the situation of Third-World peoples a theological status." See his Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 254.

¹⁹⁸Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 258.

question involves the whole reality of the poor and oppressed. In his article on "Human Rights in a Divided Society", Ellacuría shares his social analysis and writes:

More concretely, the true picture of a historical process is not found in the actual results which should have been the common good, nor still less is it found in the minorities which appropriate those results for themselves. The truth lies in the participation in this common good and in the real situation of the majority of persons and citizens. Thus the Third world is the truth of the First World, and the oppressed classes are the truth of the oppressing classes. It may be argued that without the accumulation of capital and the plundering of resources, and without deflection of resources away from their primary goal of satisfying basic needs, scientific, technological, and cultural development which is necessary for the contemporary historical process would not occur. But one has to ask if this development is good in itself, especially since it entails the subdevelopment of the great majority of humanity.¹⁹⁹

Ellacuría's observation, critical reflection and discernment offers us a great insight and approach to proclaim the Good News in our world today, marked by innumerable poor and oppressed, the crucified people. Ellacuría reminds us that Jesus was exemplary in initiating the last supper, a moment of a "... symbolic activity of someone willing to give the gift of self to the very hilt, to very death as a culmination of all of that person's life, which in turn has ever been a pro-existence-that is, it has always been a life defined by its total commitment to others."²⁰⁰ Ellacuría notes that "...although Jesus would not have had an explicit awareness of the complete meaning of his death, he would have had the firm hope that his life and death were the immediate announcement of the Reign."²⁰¹ Within

¹⁹⁹Ignacio Ellacuría, "Human Rights in a Divided Society," in Human Rights in the Americas: The Struggle for Consensus, eds. A. Hennelly, S.J. and J. Langan, S.J. (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1982), 62-63.

²⁰⁰Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 275.

²⁰¹Ibid., 276.

their relation to the mystery of the salvific plan of God through suffering and violent death of Jesus and the Servant of Yahweh, the crucified people are present overwhelmingly, bringing back today their image through similar characteristics and paradoxical reality: persecuted and salvific, condemned and redeemed, sin and grace, hopelessness and a wellspring of hope, death and life, victims and savior. Ellacuría shows that the suffering Servant of Yahweh carries on a historic mission and that salvation was favorably prepared for and through this Servant.

Once again, the reality of this suffering and death forces Christians to think and discern what kind of historical reality is there and what does it say to our Christian faith. It has to be said from the beginning that the passion and death of Jesus in history remains scandalous to Christians as well as theologians. Ellacuría explained that it was experienced and presented as a scandal in the New Testament. He wrote that "...with regard to Jesus himself, who only gradually was able to comprehend the true path toward proclaiming and bringing about the Reign of God; with regard to those persecuted him to death, because they could not accept that salvation involved particular positions in history; and finally, with regard to scandal in the church, which leads the church to avoid passing through the passion when it proclaims the resurrection."²⁰²

Ellacuría recalls the passage of Isaiah that talked about the suffering servant and how he gradually saw the truth of the descriptions of the suffering servant in its embodiment in what was happening in the world of the poor and the oppressed. The persecution and violent death of many poor and many martyrs in El Salvador during his

²⁰²Ibid., 259.

own life time became his first hand undeniable examples. Therefore, he concluded that "This crucified people is the historical continuation of Yahweh's Servant, whom the sin of the world continue to deprive of his human face. The powerful of this world continue to strip them of everything, to snatch everything from them, even their lives, especially their lives."²⁰³

Ellacuría developed a historic soteriology. He wrote that "There is no history of salvation without salvation in history."²⁰⁴ Confronted by the reality of the dying poor and oppressed, any theological reasoning about salvation is challenged radically. If this challenge is not pointed out precisely, then this reality will be overlooked and ignored. Theoretically, it is almost possible to overlook the painful reality and justify partially the reality of the world today with a theological and personal indifference. In fact, it has been done in different kinds of theological, philosophical and other analytical projects that did not take into consideration the reality of the overwhelming poverty and oppression of today's world, worsened by wars and national as well as international political conflicts. Somehow, in the perspective of Ellacuría's analysis, it is just impossible to ignore this situation, since that reality is an integral part of our common history and our common humanity. Sobrino recalled what Ellacuría once said about a "co-pro-historic analysis"

Confronted with the crucified people, Ellacuría said, the other worlds can know their own truth from what they produce, as in an inverted mirror. Using a metaphor taken from medicine, he said that to test the First World's health, we

²⁰³Ignacio Ellacuría, "Discernir el Signo de los Tiempos," *Diakónia* 17 (1981): 58.

²⁰⁴Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church*, 3-19 also Ellacuría, "Human Rights in a Divided Society," in Hennelly and Langan, eds. *Human Rights in the Americas: The Struggle for Consensus*, 65.

needed to do a "coproanalysis," that is, an examination of faeces. For what appears in this analysis is the reality of the crucified peoples and this is what gives the measure of the producer's health. The discovery is tragic, but necessary and healthily, because only in this way can the nations base themselves on the truth.²⁰⁵

The crucified people is indeed obvious and striking to the rest of the world today.

For Ellacuría, as well as Sobrino, their growing in number is becoming more obvious in the midst of current economic and political crisis, for example in many Asian countries, and the worse possible care and help for them only adds to the amount of suffering those people bear. The world of egoism, consumerism, work and productive orientation hardly acknowledges their existence, other than a quick mention of a problem. Liberation theologians such as Sobrino, saw a different reality. Precisely it is the reality of the poor that "holds and secures" a christological revelation in this modern world. Ellacuría has explained his own unique theological insight that the crucified people is the servant of Yahweh in our contemporary world. He has examined and shown similarities between the profile, "fate" and the theological, soteriological and eschatological role of the servant of Yahweh and the crucified people today. At this point, let me summarize our discussion. I found it best stated in Sobrino's "Letter to Ellacuría" that shows Ellacuría's most profound concern which is "the crucified people" to whom he dedicated his life.

²⁰⁵Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 261. Ellacuría further explains: Much remains to be done. Only in a utopian and hope-filled spirit can one believe and have enough energy to join with all the poor and oppressed of the world in order to overturn history, to subvert it and send it in another direction. But this huge task--what on another occasion I have called 'co-pro-historic analysis,' that is the study of the dregs of our civilization--seems to indicate that this civilization is gravely ill and that in order to prevent it from ending in destruction, we must try to change it from within. Helping to stimulate and nourish a collective consciousness of the need for substantial change is in itself a first great step." See his article/lecture of November 6, 1989 in Barcelona on "The Challenge of the Poor Majority," in Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 173.

You served *at* the University of Central America, but ultimately not the University of Central America. You served *in* the Church, but not ultimately the Church. You served *in* the Society of Jesus, but not ultimately the Society of Jesus. The more I came to know you, the more I arrived at the conviction that you served the poor of this country and of the whole third world, and that it was this service that gave your life its ultimacy. You were a faithful disciple of Xavier Zubiri, that philosopher and theologian of liberation, that theoretician of popular movements. But you didn't fight for his theories as if they were some kind of dogma. Instead, you changed your viewpoints. Inflexible you! And when you changed them, it was always for the same reason: the tragedy of the poor. So I think, if you were bound to any unshakable "dogma," there's only one thing it could have been: the pain of the crucified peoples.²⁰⁶

On the basis of this understanding of the metaphor of the crucified people in the writings of Ellacuría and of the realization of urgency of the matter, we turn now to the act of following Jesus according to Ellacuría. The discussion will also be an attempt to illustrate how Ellacuría very profoundly influenced the development of the christology of Sobrino.

B. Following Christ as an Act of Full Participation in Historicizing the Kingdom of God Proclaimed and Initiated by Jesus Christ

We have discussed the important theological and christological insights revealed through the reality of the immense suffering and death of the crucified people as presented by Ellacuría. The crucified people powerfully demonstrate the formidable existence of sin. One of the most striking facts is that this historical reality unveils the demand and urgency of an act of mercy or, in other word, it demands a conversion of the people around them. Ellacuría himself, who lived within a university setting yet also with a strong awareness of

²⁰⁶A letter of Jon Sobrino to Ignacio Ellacuría, November 1990. See Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 187-188.

the innumerable poor and the on-going oppression in El Salvador, cannot help but urge an immediate response.

I only want--I am trying not to be too demanding--two things. I want you to set your eyes and your hearts on these peoples who are suffering so much--some from poverty and hunger, others from oppression and repression. Then (since I am a Jesuit), standing before this people thus crucified you must repeat St. Ignatius' examination from the first week of the Exercises. Ask yourselves: what have I done to crucify them? What do I do to uncrucify them? What must I do for this people to rise again?²⁰⁷

This demand is radical and self-involving. For Ellacuría this immediately evokes a christological re-thinking. In the early 1970s, together with his fellow Latin American theologians such as Boff and Sobrino who wrote extensively on a christology from a Latin American perspective, Ellacuría perceived the need to pursue a new christology , especially as it is related to history.

Today we need a new christology. Our major concern cannot be to quiet our intellectual unrest by somehow effecting a conceptual reconciliation between the oneness of Jesus' person and the duality of his nature. Today we must explore how Jesus realizes his salvific mission to man in a full and perfect way. This is not purely functional emphasis, nor is it any less profound than the older framing of the question. If history is a more solidly metaphysical entity than nature, then our reflections on history should be more profound than our reflections on nature and hence more operational.²⁰⁸

This historical character of Ellacuría's christological reflection departs from the actual reality around him, which is the national reality of El Salvador in particular. How do we do christology from the situation of El Salvador and the Third World generally, that reveals so much human poverty and suffering? Which christological reflection might shed

²⁰⁷Ignacio Ellacuría, "Las Iglesias Latinoamericanas interpelan a la Iglesia de España," Sal Terrae 826 (1982): 230.

²⁰⁸Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church, 26.

light to that reality and enable those poor people and those who are in solidarity with them to believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ? Ellacuría brought up the metaphor of the crucified people which alludes to Jesus Christ, the crucified One and the revelation of God among us.

Our new christology must give the history of the flesh-and-blood Jesus its full weight as revelation. Today it would be absolutely ridiculous to try to fashion a christology in which the historical realization of Jesus' life did not play a decisive role. The "mysteries of Jesus' life," which once were treated peripherally as part of ascetics, must be given their full import--provided, of course, that we explore exegetically and historically what the life of Jesus really was. We must move on to an historical *logos*, without which every other *logos* will remain speculative and idealistic²⁰⁹

A sense of urgency was one of his major reasons why he chose that metaphor. However, from the very beginning it should not be understood as a mere social concern, since Ellacuría intended to address radical theological/christological questions about God's creation and Jesus Christ. The basic questions are: did God's creation turn into a bad one? Where is Christ's presence most represented? Let us discuss this subject in three headings: first, Ellacuría's idea of historicizing the Kingdom of God and following Jesus of Nazareth; second, Ellacuría's idea of a true Christian university as an embodiment of his insight of the act of following Jesus in the world;²¹⁰ third is the act of following Jesus and persecution/martyrdom.

²⁰⁹Ibid., 26-27.

²¹⁰Ellacuría was the rector or president of the university and was the principal author of the vision of the university that the UCA aimed to become.

1. Historicizing the Kingdom of God and Following Jesus of Nazareth

From the perspective of the crucified people there is a concrete appeal for solidarity. From the perspective of the Gospel, there is a clear call for discipleship. For Ellacuría, these self-involving insights are also theologically and philosophically foundational. Ellacuría perceived salvation and social change as a concrete problem of human action, that is, of relating God's action to ours. This is not something new, since that is what Jesus demonstrated in his life, faith, ministry, and through his passion, death and resurrection. God has chosen to intervene in human history with saving action so as to liberate Israel from slavery. This is God's primordial revelation to human beings.²¹¹

Ellacuría argued further that in accord with biblical thought, we ought to:

view transcendence as that which transcends *in*, as that which physically impels toward *more* but does not remove *from*; as that which pushes something forward, but as the same time holds it. In this conception, when we reach God historically...we do not abandon the human, we do not abandon real history. Instead, we sound its depths; what was already effectively present becomes more present and efficacious. God can be separated from history, but history cannot be separated from God. And in history transcendence must be seen more in the relation necessity-freedom than in the relation absence-presence.²¹²

From a post-exodus theological point of view, human history becomes salvation

²¹¹Exodus 3:7 proclaims "Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings" This is certainly one of the most meaningful scriptural verse for Ellacuría that influenced his faith, thought and commitment. This theological understanding, which departs from a Christian standpoint, takes issue with those who claim that the first divine revelation occurred through nature. In other words, Ellacuría shows that praxis comes before any theological reasoning as reflected clearly in the scriptural revelation especially in the historical event called "Exodus". See Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church, 15-18.

²¹²Ignacio Ellacuría, "Historicidad de la Salvación Cristiana" in Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, eds., Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación vol. 1 (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1993), 328. Cited in Dean Brackley, Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 101.

history. Action rather than a concept is the principle of unity in history and salvation .

After the saving event of God's intervention in human history, God is never foreign to historical reality, and, therefore, God is to be found in history. Still God transcends things within history. Ellacuría viewed that "...all things, and especially life and history, are the external shape (*plasmación*) of God...Each thing, according to its limits, is a limited way of being God."²¹³ From this standpoint, we turn to Ellacuría's passion for what is called the historical reality, the truth. Ellacuría suggested a practical approach to value his explanation on the historical reality. Ellacuría made it clear once again that praxis characterizes the historical reality which therefore dynamic, open and concrete. This historical praxis finally will lead us to the truth of the reality as well as its interpretation.²¹⁴

It is not primarily a convincing concept or a complex reasoning process or a credible theory that determines what is the truth about historical reality. Ellacuría came directly to this conclusion when he began his theology with the immediate reality before us. While

²¹³Ellacuría, "Historicidad de la Salvación Cristiana" in Ellacuría and Sobrino, eds., Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación, vol.1, 359. Cited in Brackley, Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought, 101 and see also 100, 173 footnotes 3 and 4. Dean Brackley explained that Ellacuría has long collaborated with a Basque philosopher Xavier Zubiri (1898-1983) and Zubiri was one of the most influential philosophers in Ellacuría's philosophical foundation just as Karl Rahner (1904-1984) was in his theological thinking. "For Zubiri, human beings are fundamentally *sensing intelligence* (or intelligizing sensibility). Human find themselves *within* reality, apprehending it by an intelligence that senses. All conceptualizing builds on that primary apprehension. Sensible reality is intelligible reality, the object of experience. God, therefore, is to be found *in* reality but transcending in it. Reality could not exist without God. God is not things, but God is in them, 'founding' them." Xavier Zubiri, Inteligencia Sentiente: Inteligencia y Realidad (Madrid: Alianza, 1984), 127-132 and El Hombre y Dios (Madrid: Alianza, 1994), 308.

²¹⁴Ellacuría explained extensively what he meant by the historical reality and its philosophical background in his Filosofía de la Realidad Histórica (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990) especially its conclusion on pages 599-602.

discussing the problem of the common good and of human rights in a conflictive society, he explained his viewpoint:

The real truth of a historical process lies in the objective results of that process. Intentions and goals count for little in history; the truth of what is intended or proposed is the results obtained, the historical actions. The intention and goal can legitimate to some extent--and only to some extent--the individual subject, but they cannot legitimate the course of history nor the global conduct of nations. It is useless to claim a more just international order as an expression of the common good or a more just structuring of society, when historical reality demonstrates that international order is continually becoming more unjust and the social structures continually more dehumanizing.²¹⁵

The reality of the people, the reality of a political process and of economic policies in the world today, and the reality of El Salvador in particular were Ellacuría's great concern and influenced the content of his writings. From a historical point of view, Ellacuría and his friends of the UCA continuously provided social-political analysis about the national reality of El Salvador. Because of their academic background, Christian orientation and the scientific facilities at the UCA, their analysis was undoubtedly credible for many people in El Salvador as well as abroad. Its implication was a demand for a historical transformation and participation on behalf of those to whom these historical realities were directed. However, the scientific and also Christian analysis that promotes justice caused uncomfortableness and fear to those who were abusive and committing injustice. The truth became a real threat to those who preferred a *status quo* even if this preservation means an intentional prolongation of historical impoverishment and oppression of others. A few months before the killing of the six-Jesuits and their helpers,

²¹⁵Ellacuría, "Human Rights in a Divided Society." In Hennelly and Langan, eds. Human Rights in the Americas: The Struggle for Consensus, 62.

the UCA publication took notice of this increasing fear and violent reaction against UCA's critical analysis of the situation of the country.

In the second edition of July 1989, the biweekly publication of UCA, "Letter to the Churches," judged that the official campaign of harassment and violence against UCA was based on "fear of the truth."

The principle reason is that UCA often becomes an objective adversary to the economic, political, and military projects of the government. And it can be a powerful adversary, not because it has economic, political or military power, but because it has a social power based on the University word which is rational and Christian. And if this word is the word of truth, it becomes an uncomfortable power.

Through its investigations and publications, UCA tries to reveal the Salvadoran reality, analyze the causes of the current tragedy, and propose the most humane and viable solutions. It exposes the truth, qualifying and analyzing it: the human rights violations and those responsible, the conditions of poverty and its causes, the number of refugees and its roots, the events of the war and its impasse. UCA seeks to speak and analyze the truth. This is what does not please and is intolerable for some.²¹⁶

Ellacuría was the leading figure of the UCA's standpoint and its critical publications. His realism and passion for historical reality and the truth was not impartial, since his point of departure was clearly determined by his concern for the overwhelming reality of the poor and oppressed. This also meant the possibility of an untimely dying. Ellacuría's critical study, statements and publications, at the same time, were also a public denouncement against those groups, governmental, political, military, revolutionary who claimed to be representative of the people. In turn, this indicated Ellacuría's "political" position which was quite different from and singularly visionary among other liberation theologians. Arthur McGovern indicated Ellacuría's contribution in liberation theology.

²¹⁶Instituto de Estudios Centroamericanos and El Rescate, The Jesuit Assassinations: The Writings of Ellacuría, Martín Baró and Segundo Montes, with a Chronology of the Investigation (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 20.

Writing in the concrete context of El Salvador, Ignacio Ellacuría observes that realism dictates that El Salvador cannot expect to create a new society. But it can hope to transform existing structures by reducing violence and outside military interventions, by guaranteeing human rights, and by allowing popular movements to organize so that they can play a more effective part in the political life of the country. Some critics view liberation theologians as giving unquestioned support to revolutionary groups. Ellacuría takes a different position. He says that the revolutionary groups in El Salvador cannot claim to represent majority. They represent many aspirations of the people and they must become part of a political solution to the present conflict, but they cannot claim that their programs express the popular will.²¹⁷

That point of departure itself, that is, the historical reality or a historical point of view, was publicly introduced by the Second Vatican Council reflected in Gaudium et Spes (Especially articles 1-10), a pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world. This new theological approach in itself was a major step in the Roman Catholic theological environment, supplanting the authoritarian point of departure and the "kind of theologizing that consists in an objective analysis of purely objective data and meanings based on authority."²¹⁸ The actual historical situation and the experience of a concern and involvement by Christians in that situation determine theology that is written in their midst and meant to be relevant.

²¹⁷McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment, 182. See also Ignacio Ellacuría, "Perspectiva Política de la Situación Centro Americana," ECA (September-October 1985): 631-632.

²¹⁸Roger Haight, S.J., An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 18 and 296-297. Haight referred to Ellacuría as theologian who especially insisted on this historical point of view together with Rubem A. Alves, José Míguez-Bonino from the Protestant tradition. From the perspective of liberation theology, Haight further explained that this theology "...presupposes and joins the movement in Roman Catholic theology begun in the modernist period by Maurice Blondel and continued by existentially conscious theologians before the Second Vatican Council and especially afterward by socially conscious theologians. The principle announced by Blondel was that for Christian doctrine to make sense, it had to somehow be experienced by people in their actual life situation." See also Gregory Baum, Man Becoming: God in Secular Language (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 1-36.

While elaborating his critical reflection from the historical point of departure, Ellacuría compiled his extensive analysis on the social and political situation of El Salvador and these notes were published in two volumes posthumously. In one of his last writings "Una Nueva Fase en el Proceso Salvadoreño", which was published in ECA, March 1989, he delivered his optimistic observation and prophetic vision that 1989 was the year of a new step in the political life of El Salvador. He foresaw that peace was getting nearer and past events especially of the year 1988, had begun to facilitate this new phase. Negotiations could be enhanced only if the political powers of the government and the revolutionary groups, ARENA, FMLN and the armed force came together, to be self-critical against human-rights abuses and focus on the betterment of life for all people in El Salvador.²¹⁹ This passion for truth was quite noticeable and therefore explained accurately and profoundly what happened to him and his friends. Celebrating the first anniversary of the killing of the six Jesuits of the UCA and their helpers, the Editorial of the Estudios

²¹⁹Ellacuría, "Una Nueva Fase en el Proceso Salvadoreño," *ECA* 485 (March 1989): 167-197. In its conclusion Ellacuría wrote: "Por ello, para impulsar la nueva fase se requiere trabajar a su favor directa o indirectamente. Directamente en preparativos inmediatos de negociación, impulsados por los partidos y por el FMLN, pues la comisión gubernamental está herida de muerte; en especial, son importantes conversaciones previas de ARENA con el FMLN y de éste con la fuerza armada; también las fuerzas sociales y, entre ellas y con ellas, la Iglesia, deben favorecer el ambiente propicio para la negociación. Indirectamente en un trabajo sistemático para ir superando los males, que impiden la reincorporación del FMLN a la vida política. Estos son, a) violación de los derechos humanos por parte de los escuadrones de la muerte y de la Fuerza Armada; b) suma debilidad del poder judicial; c) grave situación económica para la mayor parte de la población; d) magnitud, estructuración y comportamiento de la Fuerza Armada; f) desinformación y polarización promovidas en los medios de comunicación. También el FMLN tendría que favorecer el cambio y hacer creíble sus nuevas propuestas con acciones tales como: a) abandono de toda acción violatoria de los derechos humanos y de las que quedan considerarse como técnicamente terroristas; b) abandono de aquellas acciones que repercuten económicamente sobre la mayor parte de la población; c) presentación de propuestas realistas en orden a lograr resultados efectivos y a entrar de lleno en la solución definitiva del conflicto."

Centroamericanos (ECA) recognized once again Ellacuría's vision of not separating the University from its national reality, God and history.²²⁰ Further this periodical acknowledged the constructive and transforming role of the life and death of Ellacuría and his friends within the university as well as in the Church, among Christians of El Salvador and its broader environment and historical reality. Let me conclude this part with a comprehensive statement from Teresa Whitfield which I think correctly expresses Ellacuría's thought.

In Ellacuría's profoundly theological political philosophy and profoundly philosophical political theology, the historic reality open to the presence of God is mediated by an understanding of intelligence that is truly Ignatian in its synthesis of contemplation in action. In 1975, in the keynote article of the edition of *ECA* that was dedicated to liberation theology and thought to have been the cause of the first of the bombs placed against the UCA, Ellacuría outlined his assessment of a "rightful conception of human intelligence" as he wrote of the philosophical basis of a proposed methodology of Latin American theology. Insisting that "the formal structure of intelligence and its differentiating function...is not that of an understanding of being or of sense, but that of apprehending and confronting reality," Ellacuría elaborated a triple dimension to that confrontation. In a play of words that is wholly typical of his written or spoken discourse, and wholly understandable, Ellacuría distinguished between the need to *hacerse cargo de la realidad*, *cargar con la realidad*, and *encargarse de la realidad*.²²¹

²²⁰Editorial, "La Resurrección de los Mártires de la UCA," *ECA* (November-December 1990): 950-951.

²²¹Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*, 205. Hasset and Lacey observed that Ellacuría's writings on ethical and political theory display an interesting methodology, a subtle mixture of theory and practice. His writings usually have a concrete point of departure which may be a significant event such as the 1969 war between El Salvador and Honduras, a piece of legislation and a range of commentaries on it such as regarding the 1976 legislation on land reform, a socially significant actual phenomenon such as unemployment, or a new combination of circumstances such as changes that suggest novel possibilities for a negotiated settlement to the war in El Salvador. "Then the theoretical moral principles that illuminate the issue and inform possible liberating projects or policies are brought into play. Ellacuría takes the various parties involved in the issues very seriously. He scrutinizes their words and their actions, drawing out their presuppositions and implications--with a keen eye to discerning the ideological uses of moral discourse which legitimate oppressive structures and the

2. The Idea of a True "Christian" University Central America

Ellacuría was the principal author of the vision of the university that the UCA aimed to become. This "on-becoming a Christian university" was the most significant embodiment of his vision, taking both academic responsibility and "personal" responsibility as a Jesuit priest before a crucified world and the majority poor and oppressed of El Salvador. Let us briefly examine his involvement in the UCA and the society where it is located.

In 1967, Ellacuría returned to El Salvador to start his new assignment to work in the newly founded University of Central America or UCA.²²² At the same time, it was the time of unrest and changes not only in Central America or Latin America but also in many

repressive institutions which support them." See Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 9-10. It is also worth noting that Sobrino used the phrases of Ellacuría and further elaborated his theological method and insight along the same line of thinking. He wrote: "En mi caso, el método fundamental ha sido el caminar intelectual forzado por la misma realidad... Dicho en otras palabras, antes que ponerlo en concepto creo que, sin buscarlo ni pretenderlo, me encontré 'haciéndome cargo de la realidad', 'encargándome de la realidad', 'cargando con la realidad' y 'dejándome cargar por la realidad'." See Jon Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author," *El Salvador*, 30 June 1999, 1.

²²²Ellacuría wrote: "The University of Central America (UCA) was established on September 15, 1965 in order to enhance university endeavors in El Salvador through what might be called a Christian inspiration and energy." See Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 177.

Montgomery noted on the opening of the UCA: "While the church at the parish level was beginning to resocialize the people from a religious perspective, a new national university was founded in 1966 with the intention of teaching the children of the ruling class about the social and economic reality in which a majority of their fellow citizens lived, creating a sense of responsibility for changing this reality, and giving the education necessary to do so. That, at least, was the intent of the Jesuits who formed the intellectual and administrative backbone of the Central American University (UCA). Their benefactors, the self-same oligarchy, had a different objectives. They did not want their children to attend and be corrupted by the University of El Salvador, which was perceived as a hotbed of Marxism and revolution. The oligarchs wanted their children a good, conservative, Catholic education that would prepare them to continue in their father's footsteps." Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 91-92.

places in the world, including the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus itself. Socially, people were in search of a new possible just way of life, regardless of social, economical and political background. Ecclesially, for example, within the Catholic Church Christians were adapting the new spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which meant a radical change in ways of believing and being Catholic in this diverse and multicultural world. Under the leadership of Pedro Arrupe whom Ellacuría described as "open to history and within history to the 'signs of the times, the Society of Jesus itself were undergoing a transition as regards apostolic preference .'"²²³

Soon after his return to El Salvador, Ellacuría publicly criticized and asked the Society of Jesus to free itself of the values and structures of the first world, which was responsible--with the "possible collaboration of the Society of Jesus"-- for the very existence of the third world, in order to live and work with "effective action in the third world."²²⁴ In the first meeting of the Central-American Jesuits held in Spain (June 26-30,

²²³The Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, "Gaudium et Spes", article 4, strongly urges Christians to "examine the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the Gospel". In 1968, Latin American Jesuit leaders officially expressed their apostolic mission in response to "a disgraceful situation" of the people in Latin America. "In all our activities, our goal should be the liberation of humankind from every sort of servitude that oppresses it: the lack of life's necessities, illiteracy, the weight of sociological structures which deprive it of personal responsibility over life itself, the materialistic conception of history. We want all our efforts to work together toward the construction of a society in which all persons will find their place, and in which they will enjoy political, economic, cultural, and religious equality and liberty." Provincials of the Society of Jesus, "The Jesuits in Latin America (May 1969)." In Hennelly, ed., trans., Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, 78. See also Ignacio Ellacuría, "Pedro Arrupe, Renovador de la Vida Religiosa," in RLT 22 (January-April 1991): 12.

²²⁴Ignacio Ellacuría, "Reflexión Teológico-espiritual de la Vice-Provincia Jesuítica de Centroamérica" in "Reunión de Ejercicios" San Salvador, December 24-31, 1969, Survey vol. II, Dia 29-1, pages 1-12, ACAPSJ (Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus) Cited in Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 44-45, 422.

1969), Ellacuría shared his readings of "the sign of times" and explained:

The third world is the prophetic denunciation of how badly arranged are the things of this world. A society that makes possible the third world is an unjust society, an inhuman society, a society appallingly badly arranged. This is the case of the consumer society, which is that which has led to the constitution of the third world as it is... It is not just that the third world demands a return to the poor. It demands it urgently and immediately at the same time as it offers the conditions for an authentic Christianity. As a task, it is one of the greatest and most worthy of enthusiasm that one might humanly imagine. It is an enormous task without abstractions and without need of purity of intentions because it is a task that is essentially pure and purifying; it is a task of protest, of rebellion against injustice, a task of solidarity and sacrifice, of the construction of a new world that is truly human.²²⁵

This transition was confirmed at the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (December 2, 1974-March 7, 1975) through which the Jesuits adapted to a new apostolic preference or option and made a public commitment to "the service of faith and the promotion of justice". This was a major step in this international community, yet does not mean that this preferential apostolic option was either understood well or put into practice by all Jesuits. Later, the killing of Ellacuría and his friends and co-workers served as a tremendously illuminating example of what this new option involved.²²⁶

²²⁵Ignacio Ellacuría, "Ponencia Sobre Vida Religiosa y Tercer Mundo" in "Reunión de Madrid: Primera Reunión de los Jesuitas Centroamericanos en Europa," Madrid, June 26-30, 1969, 14, ACAPSJ, translated in Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 41.

²²⁶The gathering of the Jesuits in leadership reflected this exemplary life commitment once again in 1990. "Even in the Society there are those who think that the promotion of justice demanded by the Gospel is the affair of the laity and of priests and religious. The example of our companions in El Salvador who lived out the apostolic priorities of the Society to the limit, in their university work, is a call to all of us to live and promote justice in keeping with the Gospel, and to be ready, as becomes the disciples of Jesus, to be persecuted and to give up our lives for others." They also felt confirmed by their self-gift of love for the poor. "The progress of our commitment has received its "confirmation" in the totally unprovoked and cruel assassination of our six fellow-Jesuits in El Salvador, to speak only of the last Jesuits who have suffer death for justice' sake. This crimes reveals how a university institution of teaching and research can become an instrument of

Commitment of faith that does justice and commitment to the majority poor was Ellacuría's starting point and vision when he began to work in UCA. In the following year, 1968, he was named to be one of the board of directors. Yet, for sometimes, there was no sign of potential changes. Meanwhile, there was a spreading wave of influence of liberation theology. At the level of the church authorities, the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishop (CELAM) took place in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. The conference took seriously one of the major theological approaches of the Second Vatican Council, namely a method which begins with factual descriptions and analyses of social conditions and then theological reflections on the data. As a result, meetings in Medellín gave the newly-developing theology a great impetus.

Ellacuría was persistent with his ideas and theological views. The debate in the Jesuits' universities and the orientation among the Jesuits of the Central America Vice-Province caught more attention. In the early 1970s, with other member of UCA's board of directors, especially Román Mayorga, Ellacuría worked to articulate the university orientation, "a new kind of university in Central America, a university that puts its whole self at the service of social change but *as a university*--that is to say, through the specific functions of the institution of a university."²²⁷ This document received approval by the board of directors, with a basic thrust: "To work within an autonomous concept of

justice in the name of the Gospel, to the point that its activity becomes unbearable for the agents of injustice." Society of Jesus, Documents of the First Congregation of Provincials: 20 to 26 September, 1990, Loyola (India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991), 32-33.

²²⁷See Román Mayorga, "Recuerdo de Diez Quijotes" (manuscript, Montevideo and Washington, D.C., March 1991), 10, noted in Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 47.

liberation, free of clichés and of analyses divorced from the reality we live in, is the mission of a university that modestly seeks the creation of a new man, in whom liberty should not be a political attribute but an essential part of his being."²²⁸ In the following years of his work at the university, Ellacuría developed his philosophical, political and theological thought and his goal was to put the university orientation into practice. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UCA, in 1975, Ellacuría wrote:

Both the university and Christianity are realities in history. As obvious as it might be, the observation is significant when consequences become apparent.. Our concern is to show how Christianity can energize our university endeavor without impairing it in any way.

A university is a Christian university when its horizon is the people of the very poor who are demanding their liberation and struggling for it. [Thus, it is] a university whose fundamental commitment is to a change of both structures and persons with a view towards a growing solidarity; a university which is willing to engage in dangerous struggle on behalf of justice; a university whose inspiration for making ethical judgements of situations and solutions and for the means to use in moving from such situations to solutions is the inspiration of the gospel. It is also--some of us believe--the different university that our country needs.²²⁹

UCA's social standpoint and Ellacuría's public-political opinion invited criticism and violent reactions from the Salvadoran government.²³⁰ In 1976, the government

²²⁸"Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la Firma del Contrato con el BID" in Planteamiento Universitario (1971), 12. See Ellacuría's "Is a Different Kind of University Possible" in Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 177. Whitfield added that this approval represented a significant victory and "it was a clear statement of a shift away from the framework of 'development' within which the university had opened, through the 'integral development' of *Populorum Progressio* to 'liberation'." Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 47.

²²⁹Ignacio Ellacuría, "Diez Años Despues: Es Posible Una Universidad Distinta?," ECA 30 (1975): 626-628, translated in Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 204-207.

²³⁰It also needs to be admitted that there were different opinions and disagreements in the UCA itself, among the professors as well as with their Jesuit co-teachers led by Ellacuría, and this

stopped the national subsidy for the UCA because of Ellacuría's editorial article in ECA that strongly criticized the government for capitulating to the landed oligarchy and for several months the so-called White Warrior Union, a notorious death squad, detonated bombs on the campus. In the following year, the Salvadoran government expelled eleven foreign priests, including Ellacuría who had become a Salvadoran citizen in 1975. After his return to El Salvador, Ellacuría was named rector (or university president) of the UCA in 1979. By this time the situation of the country was getting worse. More priests had been killed violently, and in 1980, a bishop, Romero, and also some nuns were killed.²³¹ This was also the year when the Salvadoran civil war began.

In an honorary lecture given at the University of Santa Clara, in California on June 12, 1982, Ellacuría expressed his pride in the academic and social work which the UCA had done in its past seventeen years. "It is work oriented, obviously, on behalf of our Salvadoran culture, but above all on behalf of a people who, oppressed by structural injustices, struggle for their self-determination, people often without liberty or human rights." Then he delivered his idea of a Christian university saying:

A Christian university must take into account the gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence--excellence needed in order to solve complex social problems. It does mean that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for

did not always make an easy internal dynamic though externally it may appear strongly monolithic in its social stance as a Christian/Jesuit-run university. See Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 245-247.

²³¹ See Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 63-66 and Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 61-62.

those who have no science; to provide skills for the unskilled; to be a voice for those who have no voice; to give intellectual support for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to promote and legitimate their rights...

We have been thanked and supported in our efforts. We have also been severely persecuted. From 1976 to 1980, our campus was bombed ten times; we have been blocked, raided by military groups, and threatened with the termination of all financial aid. Dozens of students and teachers have had to flee the country in exile; a student was shot to death by police who entered the campus. Our history has been that of our nation.²³²

Ellacuría and friends were able to lead the UCA toward the formation of an infrastructure of the realization of their main goal.²³³ This process of "historicizing" the goal and commitment of a Christian university was also exemplary and influential to the rest of the Society of Jesus and the Church in general. Yet the process itself was not necessarily developed and realized smoothly as the pressure from the government and pro-government groups became stronger and even, at times, violent. Their academic research, critical writings and voice as well as the practical implications for life in El Salvador, were more and more perceived as intolerable to the opposing groups.²³⁴ The UCA and the Jesuit residences were bomb-targeted regularly until 1983. As a reasonable response, there

²³²Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 147-151.

²³³Whitfield wrote: "If the first five years of the UCA's existence had been necessary to establish its institutional identity and to begin to shift away from 'development' and toward 'liberation' expressed in the 1970 IADB speech, the intense debates of the second five years had led to the formation of an infrastructure within which the university's principles could begin to be realized." Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 231.

²³⁴In 1980, UCA started a Center for Information, Documentation, and Support for Research (CIDAI) directed by Ricardo Stein, then a new human rights institute (IDHUCA) headed by Segundo Montes and the "Forum on National Reality" in 1985, as well as the Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP) in 1986, directed by Ignacio Martín Baró. See for more detail of the academic activities and influences of these centers in *Ibid.*, 240-257.

was a self-censorship on behalf of the university, as indicated in an interview with Ellacuría who explained: "A permanent self-censorship has been forced upon us. Circumstances do not allow us to do as much for this country as we could."²³⁵ Somehow, UCA's political position was consistent. The university maintained its belief that negotiation is the best solution, not a military intervention by either side.²³⁶ At the twentieth anniversary of the UCA, Ellacuría reflected back on what had happened and he outlined its future commitment.

On this our twentieth birthday we have much to thank many for, but we must also ask more from all. One can always give more, particularly if the cause for which one is working is noble. And there are few more noble causes than that on which our university had embarked: the creation of a new earth, plowed and cultivated with the best of human intelligence as we keep before our eyes [the fact] that those who have most right to enjoy it are those who have been most marginalized by history...to work together in this, to contribute as members of a university to the solution of the great national crisis--this is the challenge we have before us as we leave behind us twenty rich years of history.²³⁷

The UCA has been dealing with the national reality in order to participate in history particularly in the life of the people of El Salvador, and has helped to give solutions through academic research and critical analysis to the national problems, especially in regard to the continuing marginalization of the majority poor. Ellacuría himself as

²³⁵Paul Desruisseaux, "Salvador's Jesuit University: A Life of Self-censorship" in San Francisco Chronicle of Higher Education, 21 September 1983.

²³⁶Whitfield reported her interview with Rubén Zamora of the UCA who said that "We do not envisage a military victory on either side. We are trying to show that negotiations are the best road to a solution. We are pushing for negotiations in our publications, in our personal contacts with officials, and in our conversations with foreign diplomats." Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 241.

²³⁷Ignacio Ellacuría, "Los Retos del País a la UCA en su Vigésimo Aniversario" Speech given in the UCA on September 17, 1985, Planteamiento Universitario, page 152, translated in *Ibid.*, 242.

president provided a strong vision of academic excellence and Christian mission. Ten days before his assassination, he gave a lecture in Barcelona on behalf of the UCA that received an international award named after a Spanish theologian, Alfonso Comín. Ellacuría was incisive, reasonable and critical, articulating his vision of the mission of the UCA founded on the reality of the majority poor and oppressed.

Alfonso Comín obviously sought to carry out his theoretical and practical work from within the [ranks of the] poor and oppressed--and not simply for the poor and oppressed--while striving for universality and solidarity. That is also the perspective of our university, at least in intention, and for twenty-five years it has been working out of, and within, the light that the oppressed majority of the world cast on the world. Some are blinded while others enlightened.²³⁸

After a brief social analysis of the current grave situation of poverty and oppression, he repeated the commitment of the UCA to contribute to the historic struggle for the cause of the majority poor and oppressed, as which he called the starting point and the challenging source of "historic truth" of our world today.

All that would not be enough unless we were clear on where we had to stand as university persons in order to find historic truth. It is often said that the university should be impartial. We do not agree. The university should strive to be free and objective, but objectivity and freedom may demand taking sides. We are freely on the side of the popular majority because they are unjustly oppressed and because the truth of the situation lies within them both negatively and positively. Our university as a university has an acknowledged preferential option for the poor, and it learns from them in their reality and in their many expressions which both draw matters together and point the way ahead. We take this stand with them in order to be able to find the truth of what is happening and the truth that all of us must be seeking and building together.²³⁹

²³⁸Ignacio Ellacuría, "El Desafío de las Mayorías Pobres," *ECA* 44 (1989): 1075-1080, translated in Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 171-176.

²³⁹Hassett and Lacey, eds., Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 175.

3. A Christian Commitment and Persecution

Somehow, all of the efforts in a university to be in solidarity with and to defend the majority poor and oppressed demanded a consistent dedication and self-sacrifice.

Opposition was an expected possibility and there were indeed repeated verbal and physical threats and attacks against the university especially from the government and opposing groups including death squads. However, there were two things noticeably significant.

First, Ellacuría's thought on this element of persecution, including what had been happening to the UCA meant putting his own life on the line of the persecuted. Second, Ellacuría sought a christological justification for the persecution of "the crucified people".

Let us briefly discuss these two points to understand Ellacuría's idea on the persecution internally attached to the act of following Jesus Christ and his cause.

a. Persecution against the Church of El Salvador: Learning from Romero

Ellacuría had never isolated himself and the UCA from the Church of El Salvador and its struggle. Yet, he also tried always to show and prove his and the UCA's solidarity in words and deeds with the people of El Salvador especially with their majority poor and oppressed. This should not be explained as his own personal act of solidarity, since he was surrounded with many live witnesses and martyred witnesses as well. However, he was the one who articulated straight-forwardly and publicly this solidarity and life commitment as seen in the life and death of these witnesses.

The death of Grande with two of his parishioners on March 12, 1977, became a defining event for the Salvadoran Church under the leadership of Romero and the Jesuits

including Ellacuría. It was a moment of radical change in Ellacuría's relation to the church he had served for many years and to the more conservative members of Salvadoran society that had supported the naming of Romero to the archdiocese. Just a few months after Grande's death, Romero spoke to the people of the parish in Aguilares where Grande had served. These people had endured suffering on a daily basis and had been terrorized by the operations of the military and paramilitary forces even after the death of their pastor. Romero spoke to console those suffering people and he pledged his full support as their "pastor". Yet, one of his reasons revealed in his talk that will remain deeply in the heart of the people and of theologians such as Sobrino who were present at this event, was his extraordinary theological insight on the reality of these suffering people of God. He addressed them as the image of Christ crucified on the cross. He said that the Church was with them at all times in a very special way, particularly since there were three priests among the victims. The Church suffers with those who have suffered so much, is truly with them, and that their pain is the pain of the Church. They are the image of the Pierced One, the crucified Christ. Finally, Christ himself is the image of all people who were insulted and wounded like the people of Aguilares. However, those who suffer with faith and find a sense of redemption in it will be singing the precious music of liberation, and because those who see the pierced people are converted, and they will witness to their heroism and joy which has been blessed by the Lord in their suffering.²⁴⁰

Romero's life, pastoral approach and theological/christological thought evoked a

²⁴⁰See Romero's homily in Aguilares, June 19, 1977 in Sobrino, Martín Baró and Cardenal, eds., La Voz de los Sin Voz: La Palabra Viva de Monseñor Romero (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1996), 208-209.

serious rethinking of the existing faith in Jesus Christ and the reality of Jesus' followers, particularly those whose suffering and death resemble Jesus' suffering and death. This illuminating theological and christological insight was even more determining because of Romero's continuous courageous commitment to the poor and oppressed in the middle of their severe persecution by his becoming the voice of the voiceless and finally by his own assassination on March 24, 1980. In the celebration of Mass at UCA just a few days after his death, Ellacuría made a faith claim that "with Romero God passed through El Salvador."²⁴¹ This was certainly a radical theological statement from a critical philosopher and theologian such as Ellacuría. However, it was a faith statement since Romero's life and death were for him a revelatory message that caused a transformation of his own social and theological standpoint which strongly began to include persecution. This is indicated in his talks on the UCA as a Christian university which was called on to defend the majority poor and oppressed including their cause, persecution and assassination such as we have seen in his address at Santa Clara University of California.

But we have also been encouraged by the words of Archbishop Romero--himself soon to be murdered--who said, while we were burying an assassinated priest, that something would be wrong in our church if no priest lay next to so many of his assassinated brothers and sisters. If the university had not suffered, we would not

²⁴¹ This was recalled by Jon Sobrino who that day was also celebrating the Mass with Ellacuría. See Jon Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1995), 64. Ellacuría also explained that Romero extraordinarily made Christian liberating message credible, strengthened his people's hope and Church's critical function. "La palabra, la vida, el ejemplo de Monseñor Romero hacían creíble el mensaje cristiano a cada vez mayor parte del pueblo salvadoreño, porque cada vez lo abría a una esperanza siempre más grande ya más pura. El pueblo recibía de Monseñor Romero fuerza nueva para esperar, para luchar esperanzadamente, para ofrendar sus vidas llenando de sentido su sacrificio heroico. la Iglesia, en contrapartida, recibía credibilidad y fuerza de ese pueblo que cada vez se fiaba más de ella en una nueva etapa ya no ingenua, sino crítica." Ignacio Ellacuría, "Monseñor Romero, un Enviado de Dios para Salvar a su Pueblo," *RLT* VII (January-April 1990): 10.

have performed our duty. In a world where injustice reigns, a university that fights for justice must necessarily be persecuted...

And how do you help us? This is not for me to say. Only open your human heart, your Christian heart, and ask yourselves the three questions Ignatius of Loyola put to himself as he stood in front of a crucified world: What have I done for Christ in this world? What am I doing now? And above all, what should I do? The answers lie both in your academic responsibility and in your personal responsibility.²⁴²

b. Following The Persecuted Jesus Christ: Learning from the Crucified People

One of Ellacuría's earliest writings that addressed the majority poor and oppressed as the "crucified people" was published in Mexico, 1978.²⁴³ As mentioned before, Sobrino began developing his own christological reflection by taking and re-thinking seriously this metaphor.

Theological relevance and credibility had become a permanent demand for many Latin American theologians. For instance, Ellacuría explained that christology and ecclesiology must be seen as historic soteriology. As he began his reflection by inviting people to look at the reality of their surroundings, Ellacuría suggested important questions concerning the reality of the crucified people.

What does the fact that most humankind is oppressed mean for salvation history and in salvation history? Can we regard suffering humankind as saved in history when it continues to bear the sins of the world? Can we regard it as savior of the

²⁴²Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 150-151. In 1985, as the UCA awarded Romero a posthumous doctorate in theology, Ellacuría would acknowledge that "It was with the arrival of Monseñor in the archdiocese that the university gained a greater consciousness of its mission." See "La UCA Ante el Doctorado Concedido a Monseñor Romero," ECA 437 (March 1985): 168 and Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 115.

²⁴³"El Pueblo Crucificado. Ensayo de Soteriología Histórica" in I. Ellacuría etc., Cruz y Resurrección (Mexico: CTR, 1978), 48-82, reprinted and incorporated in his book Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 25-63.

world precisely because it bears sins of the world? What is its relationship with the church as sacrament of salvation? Is this suffering humankind something essential when it comes time to reflect on what the people of God is and what the church is?²⁴⁴

In 1973, Ellacuría's Teología Política, translated as Freedom Made Flesh. The Mission of Christ and his Church (1976), showed strongly the need to explore "the historicity of salvation". Otherwise, he argued, theology will not acquire its full meaning nor its full concrete contribution. Announcing the Good News of the coming of the reign of God and denouncing the anti-kingdom as the historical Jesus did in his own society entailed an immediate consequence especially from those who oppose the coming of the Reign of God. Eventually in the suffering of the vast and exploited popular majority, the crucified people, this active opposition was brought to light as it was in Jesus Christ crucified.

Ellacuría explained plainly that the death of Jesus implied a negative response to the preaching of the Kingdom of God and a clear possibility of persecution against those how act like Jesus, announcing the Good News of the Kingdom of God for the poor and denouncing the idols of death.

Jesus death makes it clear why really proclaiming salvation runs up against the resistance of the world, and why the Reign of God does combat with the Reign of sin. That is made manifest both in the death of the prophet, the one sent by God, and in the ravaging and death of humankind at the hands of those who make themselves gods, lording it over humankind. If a spiritualizing approach to the passion leads to an evasion of that commitment to history that leads to persecution and death, a historic commitment to the crucified people makes it necessary to examine the theological meaning of this death, and thus, to go back to the redeeming passion of Jesus. Reflecting historically on the death of Jesus helps us to

²⁴⁴Ellacuría, "The Crucified People." In Sobrino, Ellacuría, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, 257.

reflect theologically on the death of the oppressed people, and the latter points back toward the former.²⁴⁵

The crucifixion of Jesus proves the immediate consequence of an act of announcing the Kingdom of God and denouncing the kingdom of evil. Those who follow Jesus and his cause should expect naturally a resistance that extends to the extreme of persecution and martyrdom. Ellacuría even pointed out the "necessity" of this persecution as he took seriously Jesus' message that indicated persecution and death for those who were to continue his work. And this "revelation" came in a very special way from the historical reality of the crucified people.

...the on going passion of the people and paralleling it the historic reign of sin--as opposing the Reign of God--do not permit a reading of the death and resurrection of Jesus removed from history...identifying the Reign with the resurrection of Jesus would leave unfulfilled Jesus' message which predicted persecutions and death for those who were to continue his work. When Paul speaks of what is still wanting in the passion of Christ, he is rejecting a resurrection that ignores what is happening on earth. It is precisely the reign of sin that continues to crucify most of humankind and that obliges us to make real in history the death of Jesus as the actualized passover of the Reign of God.²⁴⁶

This christological insight might sound predetermining, yet it is true especially since this theological reflection was done from the standpoint of the crucified people. To follow Jesus is intrinsic to the Christian faith, a faith in Jesus Christ. This faith in Jesus Christ is relevant, and not alienating, to the world today, since it is historical in three senses. First, its foundation is in Jesus of Nazareth, a historical person. Second, its finality is the Reign of God which began in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Third, its

²⁴⁵Ibid., 262.

²⁴⁶Ibid., 260.

historical embodiment is in the act of following Jesus and his cause. Ellacuría remarks:

"...Jesus followed a particular direction in history not because it would lead to death or because he was seeking a redemptive death, but rather because that was what truly proclaiming the Reign of God demanded."²⁴⁷ The salvific dimension of Christian faith is therefore historical. It is happening in the act of following Jesus just as it began in the life of Jesus himself while he was preaching the coming of the Reign of God, the Good News for the poor.

Salvation, therefore, cannot be made exclusively a matter of the mystical fruits of the death of Jesus, separating it from his real and verifiable behavior. It is not merely a passive and obedient acceptance of a natural fate, let alone a fate imposed by the Father. It is, at least in a first level, an action that leads to life by way of death, in such a way that in the case of Jesus what is salvific cannot be separated from what is historic. Consequently, Jesus death is not the end of the meaning of his life, but the end of the pattern that must be repeated and followed in new lives with the hope of resurrection and thereby the seal of exaltation. Jesus' death is the final meaning of his life only because the death toward which his life led him shows what was likewise the historic meaning and the theological meaning of his life. It is, thus, his life that provides the ultimate meaning of his death, an only as a consequence does his death, which has received its initial meaning from his life, give meaning to his life. Therefore, his followers should not focus primarily on death as sacrifice, but on the life of Jesus, which will only really be his life if it leads to the same consequences as his life did.²⁴⁸

All of this christological reflection was "demonstrated" vividly in the life, preferential option for the poor, and death of Romero. On the one hand, Ellacuría learned that Romero came to an understanding of the "historic necessity" of the persecution of the people of God when they follow in Jesus' steps. Then, Romero saw specifically this persecution was an unavoidable consequence of commitment to these poor. Defending the

²⁴⁷Ibid., 264.

²⁴⁸Ibid., 265.

rights and interests of the poor, and denouncing the selfishness of the rich and violence of the military against them, the church of El Salvador had been persecuted. The preferential option for the poor as an active option indeed brought persecution on the church. On the other hand, after the death of Romero, Ellacuría saw what he called "chain of persecutions" as an active response to that commitment and to an active preferential option.

First of all there is the persecution of the people, a persecution that at its root is that of structural oppression and then becomes repression when the people have become conscious and have organized struggles for liberation. Then comes the persecution of the people of God, which seeks to bring salvation history into the history of the people and to integrate the history of the people into salvation history. Finally there is the persecution and death of Archbishop Romero, as the most visible head of the people of God, whose death it is hoped will scatter the flock. That has not happened completely, but the enemy of the people and of the Reign of God in history was well aware that it was going to be difficult to replace a prophet and a bishop like Archbishop Romero.²⁴⁹

Ellacuría was working in the UCA while the country of El Salvador was in the middle of its civil war. In the year of his assassination, he expressed a notable optimism in the progress of the possible negotiation for peace between the fighting groups. UCA was prominent and consistent in encouraging and proposing a negotiated settlement to the war. Yet the dialogue for peace was almost a permanent threat to the group that had been trying to repress the outbreaks of popular resistances. Ellacuría came to a conclusion that the true followers of Jesus Christ in a world dominated by sin and violence cannot but be persecuted. Its simple reason is that Jesus' followers seek to negate sin and establish the reign of peace. This means immediately the negation of existing sinful and violent

²⁴⁹Ignacio Ellacuría, "Persecution for the Sake of the Reign of God." In Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 68.

structures. This reality is not a "sad-ending" of the followers, since Jesus himself "made persecution a clear sign of the happiness that comes with belonging to God's reign."²⁵⁰

Sobrino's evaluation and recognition of what Ellacuría did serves as a good summary of the Christian faith based on the efforts of Ellacuría and his friends as well helpers.

Where the truth is told, analyzed, and presented in a university and Christian way, this is a kind of university that the idols will not tolerate. They murdered these Jesuit academics because they made the university an effective instrument in defense of the mass of the people, because they had become the critical conscience in a society of sin and the creative awareness of a future society that would be different, the utopia of God's kingdom for the poor. They were killed for trying to create a truly Christian university. They were killed because they believed in the God of the poor and tried to produce this faith through the university.²⁵¹

We have already learned the reality of the crucified people as observed, studied, lived and presented by Ellacuría as well as in his academic efforts to materialize or historicize his Christian approach and in his attempts to find the best solution for it. Now it is our turn to understand it from its continuation and discontinuation in Sobrino's christology particularly through the discussion of the crucified people and the act of following Jesus. It is astonishing to find the new emphases in the post-killing christological reflection of Sobrino. New themes emerged, such as theology of mercy, recognizing a "new" civilization of poverty or austerity, the significant role of the crucified people as a martyred people in "revelation" and a truly historical "God's saving plan", a changing context for theology and the worsening reality of the poor and oppressed, a new

²⁵⁰Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 112-113.

²⁵¹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 29.

spirituality of liberation, a new meaning of faith, hope and joy, a new reading of the Bible as a whole and, at the bottom line, what it means to be human and neighbor in our world today. Through the discussion of these themes. One enhances the understanding of Sobrino's christology and his personal transformation.

Conclusion

It is obvious that Sobrino draws our attention to the historical reality of our world today especially the suffering of the so-called "third world" people. Sobrino shows that European theologies/christologies which were his previous theological background, were not able to respond fully to that reality. Therefore, he started a christological reflection from this "new" reality with the help of some Latin American social analysts, philosopher and theologians especially Ellacuría and Romero. From reading his two main christological writings, it is clear that Sobrino is in process of rounding up his christological and methodological insight. He shows that he has moved from the European approach to a Latin American approach.

In his first christological book, Christology at the Crossroads (1976) Sobrino articulated a maturing Latin American systematic christology initiated, for example, by the notable work of Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator (1972). In his second christological book, Jesus in Latin America (1982) Sobrino showed the centrality of the historical Jesus and discipleship as the basic means to know Christ. These are two basic guidelines for a christology emerging from a Latin American context. Further, he explained that these two points are well-grounded in the Christian tradition contained in the christological teachings

of the Church and above all this new Latin American christology offered a new depth and urgency into the official teaching. This is Sobrino's early christological turning point. At this point, the most important point is his theological/christological method that takes seriously the historical Jesus especially his "scandalous death" and the historical reality of Latin America marked by massive poverty and oppression. However, more than that, he is gradually committed himself to integrate the insight of the poor more deeply and profoundly into his christological method. He has come to a point where he is convinced that the poor has much to say to christology and "gradually" he points out that the poor is also a major *locus theologicus*.

Ellacuría, one of Sobrino's closest Jesuit brother and co-thinker, has become very influential in the development of Sobrino's christology, namely a christology of mercy done from amidst the poor, the crucified people. Indeed, Sobrino's thought on the poor as crucified people and following Jesus as taking the crucified people down from the cross have been developed in the light of Ellacuría's ideas on the crucified people and his work in historicizing the liberating message of Jesus through a University-academic environment. Later, Sobrino's christological reflection will be further developed and rooted in his own life after the killing of Ellacuría for exercising mercy on behalf of the crucified people (Chapter IV). Ellacuría's works recover the political implications of Jesus' concern with the Kingdom of God and also highlight anew the social implication of his death which is also noticeable through the death of Ellacuría himself and his Jesuit brothers that has contributed to an end to war in El Salvador and reinvigorated the combat for basic human rights they held so dearly (Chapter III).

Sobrino himself has always been persistent in showing the history-making potential of faith in Christ amidst the suffering world today and he has dedicated his whole life for the Church in Latin America and especially for the crucified people without losing sight in the ultimate mystery of God. In his interview, Sobrino admitted that he was overwhelmed by innumerable committed Christians in the middle of war, threats, continuing conflict, and the persecution. Sobrino's christology is the fruit of living and laboring with the suffering poor, the crucified people.

Karl Rahner, one of the most influential and admired theologians both for Ellacuría and Sobrino, once wrote powerfully that there are people to whom Jesus ... "really makes such a compelling impression on a person that they find the courage to commit themselves unconditionally to this Jesus in life and death and therefore to believe in God of Jesus."²⁵² Rahner's insight was reflected in the life, ministry and death of Romero and many committed Christians in such a way that they provide an exemplary way of life as followers of Jesus. These many deaths, especially the killing of Romero has caused another major turning point in Sobrino's christology which now takes martyrdom as its constitutive element.²⁵³

This survey of the two christological books of Sobrino and the influence of Ellacuría lead to a further question on the influence of the killing of six Jesuits of his community and their co-workers, to indicate in a more explainable way, the turns and

²⁵²Karl Rahner and Karl-Heinz Weger, Our Christian Faith: Answer for the Future (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 93-94.

²⁵³Sobrino "A letter to the Author," El Salvador, 30 June 1999, 1.

changes occurred in the development of Sobrino's christology. This hypothetical observation received its impetus in Sobrino's self story, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity" written in 1992 for a compilation of How My Mind has Changed.²⁵⁴

Finally, it has to be said that in this chapter: first, I have presented Sobrino's position, his emphases, his method, and his gradual changes. A major turning point will come when Sobrino's Jesuit brothers of the same community of the UCA with their co-workers were murdered. The following chapters will center directly on the explanation of these turns and changes that will also serve as the binding point of the fuller development of Sobrino's christology from the womb of El Salvador and the so-called Third World in general; secondly, I have not incorporated any critique of Sobrino's material in this chapter, nor will I in chapter four. This does not mean that Sobrino's position does not merit some criticisms. My criticism will come only in chapter five, when the entire christological synthesis constructed by Sobrino has been thoroughly and carefully analyzed. I believe that only when an author's position is carefully analyzed and deeply understood, is criticism, both positive and negative, possible. Therefore, it is not my intention to ask the readers of these three chapters to accept without question Sobrino's position, rather, the reader at this point of my argument is asked "only" to understand clearly Sobrino's position and its evolution. With this methodological note, let us proceed with our analysis on the case of the killing of six Jesuits of the UCA and their co-workers.

²⁵⁴See Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 1-11.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KILLING OF THE SIX JESUITS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CHRISTOLOGY OF JON SOBRINO

I. The Killing of the Six Jesuits of the UCA and Their Co-Workers

As I mentioned earlier, the metaphor of the crucified people was introduced by Ellacuría who later was confirmed by the prophetic sermons of Romero and particularly by his assassination for the cause of defending the poor and oppressed, the crucified people. Nine years after this overwhelming event, Ellacuría himself was murdered with five other Jesuits and their co-workers for a similar cause. Sobrino escaped this violent killing "only because" he was away delivering a series of lectures on christology in Thailand. This shocking event offered Sobrino a true and realistic picture of the crucified people far beyond his previous understanding and experience. Therefore it is important to begin our discussion with this martyrial dimension of the metaphor.

A. Martyrdom as a Contemporary Theological Question

Let us begin with one of Sobrino's recollections of the killing of the six-Jesuits and their co-workers.

Now, it happened that, after the murders, those who had committed them dragged the corpse of one of the six victims, Juan Ramón Moreno, back into our house. And in all the bumping and pushing, there fell from the bookcase a book--one book--that would now lie there covered with blood. The book was Jürgen Moltmann's *El Dios crucificado*--"The Crucified God." Some years latter, in 1994, Moltmann himself passed through El Salvador, to see the place where the Jesuits had been murdered and lay buried. He had not come to teach; instead, he spent a

long while in silence, meditating in the courtyard and in the chapel."²⁵⁵

The killing of many committed Christians of this century has challenged our faith commitment as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ. Prior to their murder the six Jesuits of the University of Central America in El Salvador realized the presence of a death-threat as a result of their persistent Christian message to establish a just and peaceful society, and yet they remained faithful until the end.²⁵⁶ Has their death, indeed, had any significant role to strengthen and transform the commitment of Christians? Has their death significantly evoked and renewed the solidarity of Christians with those who died in a way most resembling or *like* Christ?

The modern world, especially in this century, has been marked by a common inability to stop the population growth of its poor and the massive world-wide violations of human rights, especially through oppression, torture, killings and even genocide. A global ecological indifference and a possible rapid destruction by nuclear holocaust add to

²⁵⁵Sobrino continued: "One might wish to dispute the theology of Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, but one thing is beyond discussion. And that is that in our historical reality, there is massive, cruel crucifixion--what Archbishop Romero and Ignacio Ellacuría referred to in terms of "the crucified people." The blood that covered Moltmann's book expresses that crucified reality. And the fact that the book was precisely *El Dios crucificado* supplies objectively theological depth: in concrete historical crucifixion is ultimacy, and in that ultimacy, very God." See Jon Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 165. It is also worth-remembering that the corpse of Juan Ramón Moreno was dragged back not only into the house but particularly into Sobrino's room. Apparently, the perpetrators were making "a statement".

²⁵⁶Joseph O'Hare, SJ, president of Fordham University in New York, recalls that the same year of the assassination of Rutilio Grande, S.J. in 1977, a rightwing paramilitary group ordered all Jesuits in El Salvador to leave the country or face a sentence of death. In the early part of November, 1989, government-controlled radio stations broadcasted warnings against their safety. See Joseph O'Hare, S.J., "Six Slain Jesuits," Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 176.

the crises of our modern civilization. From this kind of crisis, a question of the relevancy of Christian faith for the modern world is undoubtedly important and urgent. A concern for the victims raises a question of Christian faith. What should a Christian do to be human in a world like this? What does it mean to be Christian in a world like this? "In time, the new question sparked another which continues to burn to this day: What does salvation promised by the Gospel have to say to society's victims? I wondered whether the churches, and my own Catholic Church in particular, announced a hope that really addressed the suffering of the poor"²⁵⁷ Ellacuría, one of the six murdered Jesuits, affirmed that: "The historicity of Christian salvation is still one of the most serious issues for the understanding and practice of faith. It is a problem in the North Atlantic countries, in the oppressed countries; and finally, in the magisterium and discipline of the institutional Church"²⁵⁸

In the first part of this chapter, the case of the killing of six Jesuits of the University of Central America (UCA) and their helpers will be presented. Then, the place of the killing and its significant role in Sobrino's christology will be located and examined. Finally I will show the importance of the event in the development of Sobrino's christological reflection.

The case of the six murdered Jesuits together with many other cases of killings of committed Christians made a deep impact on Sobrino's theological and christological

²⁵⁷Brackley, *Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought*, xvi.

²⁵⁸Ellacuría, Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación*, vol. 1, 323.

reflection. The killing of many Christians, what is called "popular martyrdom" in general, is presented to help one find its significance and relevance for Christians who are still struggling to make sense of their faith. Eventually, the most important interest for Sobrino was to question and try to indicate and identify a connection between the way of being a committed Christian in our modern world and christology. It should be noted that my emphasis is primarily on his christology.

B. The Killing of the Six Jesuits of the UCA and Their Co-Workers

Let us then briefly present the details regarding six Jesuit priests of the University of Central America in El Salvador, who together with their helper and her daughter were murdered by the Armed-Forces of the government of El Salvador on November 16, 1989.²⁵⁹ They are Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Amando López, Joaquín López y López ("The six Jesuits"), Julia Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina Ramos. When they were killed, Ellacuría was the rector of the university, Martín-Baró was the academic vice-rector, Montes was the director of the

²⁵⁹In presenting this material, I will follow the tenth report prepared by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the Jesuit case as compiled by Martha Doggett in Death Foretold: The Jesuits Murders in El Salvador (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993) with the support of some other resources such as the document from the Instituto de Estudios Centroamericanos and El Rescate, The Jesuit Assassinations: The Writings of Ellacuría, Martín Baró and Segundo Montes, with a Chronology of the Investigation (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1990); the work of Teresa Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); and a report prepared by the Salvadoran Truth Commission, which was gathered to investigate human rights abuses during the Salvadoran civil war: From Madness to Hope: The Twelve Years War in El Salvador. Report of the Truth Commission for El Salvador. (New York: United Nations, 1993). These documents summarize the crime and evaluate efforts to investigate and prosecute those who were involved in the planning of the killing and those who carried out the order.

UCA institute of Human Rights, Ramón Moreno was the assistant-director of the Archbishop Romero Pastoral Center, Amando López was coordinator of the Philosophy Department and professor of theology and Joaquín López y López was the national director of "Fe y Alegría" that provides education for the children of poor families. Julia Elba Ramos worked at the Jesuit community for several years as a cook with her husband and often her young daughter, Celina, helped her.²⁶⁰

On November 11, 1989 at 8:00 p.m., the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation) offensive commenced in San Salvador and other cities around the nation. By 11:00 p.m., all radio stations were pressured into joining a nationwide hook-up, which broadcasted the death threats against the Jesuits and members of the political opposition. On the following day, November 12, president Alfredo Cristiani declared a State of Exception and a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew. Threats against the Jesuits continued to be broadcasted over the national radio network. On November 13, the U.S. training of Atlacatl commandos was suspended. Atlacatl troops were transferred to San Salvador, where they were billeted at the Military Academy near the University of Central America (UCA). At 6:30 p.m., within two hours of their arrival in San Salvador, Atlacatl units under the command of Lieutenant Espinoza searched the Jesuit residence on the

²⁶⁰See Sobrino's note and reflection on the lives of Julia Elba and Celina which will not be addressed separately in this presentation of the case. Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 141-143 and also Salvador Carranza, ed., Mártires de La UCA: 16 de Noviembre de 1989 (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1994) especially pages 34-36, 51-53, 58-61.

UCA campus.²⁶¹

Two days later, November 15 at 3:00 p.m. over one hundred Atlacatl troops occupied Loyola Center at the edge of UCA campus. In the early evening of that day, Lieutenant Espinoza met with the United States Ambassador Walker and the top U.S. military advisor Colonel Menjívar at the ambassador's home. In the evening Atlacatl patrols were stationed on the north, southeast, southwest and west sides of the UCA. Ranking military officers held several meetings throughout the day. Twenty four top officers met in a closed door session from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. By the end of the meeting, president Cristiani had been summoned to Joint Command headquarters, where he met with Chief-of-staff Ponce, Defense Minister Larios, and Vice Ministers Zepeda and Montano. Colonel Benavides met with Military Academy officers to report on the meeting at the Joint Command headquarters. At 10:30 p.m., Lieutenant Espinoza of the Atlacatl was ordered by radio to gather his men. At 11:30 p.m., Colonel Benavides gave Lieutenant Espinoza and Mendoza the order to kill the Jesuits.

²⁶¹See Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 169-171. Whitfield briefly explained what is the Atlacatl Battalion and its crucial role in the assassination of the Jesuit case. On page 171 she noted: "Moakley had to push hard to extricate background material on the members of the Atlacatl responsible for the murder of the Jesuits. When it finally came, the Pentagon's assessment that 'the very presence of U.S. military advisers is a reminder to the Salvadoran armed forces of the U.S. government's commitment and insistence on human rights' sounded somewhat naive. According to answers given to the FBI by U.S. Major Samuel Ramírez, resident with the CEBRI from October 1989 to October 1990, the commando unit that murdered the Jesuits was considered to be the 'best' of the units in the Atlacatl--tougher, more experienced, and more motivated than any other. Its leader, Lieutenant Espinoza, came across as a model young officer: a product of cadet training in Fort Benning, instruction as a pilot on San Antonio Texas' air base, and a veteran of a Special Forces course in Fort Bragg. His unit, it also emerged, had undergone intensive training by Green Berets not forty-eight hours before they forced unarmed priests to lie face down in the grass and then shot them in the back of the head. To what end, task force members wondered, the Pentagon's calm assurance: 'human rights issues have been and continue to be a central issue in the U.S. military effort in El Salvador'?"

Early in the morning of November 16, at 12:30 a.m., president Cristiani was given a briefing on San Salvador's military situation in the COCFA (The Command Center at Joint Command Headquarters), where, it is said, two or three U.S. military advisers were also present. At 1:00 a.m., the operation against the UCA commenced. At 2:30 a.m., Atlacatl commandos executed two women and six Jesuit priests inside the walled UCA campus. The Oscar Romero Pastoral Center (CRT) was also ransacked, burned and barraged with an M-60 machine gun. At this hour, Mrs. Lucía Barrera de Cerna, a Jesuit housekeeper and her family heard gun fire and she observed military officers on the UCA campus. During the day, First Brigade megaphones announced, "Ellacuría and Martín-Baró had fallen. We are going to continue killing communists".²⁶² At a later time, Archbishop Rivera y Damas and the Jesuit Provincial Father Tojeira announced that circumstantial evidence pointed toward the Armed Forces as the group which did the killing.²⁶³

After about thirteen months of a slow and difficult process of investigation, with lots of organized coverup on behalf of the Salvadoran army, in December 1990, judge

²⁶²Doggett , Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador , 282. Teresa Whitfield narrated on what happened early morning of November 16: "At 6:00 A.M. on November 16, 1989 Pedro Arévalo Coreas, an agent with the National Police in San Salvador, noticed some interference on his radio. Since the FMLN guerrillas launched their offensive on the night of November 11, his orders had been to supervise the distribution of food to active duty agents from his radio car. This Thursday morning he was gathering up the pans he had given out full of food the night before when his radio crackled into life. 'We've killed Ellacuría,' said the voice on his radio. 'Enjoy!'. See Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 71. Read also the homily of bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez commemorating the Ninth anniversary of the killing, "Aniversario del Martirio de los Jesuitas" in ECA LIII-601-602 (November-December 1998), 1020.

²⁶³Doggett , Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador , 31-71, 281-282.

Ricardo Zamora decided to take the case to trial against ten members of the Salvadoran military.²⁶⁴ Nine of these men faced a jury trial for the murders and related charges, while Lt. Col. Carlos Camilo Hernández was charged solely in the coverup, a non jury offense.²⁶⁵ When the third anniversary of the murders, November 16, 1992, was commemorated with a Mass at the UCA, the Jesuit provincial of Central America reiterated his call for identification of the officers who ordered the crime.²⁶⁶

Before we move to any theological discussion, let us learn *the message* of these six Jesuits. For this reason we will study briefly what they taught and denounced, what they did as their pastoral work and their shared mission as Jesuits. What they believed, taught and practiced finally led them to a situation in which they were both accused and received death threats; and, therefore, this will show us why they were murdered. Since they worked together in the same university, lived in the same community as Jesuits and had

²⁶⁴These coverup and obstructions of the investigation on the Jesuit case also involved the U.S. authorities. In October 16, 1990 it was reported that "The United States is not interested in a thorough investigation of the Jesuit case, says UCA Rector Miguel Estrada in Spain, citing the withholding of twenty-one documents on the case by U.S. authorities. According to Estrada, release of the documents 'would force them to accept their participation.' Estrada also says he is "afraid for the situation of the country...The death squads are still active. (TV12)" See Instituto de Estudios Centroamericanos and El Rescate, The Jesuit Assassinations: The Writings of Ellacuría, Martín Baró and Segundo Montes, with a Chronology of the Investigation, 156. Martha Doggett reported the response delivered in December 13, 1990 and wrote: "U.S. Ambassador Walker says 'my government and I are doing everything possible to achieve justice in this case,' explaining that some portions of documents given to the Jesuits under the Freedom of Information Act were blacked out, as U.S. law permits." See Doggett, Death Foretold: The Jesuits Murders in El Salvador, 292.

²⁶⁵See also "A Summary and Chronology of the Conflict in El Salvador: 1979-1991," Benjamin C. Schwarz, American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustration of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1991), especially page 92.

²⁶⁶Doggett, Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador, 299.

the same apostolic concern for the poor majority, I will address them primarily as a community.

C. The Message of the Murdered Jesuits

1. The Six Jesuits Denounced the Unjust and Oppressive Policies of the Government of El Salvador and the Rise of Other Political Parties

a. "Twenty Years of El Salvador"

In the last two decades before the killings of the six Jesuits, the political situation in El Salvador was marked by the growth of political unrest and violence. This caused massive suffering especially among the majority of poor civilians.²⁶⁷ We read, for example, that between 1961 and 1975, the landless population grew from 11.8 to 40.9 percent of rural families. Then, an economic crisis happened unavoidably. This crisis deepened the chronic poverty of the majority and made income distribution in the country even less equal. The same economic situation left some ninety percent of rural households without the minimum income necessary for basic nutrition. As a response, the Salvadoran government proposed a small-scale agrarian reform. This project was also supported by the U.S. government. However, the Salvadoran oligarchy (about two hundred families) opposed every kind of land reform, and therefore very little land actually reached small

²⁶⁷Ellacuría wrote an extensive social and political analysis of this period especially from 1969 to 1989. See Ignacio Ellacuría, Veinte Años de Historia en El Salvador (1969-1989): Escritos Políticos (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990). Also see his article "The Challenge of the Poor Majority" in Hassett and Lacey, Towards a Society that Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits, 171-176.

farmers.

The repression and killings against the leaders of the opposing parties began to spread as there were more and more groups of protesters. This severe repression gave a message to the public that a violent way will be taken to solve the national problem. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, political violence developed into massacres primarily, but not only, in rural areas. A massacre of the people of the village of El Mozote, that killed more than one thousand civilians including many children in December 1980, numerous attacks during 1980 and 1981 on civilians who tried to flee their villages such as the massacres at the Rio Lempa and the Rio Sumpul were among the best-known. This growing repression and the apparent absence of peaceful alternatives eventually created a stronger resistance of the popular opposition and encouraged the growth of armed revolutionary groups. This revolutionary opposition against the spreading violent repression on behalf of the government and the Armed Forces and the militancy of the popular resistance led the united guerrilla forces to launch a "final offensive" in January 1981. This marked the beginning of a twelve year civil war of El Salvador. The result unfortunately was a bigger world of civilian victims and wide-spread misery among the majority poor.²⁶⁸

In the middle of this worsening political situation, the six Jesuits and the UCA were trying to respond to the situation of poverty and oppression, a reality which also widely characterizes all the Third World countries. Ellacuría wrote:

²⁶⁸Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 28-36. See also Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 51-79, 101-154. The political violence that happened in the 1970s and early 1980s are the events which Sobrino referred in his first two christological books and reflected upon, as he was trying to understand the reality of the poor and the oppressed especially in El Salvador.

Our intellectual analysis finds that our historical reality, the reality of El Salvador, the reality of the third world, that is, the reality of most of this world, the most universal historical reality, is fundamentally characterized by the effective predominance of falsehood over truth, injustice over justice, oppression over freedom, poverty over abundance, in sum, of evil over good...²⁶⁹

The six Jesuits observed that the reality of El Salvador at that time noticeably victimized the poor civilians and the powerless. Ellacuría also spoke during the 33rd General Congregation of the Jesuits in Rome in 1983 and explained to Jesuit representatives from all over the world about the misery of many Salvadorans and the need to respond to the institutionalized violence of massive poverty and repression that was crushing the vast majority of the people of El Salvador. Since the beginning of the civil war until the killings of the Jesuits in 1989, about 75.000 Salvadorans were killed without any proper investigations of their cases and many of them remained on the list of the disappeared persons. The six Jesuits and the UCA attempted to solve these problems as much as they could, primarily academically but without neglecting practical ways.

b. Option for the Poor

The six Jesuits worked, taught and formulated their concern to opt for the poor majority and civilian victims. As Christians who read the Gospel and priests who had worked for and with the people of El Salvador for many years, they found many reasons for opting for the poor. This means that the priority of their mission was to work for the betterment of the poor and the oppressed, and if they had to take sides, as they did, they

²⁶⁹ A speech from an occasion of receiving a honorary doctorate from the university of Santa Clara in 1982. Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 38.

would take the side of the poor. Both phrases "option for the poor" and the option itself were not new nor did they belong exclusively to the Jesuits. The second Vatican Council had already addressed this strong sense of solidarity with the poor, for example in Gaudium et Spes.²⁷⁰ The Jesuits came into the preferential apostolic option definitively in their 32nd General Congregation of 1974-1975.²⁷¹ However, it was also clear to the six Jesuits that an option for the poor was rooted more in the Gospel itself, in Jesus words and works, his life and death. The mission of Jesus according to Luke, quoting Isaiah 61: 1-2, explains what they were trying to do: "...He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the

²⁷⁰"The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's Kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history. Flannery, gen. ed. The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language, 163. Ellacuría explained that the preferential option for the poor indeed was reclaimed vividly by many bishops in the Second Vatican Council especially Lercaro, Gerlier y Himmer who said that "*primus locus in Ecclesia pauperibus reservandus est*" (the first place in the Church has to be reserved for the poor) and the reason is that the mystery of Christ, as always being present in the Church, is present today in a special way among the poor. Ellacuría therefore made a point that this preferential option was not a Latin American theological sociologism as viewed by some people. See Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 85.

²⁷¹"...solidarity with men and women who live a life of hardship and who are the victims of oppression cannot be the choice of a few Jesuits only. It should be a characteristic of our communities and institutions as well. Alterations are called for in our manner and style of living so that the poverty to which we are vowed may identify us with the poor Christ, who identified Himself with the deprived.." Society of Jesus, Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus: An English Translation of the Official Latin Texts of the General Congregations and of the Accompanying Papal Documents, 428. See also a wider discussion on the promotion of justice in this "decree four" in Martin R. Tripole, S.J., Faith Beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 27-118.

downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor"²⁷²

The six Jesuits were teachers in a university which taught theology, philosophy, sociology, and social psychology. The reality of El Salvador was their main concern. They published their research and thoughts on the reality of El Salvador in university publications and in various other sources. Some of them were asked to present their investigations within the country as well as abroad, such as in Spain, U.S.A. and other countries in Central and South America. At this point, we are reminded that if the six Jesuits worked hard to understand and to reveal "the reality of El Salvador", it was because it had to do with the poor.

The six Jesuits saw the reality primarily as a *shared truth* about life of the people and, in this case, the life of every person in El Salvador. A perpetuation of the reality of massive poverty and oppression indicated the existence of a small group of people who preferred to preserve this reality for their own advantage at the expense of the poor majority. They made this possible because they held power and then misused this power to manipulate and to silence the powerless. In other words, the six Jesuits were convinced that in this situation, revealing the reality also meant returning the reality to the poor and at the same time converting the reality into a shared truth. Sobrino, one member of their community who escaped the November 16th massacre, wrote "...they were not spokesmen of any group or institution. They were spokesmen for the reality itself. If they had or recognized any bias, it was that they saw reality from the viewpoint of the poor. And if

²⁷²Luke 4: 18-19 and Matthew 25: 35-45. See also Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 62.

they told this truth so decisively, it was because they were convinced that the truth at least is on the side of the poor, and sometimes that is all they have on their side."²⁷³

c. A Christian University in El Salvador

The university meant much to these Jesuits especially as a center of investigation of the problems of the country. Ellacuría wrote:

...what a university should be, consists of two considerations. The first and most obvious is that the university has to do with culture, knowledge, a particular exercise of intellectual reason. The second consideration, which is not so obvious and commonplace, is that, the university is a social reality and a social force, historically marked by what the society is like in which it lives. As a social force it should enlighten and transform that reality in which it lives and for which it should live...²⁷⁴

The inseparable concern of the university with society marked a continuous struggle of the six Jesuits and the UCA in general. The Jesuits bore a double responsibility of their university to be a place of a thorough scientific investigation and of a public trust as well. The six Jesuits established a center of public opinion as well as a center of theological reflection. They valued greatly historical data. They read these historical data within a framework of historical progress of the country. Political propaganda was not their interest. Besides, they obviously did not belong to any political party.

Ellacuría wrote extensively about the history of El Salvador between 1969-1989. His theological synthesis introduced a theological-historical concept of "the crucified

²⁷³Sobrinho, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 26-27.

²⁷⁴Ibid., 38.

people" who revealed in an extraordinary way the presence of God among the poor today. Segundo Montes compiled a series of studies on the problems of the refugees and dislocated people because of the civil war in El Salvador. Martín-Baró presented a psychological analysis of the prolonged war in El Salvador and the psychological trauma on the people as its result. Again, their commitment was to reveal the reality of the country with its dark side to the public of El Salvador in order to manifest the real problem of violence, war and oppression upon many poor that became worse because of the civil war. Accordingly, Ramón Moreno pointed out the need of liberation and a spirituality as well as an evangelical mission that would meet this challenge.

The six Jesuits saw that the poor and the landless had always been the victims of the political process of the country. Therefore, they supported many people or groups who had projects for the betterment of life of the poor. On the other hand, they criticized those who caused the miserable life of the poor. Sobrino noted that in 1971 the UCA published a book on a famous teachers' strike which had supported the teachers' case and which verbalized the demand of an agrarian reform as a necessary solution to the problem of the country. In 1972, the UCA published another book analyzing and denouncing the electoral fraud of the presidential elections. Since then, the people realized that the injustice in the country could not be resolved through an election alone. In 1976, Ellacuría openly criticized president Arturo Molina on his policy about the agrarian reform and he published an editorial in the journal ECA to discuss his views.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵Thomas L. Schubeck explained more extensively Ellacuría's thought on the reality of land distribution in El Salvador in his book Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models and Norms (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 116-127. According to Schubeck, it was one of the major concerns of

The six Jesuits continuously spoke out about the reality of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, lack of education and health, about repression and violation of human rights by the government, the army and about those violation committed specifically by the FMLN. Unceasingly, they spoke about the truth of the war, about the unhealthy dependence on the U.S.A., about the emerging importance of the popular movements including their mistakes. In 1987, the UCA began an institute of public opinion directed by Martín Baró. This institute soon gained an enormous credibility as the most objective source of information about what Salvadorans were thinking, and received a wide acknowledgement from the people, politicians, analysts, journalists, ambassadors and many other international institutions who came to UCA to listen to the truth about the country. The visitors who came to the UCA did not always agree with the report of the UCA, however Sobrino observed that almost all of them recognized the desire for truth on behalf of the UCA.²⁷⁶ Indeed, the six Jesuits worked hard to reach the heart of the reality itself.

Ellacuría clarified the position of the University within this particular social context. He wrote:

There is no abstract and consistent answer here. A university cannot always and in every place be the same. We should always look at our peculiar historical reality. For us in El Salvador the *historical reality* is that we are part of the Third World...What does a university do, immerse in this reality? Transform it? Yes...But how is this done? The university must carry out this commitment with the means uniquely at its disposal: we as an intellectual community must analyze causes: use

Ellacuría and that later brought him to his assassination.

26. ²⁷⁶Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador,

imagination and creativity together to discover remedies; communicate to our constituencies a consciousness that inspires the freedom of self-determination; educate professionals with a conscience, who will be the immediate instruments of such transformation; and continually hone an educational institution that is academically excellent and ethically oriented.²⁷⁷

The reality of El Salvador as it was presented by the UCA was a real challenge for those who put their personal or group interest above the poor majority. The government and the armed forces of El Salvador failed to listen to the truth of the country and the suffering of the poor majority. The government could not challenge its own understanding of the problem of the country in the face of the report from the six Jesuits of the UCA that was supported by a good number of data and public opinion. On the contrary, the six Jesuits became a real intellectual threat to them. Later, the government accused the six Jesuits of "poisoning the mind of the Salvadorans" and accordingly they were considered a serious threat to "national interests and security".

2. The Six Jesuits Took Concrete Steps as Mediator for a Dialogue

The six murdered Jesuits strongly took the stand of mediator to enhance a peaceful dialogue for the sake of the civilians, the poor-victims of the political conflicts in El Salvador. In contrast, were the military approaches enforced by the government of El Salvador and the U.S. government.²⁷⁸ The six murdered Jesuits did everything they could

²⁷⁷Ibid., 149.

²⁷⁸Montgomery explaining the significant of November 1989 offensive in San Salvador wrote "...the offensive exposed the utter failure of nine years of U.S. policy. Apart from the Armed Forces' incompetence, it soon became clear that 'professionalization'--teaching the army to respect human rights and subordinating itself to civilian authority--was an illusion. On the fourth night of the offensive, an army unit of the Atlacatl battalion, trained by U.S. Green Berets, entered the

to facilitate the dialogue between political parties, the government and the FMLN. They spoke to the FMLN leaders, to some members of the government, to many politicians and diplomats and also to some military officers. They spoke with president Cristiani, the president of El Salvador at that time. They invited Cristiani in September 19, 1989, to join the UCA on an occasion of conferring an honorary doctorate on the president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias for his work of peace.²⁷⁹ Cristiani knew the six Jesuits quite well and knew what they were proposing which was a more human and more Christian way to resolve the conflict for the sake of the victims who are mostly poor civilians. Amidst these various efforts to approach leaders of the political parties, their basic concern was to support the mass of ordinary people, poor civilians. What was important to them is the betterment of the life of the poor who form the majority of the Salvadoran people.²⁸⁰

The Jesuits made themselves quite clear that it was not their role to support a

grounds of the Jesuit-run Central American University and killed six priest-scholars, including the rector and vice-rector, their house keeper, and her daughter. This single act would have an impact both within and beyond El Salvador that was at least as great as the offensive itself." Ignacio Martín Baró and Rodolfo Cardenal added that the brutal massacre of these Jesuits "...was one of the determining elements that changed the political orientation in Washington." See Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 219, 5.

²⁷⁹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 23-24.

²⁸⁰Ellacuría commented in 1983: "Neither side in the war appears to doubt that it can remain in it for a long time and even that it could not triumph when conditions are more favorable; neither side, and the United States least of all, is inclined to bring to the fore the interests of the majority of the Salvadoran people. Both sides defend models of society very distant from each other and both think that it is only from a position of power that they can guarantee their own model. Bearing in mind the principal actors who would take part in negotiations and the problems that must be resolved within them, one must speak of difficult negotiations. But this does not mean that they should be impossible." Ignacio Ellacuría, "Las Dificiles Negociaciones en El Salvador," El País, October 7, 1983, cited in Whitfield, Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador, 291.

political party, a particular government or even a particular popular movement, but to judge them and support anything in them which helped bring justice and peace to the people. This statement was in agreement with the invitation of the Second Vatican Council. The fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote: "With loyalty to the Gospel in the fulfillment of its mission in the world, the Church, whose duty it is to foster and elevate all that is true, all that is good, and all that is beautiful in the human community, consolidates peace among human beings for the glory of God"²⁸¹ In many ways, the six murdered Jesuits had kept alive and were developing the concern of Archbishop Romero who had been murdered in 1980. For three years Romero was Archbishop of San Salvador denouncing the oppression, kidnapping and killings of the poor people by the government and armed forces of El Salvador. Romero said that political processes must be judged according to whether they are or are not good for the people.

This peace movement immediately met many difficulties and challenges because of the growing violence in the war. The worst issue was the political legitimization of violence. The policy of Counter-Insurgency was practiced unreluctantly by the government of El Salvador and was supported widely by U.S. military aid, training and advice.²⁸² The result

²⁸¹ Gaudium et Spes, no. 76 in Austin Flannery, O.P., gen. ed., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 984-985.

²⁸² In the introduction to Tommie Sue Montgomery's book, Ignacio Martín Baró and Rodolfo Cardenal noted: "As Montgomery well demonstrates, the Reagan administration had three objectives with its policy toward Central America: to depose the revolutionary government of Nicaragua, to establish a permanent military base in Honduras, and to defeat the Salvadoran FMLN militarily--all of which was done, of course, with the justification of promoting democracy in these countries. Five years after the Reagan decade, it is obvious from the blood and destruction, from the death and suffering that this militaristic policy scattered over Central America, that the policy was a failure." See Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace, 5.

was a massive killings of civilians. By the time that Archbishop Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980, death squads and the army had murdered five to eight hundred people each month for political reasons.²⁸³ This cruel policy showed a developing incapability of the government to protect its people. Death squads and the armed forces had created a "culture of fear" and practically perpetuated the civil war. Romero condemned this cruel policy as "the mysticism of violence". As a result, proposals for a dialogue to resolve this political-social problem and to stop the growing number of the civilian victims became almost impossible. On the contrary, the proposal of the six Jesuits to solve the conflict through dialogue became a threat especially for the government, since the government believed that the dialogue would only show its failure to take total control of the country and to eliminate any form of challenge from any other party.

3. To Grow in an Ignatian Spirituality

In order to understand better the life and the mission of the six murdered Jesuits who belonged to the Jesuit province of Central America, we should know about the international apostolic group called the society of Jesus and its Ignatian spirituality. Our knowledge about the mission of the Society of Jesus in general will help us to understand the spiritual roots of their concern and the "contextualization" they made to respond to the reality of El Salvador in very concrete ways.

²⁸³Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 35.

a. An Ignatian Way of Following Jesus

The six Jesuits were assigned to do their apostolic work at the UCA. As Jesuits, they lived in an Ignatian spirituality that from the beginning of Jesuit formation as a novice is introduced to a concern for evangelical perfection and a special affection for the Church.²⁸⁴ The Jesuit formation begins with approximately two years of spiritual formation according to the Ignatian spirituality. Within this two years, novices learn the spirituality of the founder, Ignatius of Loyola. The most important part of this formation is the thirty-day Retreat according to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius maintain a focus on an act of following the poor Jesus as a response to the saving work of God for all human beings. The starting point is God or more precisely the grace of God to us that makes us understand who we are. This leads to the most important prayer petition in the Spiritual Exercises "...to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely"²⁸⁵. In freedom and with the grace of God, the exercitants are expected to come to a concrete decision of a way of life that goes along with the mission of Christ, for the praise of God.

²⁸⁴See the notes of St. Ignatius on the "Rules for Thinking with the Church" in Louis J. Puhl, S.J., The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), 157-161.

²⁸⁵The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, no. 104 in Ibid., 49. It is also obvious that the surviving member of this murdered community, Jon Sobrino, "... in his Christology, devotes extended attention to not only the Christological dogmas of the Christian tradition but also to the contemporary significance of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola." See Craig Nesson of the American Academy of Religion's meeting in Craig L. Nesson, Orthopraxis or Heresy: The North American Theological Response to Latin American Liberation Theology (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar Press, 1989), 403-404 and Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 311-345, 396-424.

In the Spiritual Exercises the act of following Christ is to be done within the Church, "the hierarchical Church". Indeed, the Jesuits profess a vow of obedience to the Pope as the head of the Church. They are ready to be missioned by the pope wherever the Pope believes that there is a greater need of their presence. Therefore, the mission or the assignment of the six Jesuits is a part of a bigger apostolic plan of the Society of Jesus.

b. Pedro Arrupe and the Promotion of Faith and Justice

Previous to the killings of the Jesuits in El Salvador, the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus under Pedro Arrupe came to a conclusion that "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another"²⁸⁶. Arrupe led the Society of Jesus to investigate the State of the Order and define how the Ignatian rules should be applied in the modern world.

These Jesuit leaders found that this is a new challenge to their apostolic mission in our modern world. And so they added an observation of their contemporary world, saying

...Today more than two billion human beings have no knowledge of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He sent, yet feel an increasing hunger for the God they already adore in depths of their hearts without knowing Him explicitly....a world increasingly interdependent but, for all that, divided by injustice: injustice not only personal but institutionalized: built into economic, social, and political structures that dominate the life of nations and the international

²⁸⁶Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation in 1974-1975, no. 6 in Society of Jesus, Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus: An English Translation of the Official Latin Texts of the General Congregations and of the Accompanying Papal Documents (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 411-412.

community.²⁸⁷

The six Jesuits of the UCA took this mission seriously and applied "the service of faith and the promotion of justice" in the social context of the Church in El Salvador.

In El Salvador, the Society of Jesus soon harvested a challenge of persecutions of its members. However, it was not unpredictable. Arrupe had already said to the Jesuits that taking the side of the poor needs life's commitment and sacrifice, but it was already performed in the life of Jesus.²⁸⁸ In El Salvador, only two years after the 32nd General Congregation, a Salvadoran Jesuit, Rutilio Grande was assassinated. He had worked among the poor and clearly denounced the repressive policies of the government at that time. The assassination of Romero three years after the death of Grande affirmed the violent policy of the government against all who denounced or opposed them. Grande and Romero were two Christians among many other Christian Salvadorans who could not keep silence over the oppression and killings of their fellow Christians. Keeping their concerns alive and developing their idea of siding with the poor, denouncing the unjust policies of the government and working to mediate the peace process between political

²⁸⁷Ibid.

²⁸⁸Pedro Arrupe, S.J., "The Jesuit and The Christ of the Spiritual Exercises" in Pedro Arrupe, Other Apostolates Today (St. Louis: The Institutes of Jesuit Sources, 1981), 255-274. In 1970-1971, Fr. Pedro Arrupe gave talks to the Jesuits in Rome, Spain, the United States, East Asia, and India on this topic. It will become an important focus of the Jesuits' apostolate of the service of faith and the promotion of justice of the up-coming 32nd Jesuit General Congregation. Joseph O'Hare, S.J. states that "From the very origins of the Society of Jesus nearly four hundred fifty years ago, Jesuits have declared that the character of our life (*vitae nostrae ratio*) is that Jesuits are to be 'men crucified to the world and to whom the world is crucified'." Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 176-177. Also read Maier's analysis on the underlying Ignatian spirituality that influenced profoundly both Rahner's and Ellacuría's thoughts. Martin Maier, "La Influencia de Karl Rahner en la Teología de Ignacio Ellacuría," RLT XIII/39 (September-December 1996): 238-245.

apositions cost the six Jesuits of the UCA the same price, their own lives.

4. The Six Jesuits were Accused by the Government and Armed Forces

From what the six Jesuits preached and denounced, and from their ministry which focused on the betterment of the poor and the oppressed, the six Jesuits received many accusations. There were many accusations against them especially from the side of the ruling party, the government of El Salvador. Being in a country that has "taken so many advantages of an ideological democracy" and justified by U.S. military aid, the six Jesuits were accused of being communists-Marxists. This is not an isolated single case and presumably reasonable since it has happened repetitively in the country as well as in many other "democratic" countries of Central and South America. Under the same accusations, many Salvadorans were murdered. Even the Church was accused of being communist in El Salvador as was Pope Paul VI, after he published the encyclical Populorum Progressio in 1967.

Under this accusation and many others, such as they were anti-patriotic, atheists, liberationists, "internacionalistas" and supporters of the ideological front of the opposition party of the Government, especially the FMLN, they were targeted to be eliminated and silenced. However, their continuous presence, their persistent message and their consistency made them publicly well known as open and frank as Christians. These accusations were accompanied by all kinds of threats through phone calls, anonymous letters, newspapers, radio and even many "physical" attacks on the university and the Jesuit residence, their place of living since 1976. But, for the six Jesuits, these threats were

only means that helped them to clarify their thoughts and to become aware more of the cost of their evangelical message. The final threats against the six Jesuits before they were murdered were broadcasts on the radio.²⁸⁹ As a matter of fact, since November 12th, 1989, all the transmitters were in government's hands.

Telling the truth about the situation of the country, urging a dialogue between the opposition political parties, such as between the Government and the FMLN, and proclaiming the Good News for the poor finally became dangerous but courageous acts. Obviously, they could cost their lives since the power-holders could not see them as something good for the country. On the contrary, from the eyes of the government and armed forces, they became a real threat. From the previous two decades of history in El Salvador, the six Jesuits and the people in general learned that there was continuous possibility that the government and the armed forces would do the same to them as they did against many other Salvadorans. Grande and Romero were assassinated. Even Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, four North American missionaries, were murdered in December 2, 1980.²⁹⁰ Reflecting on the life and death of Romero, Ellacuría wrote: "The true people of God in a world dominated by sin cannot but be persecuted, because as people of God it seeks to negate sin and to establish a Reign that to a great extent is the negation of existing structures. That is what Jesus proclaimed, and he made persecution a clear sign of the happiness that comes with belonging to God's

²⁸⁹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 21-29.

²⁹⁰Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 153-156.

Reign."²⁹¹

D. Through Death to Life

It should be highlighted that the six Jesuits were killed because of their involvement in the religious-social-political life of the country which also means keeping their calls to work for and with "the people of God" in El Salvador. They believed that this involvement was an integral part of their Christian faith. Above all, they believed that having faith in Jesus implied responsibility to make His life, message and preferential ministry historically relevant ; and that being His disciple or His follower meant to keep Him alive in our world today. In fact, a Eucharistic remembrance, that was inseparable from the persecution of Jesus, can be understood as one of the most intimate and friendly requests on behalf of Jesus and His disciples to which would keep his mission in our memory and our life as Christians wherever we live.

There are some important issues which are raised by their deaths. Their deaths teach us a committed way of following Jesus in our world today. This commitment does not mean primarily to *imitate* Jesus but *to follow* his life's example in praising God by interpreting his message and ministry that was marked strongly by his preferential option for the poor, the outcast, the gentiles or the oppressed in general in his society, and to do this from within the context in which we live. Jesus' message contains a proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God and denunciation of unjust and oppressive-excluding

²⁹¹ Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 112-113.

acts. It involves concrete actions and ministerial preference. The world of many poor and oppressed and the civil war were the social situation where the six Jesuits lived. Their lives and deaths provoked a moral outrage that kept the Salvadoran armed forces on the defensive and forced the concessions at the negotiating table. Finally, their death speeded up the process of a peace agreement in El Salvador especially since the government began losing its credibility due to the international publicity and strong international pressure for peace.²⁹² The peace accord of the twelve year civil war came to its completion by the end of 1992.

Their death demonstrated consistency and coherency between their message, their theological reflection and their life. With many people calling them "martyrs of the UCA", there was a clear connection between their solidarity and practical capability to discern the true Word of God and their total commitment of life. The way they lived and died and the way the people of God responded, re-introduced a basic element of "Christian martyrdom", that is, a wide involvement on behalf of the people of God who know and are edified by "their martyrs". They affirmed their faith in God in the face of the death of their "martyrs" with their burning hope. This is also known as "popular sanctification". Similar to the case of Romero, who has been called "the saint of America", the Jesuits gave a strong witness as Christians, to live and die as followers of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote "If we

²⁹²Peterson noted that: "After voting more than four billion dollars in aid to El Salvador over the previous decade, on October 19, 1990, the U.S. Congress voted to reduce military aid to El Salvador by half, largely in response to the killing of the Jesuits. Cynthia J. Arnson, 'Conscience Vote,' The Nation 251/17 (November 19, 1990): 584. President Bush ordered the rest of the aid reinstated on January 16, 1991." See Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 116 n. 22.

live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Rome 14:8)

Their death shows that the power of life and love cannot be subdued by the ultimate violent power of death as it was performed in the killings of the six Jesuits. On the contrary, the killings strengthen and enhance the power of love to those "who are dying before their time", and they produce a deeper faith in the God of life and generate more hope and joy especially through a continuous "Eucharistic remembrance" of those who have died for others as the Gospel of John affirmed "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

The death of the six Jesuits shed lights on their life and message just as their life and message explained their death. They foresaw the possibility of being killed especially by those who accused them because of what they had been denouncing and revealing in their writings and teachings. We learn, similarly, as the four gospels narrate the prediction of the passion of Jesus, that he would be condemned to death. It was foreseen in some way by Jesus and his disciples. The cause was Jesus' message about God, the Father and that the Kingdom of God was present especially among "the poor", including the gentiles. The political and social situation at that time made it impossible for them to avoid the risk of being silenced violently. Referring to Bultmann on the execution of Jesus, Sobrino was convinced that the killings of the six Jesuits were not a mistake. "There were no just reasons for eliminating them, but there was a necessity... It is the necessary reaction of the

idols of death towards anyone who dares to touch them."²⁹³

Their death in the service of the Gospel, was a strong testimony that we are a pilgrim Church, disciples of Christ who bear witness of his love for life in solidarity with those who suffer while defending the human rights. At this point their death is a crucial part that confirms the prophetic mission of the Church today.²⁹⁴ Indeed, their death has made their life as committed Christians exemplary.

Conclusion

The killing of these six Jesuits and their co-workers has voiced once again the story of many other killings against the poor and oppressed and those who care for them. In their lives and deaths they joined a procession of martyrs. As Jesuit priests and scholars, they dedicated themselves to reasoned exposition of the university as a place for the truth that might promote greater justice and peace for their fellow Salvadorans. In writings and teachings they explored the effects of political violence, the meaning of the Gospel in a suffering and conflictive world, the way to peace at all cost, the presence of God's grace and an overwhelming hope in the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation. As spokesmen of justice in the face of massive inequalities, continuous threats and institutionalized violence, they realized the possibility of a violent death yet they did not take the option of

²⁹³Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 24.

²⁹⁴See pastoral document of the Bishop Conference of Latin America in Puebla no. 92 in Episcopado Latinoamericano, Conferencias Generales Rio de Janeiro, Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo: Documentos Pastorales-Introducción, Textos, Índice Temático (Chile: San Pablo, 1993), 271-272.

escape and their simple reason was the fact that "Because we have much to do, there is much work."²⁹⁵ Finally, it is important to remember their underlying faith commitment in Jesus Christ, the history-making potential of faith in Christ today that was witnessed powerfully by their martyrial death and therefore strongly indicates their extraordinary understanding of Jesus Christ in our world today. Sobrino himself had previously asserted that in order to know Christ one must first follow Christ. Everything we know or say about Jesus must be continually confirmed, clarified, and perhaps corrected in the praxis of living his vision within the changing contexts of history.²⁹⁶ Therefore, it is understandable that both personally and theologically, the martyred Jesuits made a great impact in Sobrino's life and ministry of doing christology from the reality of the victims.

Let us now step by step examine some christological issues and emphases brought up by Sobrino, especially those that reflect and take seriously the fact of the killing not only of the six-Jesuits but also of many poor and the role this plays in the evolution of his christological method. I will argue that Sobrino takes "martyrdom" as an historical consequence of and a possible criterion for evaluating approaches which understand the act of following Jesus Christ in terms of solidarity which seeks to "take the crucified peoples down from the cross." Finally, this will shed light on or explicate the hypothesis that important changes took place in Sobrino's christology especially through the experience of the death of his Jesuit brothers and their co-workers.

²⁹⁵Instituto de Estudios Centroamericanos and El Rescate, The Jesuit Assassinations: The Writings of Ellacuría, Martín Baró and Segundo Montes, with a Chronology of the Investigation, 20.

²⁹⁶Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 359-362

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF JON SOBRINO AFTER THE KILLING:

A CHRISTOLOGY OF MERCY

I. New Emphases on Martyrdom and the Poor as "Crucified People"

A. The Place of the Killing and Its Significant Role

Just before the tenth anniversary of the killing of the six Jesuits and their co-workers, Sobrino indicated his continuous endeavor to keep and share the memory of Jesuit martyrs. Recently he focused his discussion on the light of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and particularly on the act of following Jesus Christ which he called an "illuminated act". The Spirit gives us light to see the truth and at the same time to unmask all lies. An illuminated act of following Jesus, therefore, is to carry on this work.²⁹⁷ The memory of the martyrs is a remembrance of an illuminated act of following Jesus. Jesus' love to the end as demonstrated in their lives and deaths is Good News.²⁹⁸ Beyond a methodological rethinking, remembrance of the killing has become a driving force to know Christ better

²⁹⁷Sobrino explains that the gifts of the Holy Spirit give light to our senses to know the truth. To be awakened from our sleep, to stop oppressing the truth and to unmask the lies are perceived as necessary and urgent for our world today. The Spirit gives us light to help us to know the truth and at the same time to unmask all lies. An illuminated act of following Jesus implies memory and imagination. The memory of the body of Christ which has always been present especially in the form of crucifixion can be dangerous. Yet it is undoubtedly important not to forget, to tame or to manipulate Jesus Christ. Therefore, it makes sense to keep the memory of the victims but also the oppressors. Imagination is needed to keep learning that unmistakable presence, yet it is not easy. It is the holy Spirit that makes it possible. Sobrino, "1998 Año del Espíritu Santo: Luz que ilumina la Vida Cristiana," *Diakonia* 87 (July-September 1998): 5-8.

²⁹⁸Sobrino, "Jesús como Eu-Aggelion," *Diakonia* 83 (September 1997): 70-88 and "1998 Año del Espíritu Santo: Luz que ilumina la Vida Cristiana," *Diakonia* 87 (July-September 1998): 5-8.

especially in the reality of the crucified people and "to exercise mercy" on behalf of the poor. For Sobrino this is basic: "What is most fundamental is to introduce the truth, mercy and solidarity in the reality where we live".²⁹⁹ Let us now study these determining elements for Sobrino's "christology of mercy". We begin by looking at the impact of the killing and its christological significance; then we will consider Sobrino's attempt to address the emergence of new christological issues and emphases, such as martyrdom and the presence of Christ crucified in history, the radicalization of a theological locus, and an act of following Jesus as solidarity to take the Crucified one down from the cross as well as to combat the anti-kingdom. These major issues and elements of his post-killing christological reflections show changes in the development of Sobrino's christology, which now is properly called "a christology of mercy".

B. The Crucial Importance of the Event in the Development of Sobrino's

Christology

The killing of the six Jesuits and their helpers left a great personal impact on Sobrino. Their death has brought him more deeply into the reality and the fate of the poor as well as into their life so filled with remarkable hope and joy. "Their lives function as a 'concrete universal' of a whole people of the poor, the whole crucified Third World, and especially of those who lovingly and freely devote their lives to the liberation and salvation

²⁹⁹"Hablando con Jon Sobrino: Hacer Creible la Fe," *Mission Abierta* 6 (June 1993): 7.

of others."³⁰⁰ Their deaths made their commitment as Jesuits, as believers in the good news of Jesus Christ and as Christians inspired by the Spirit, outstanding, and therefore exemplary for their fellow Christians.

From November 13, 1989 on, Sobrino was in Hua Hin, Thailand giving a course on Christology. Late at night on November 16, he was awakened to receive the news of the killing of his six Jesuits brothers and their helpers. He has shared his immediate reaction, his deep sense of loss and sadness when he wrote:

I spent several hours, or rather several days, unable to react. As I said at the beginning, on other tragic occasions we recovered our courage fairly quickly and were fired with a sense of service, which made us active, in some way alleviating our sorrow by pushing the scenes of terror out of our heads. The masses were celebrated for the martyrs even filled us with joy. But this time, for me, it was different. The distance made me feel helpless and alone. And the six murdered Jesuits were my community, they were really my family. We had lived, worked, suffered, and enjoyed ourselves together for many years. Now they were dead.³⁰¹

What had happened to the poor people he served, to his friends and committed Christians such as Romero and his Jesuit friend Grande, eventually happened to his closest Jesuit

³⁰⁰Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, viii. Sobrino emphasized that the 1980's was the most significant period in his personal and intellectual life culminating in the killing of his Jesuit friends of the UCA together with their co-workers. This culminating event was preceded by another major event in El Salvador which was the assassination Monseñor Romero and Rutilio Grande a few years before. Romero "reorganized" his life, pastoral concern and fully opted the poor as the center of his pastoral work especially after the assassination of Grande. This is similarly representative for the changes in Sobrino's life, pastoral concern and "radicalization" in his christological reflections through the important periods of 1975-1977 (Period of the "martyrdom" of Grande and the massacres of those years), 1977-1980 (Period of brutal repressions against the people, killings of priests, nuns culminated in the assassination of Romero), 1981-1989 (Period of massacres at Rio Sumpul and El Mozote culminated in the assassinations at the UCA. Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", El Salvador, 30 June 1999, 1 and Ignacio Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1989), 89-93.

³⁰¹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 6.

friends of the same house who shared the same concerns, joys and struggles. They were murdered in one night while he was away. In 1991, writing about "How my mind has changed", Sobrino shared that he was gradually awakened "from the sleep of inhumanity". He demonstrated his growing awareness of the reality of the poor. He wrote:

At this point, I was fortunate to find others who had already awakened from the sleep of inhumanity, among them Ignacio Ellacuría and Archbishop Oscar Romero, to name just two great Salvadoran Christians, martyrs and friends. But beyond those encounters, little by little I came face to face with the truly poor, and I am convinced that they were the ones who brought about the final awakening. Once awakened, my questions--and especially my answers to questions--became radically different. The basic question came to be: Are we really human and if we are believers, is our faith human?³⁰²

There are two significant points that indicate his growing understanding. First, through the killing, he came to a better understanding of the truly poor in such away that this new understanding helped him to see and be convinced that the truly poor are the ones who brought about the final awakening. Secondly, the tragic reality of the poor, for him, finally raised a major question about our humanity, or how are we to be fully human? Yet at the same time, the life of the poor and the victims is also amazingly gracious and illuminating especially to those who struggle with them.³⁰³ These points will be developed greatly in Sobrino's christological reflections as well as in his book written after the killing.

In 1991, Sobrino published his third christological book entitled Jesus the Liberator in which he gathered together his most developed christological reflection. This book has become a major contribution to modern christology especially to the area of

³⁰²Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 3.

³⁰³See Misión Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

"liberation christology". In its introduction, Sobrino explained the reason and points of departure for his reflection. The two major points of departure, which are closely related, are Jesus and the reality of El Salvador that he called "a crucified people living in hope". Through the second point of departure, he showed that the process of writing received many challenges and became uneasy, since in fact he was still overwhelmed by the killing of his Jesuit brothers and their helpers. He writes:

To close this long introduction, I should say that the process of writing this book has been a slow one, owing to the situation in El Salvador. To put it simply, there has not been much time to read and research all that I should have liked and should have done. This book has been written in the middle of war, of threats, of conflict and persecution, producing emergencies requiring an immediate response, and therefore innumerable interruptions to the work schedule. The murder-martyrdom of my brother Jesuits, of Julia Elba and Celina Ramos, left my heart frozen and virtually empty. But this is not the whole, or even the major significance of this book being written in El Salvador.

The reality of this country has made me think a lot, and has also helped me to think about Jesus Christ. This is why I began this introduction by asking about the most appropriate title: Jesus liberator or crucified. In any case, so much tragedy and so much hope, so much sin and so much grace provide a powerful hermeneutical backdrop for understanding Christ and give the gospel the taste of reality.³⁰⁴

His goal now is to proclaim "mercy" on behalf of the crucified people and to trust the God of Jesus as the only source of hope for our historical reality even if this historical reality is marked by many tragic events. This is finally important to help make sense of the life and faith in the midst of many suffering and dying poor of our world today. Sobrino explains:

Remembering my dear Jesuit brother Ignacio Ellacuría, rector of José Simeón Cañas Central American University, who was murdered with five other Jesuits and two pious women on November 16, 1989, I have learned that there is nothing as vital in order to live as a human being than to exercise mercy on behalf of a

7-8. ³⁰⁴Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth.

crucified people, and nothing is more humanizing than to believe in the God of Jesus. As I have seen this way of life become very real in many Salvadorans, in many other Latin Americans, and in many who sympathize with us in various places, another new thing I have learned in El Salvador is the importance of saying "Thank you." Then life and faith still make sense.³⁰⁵

Above all, for Sobrino, the memory of their life and their death brings two important calls. First, there is a call to continue to build a real Salvadoran church which was sanctified by the work of many committed Christians and even by their blood of love. Secondly, there is a call to continue the struggle for a transformation of the historical reality or as verbalized by Ignacio Ellacuría as "to reverse the history".³⁰⁶

Finally, at the bottom of all of those significant points, the killing showed the truth of the cost of discipleship. Following Jesus in practice is one of the most important teachings of liberation christology. This theme had been present continuously in Sobrino's writings.³⁰⁷ In his Christology at the Crossroads, Sobrino speaks about faith and discipleship based on the historical Jesus and the following of Jesus as the fundamental

³⁰⁵Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 11.

³⁰⁶See Sobrino's "Letter to Ignacio Ellacuría" for the eight anniversary of the killing in November 16, 1997 in ECA LII (December 1997): 1086. Sobrino writes: "Cuando les recordamos a ustedes, Ellacu, recordamos a una Iglesia que era--y debe ser--ante todo salvadoreña y real. Y recordamos también a una Iglesia santa, santificada por el trabajo y la entrega de cada día, y santificada con la sangre de amor... Lo que pedimos a ustedes, sobre todo a los mártires salvadoreños, es que no nos dejen de la mano en estas dos tareas de revertir la historia y de construir una Iglesia de los pobres realmente salvadoreña."

³⁰⁷It is worth to read a small book by Andrés Gallego, El Seguimiento de Jesús en la Cristología de Jon Sobrino (Lima-Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1991). This book is based on his thesis presented to the Jesuit school of theology at Belo Horizonte, Brazil. The author did a research on the idea of following Jesus in the christology of Sobrino as a relevant theological reflection and adequate to the life of faith of the people. His immediate context is the people of God in Perú. See page 12 and also Jeffrey Klaiber, S.J., La Iglesia en el Perú (Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú Fondo Editorial, 1996).

moral exigency.³⁰⁸ In Jesus in Latin America, Sobrino explained the following of Jesus as discernment.³⁰⁹

In his writings after the killing, Sobrino directly refers to the Ignatian spirituality understood from the perspective of the need of the people today and formulated by the Jesuit representatives, as a major inspiration lived by the six murdered Jesuits. This spirituality is centered in following Jesus who carried his cross. Sobrino writes: "Jesuits like them have proved the truth of something else our 33rd General Congregation said: 'We cannot carry out our mission of service to the faith and the promotion of justice without paying the price.'"³¹⁰ Taking seriously this commitment to promote justice and serve the poor, Sobrino observed, needs much sacrifice. He recalls what had happened after the 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuit Superiors (December 2, 1974-March 7, 1975) that pinned down its mission as "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice in an absolute requirement":

³⁰⁸Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 115-131, 299-307, 359-362.

³⁰⁹Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 131-139.

³¹⁰The Jesuit representatives of the 33rd General Congregation in 1983 explain: "...We have found these years an experience of grace and conversion for us individuals and as a body. We have made serious efforts to address realistically the issues of atheism and indifference in our secularized world. Our religious life has been enriched by the opportunity to 'labor with' Jesus in the greater service of the Kingdom. This closeness to the Christ of the Exercises has brought us closer to the poor with whom he identified himself. At times it has also brought us the persecution for the sake that he promised his followers. Our service of faith and promotion of justice has made the Society confront the mystery of the cross: some Jesuits have been exiled, imprisoned or put to death in their work of evangelization. Some have been prevented from attending this Congregation." Society of Jesus, Documents of the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: An English Translation of the Official Latin Texts of the General Congregation and of Related Documents (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984), part II, no. 31, 54-55.

In the last fourteen years since these words were said, many Jesuits have been threatened, persecuted and imprisoned in the Third World. I believe the number of the Jesuits murdered is about twenty, seven of them in El Salvador--Fr. Rutilio Grande and now the six from the UCA. Although it is tragic, it needs repeating: these crosses are what show that the choice made by the Society was correct, Christian and relevant to the needs of today. These crosses also show above all that this choice has been put into practice. And again this is no small benefit their martyrdom has given the Society of Jesus.

I believe, therefore, that they were Ignatians and Jesuits of the sort the Society wants today. Without fuss, sugary words, or triumphalism, they felt themselves to be Jesuits, again more in deed than word...³¹¹

The discussion on the act of following Jesus came to its fullness in Sobrino's Jesus the Liberator. Sobrino came to a conclusion that Jesus Christ is the liberator and therefore the good news. It is important to realize that Jesus' mission is good news and therefore, Jesus himself who carries it out is good news. This theme also had been present in his earlier writings and continues to be discussed after the killing. Jesus the liberator and the good news become an important christological point and even more crucial after the killing. For Sobrino, the act of following Jesus all the way to the cross as done by his murdered people, friends and predecessors only showed the truth of Jesus as good news for them and for the people they served. Explaining the purpose and content of his Jesus the Liberator Sobrino affirms:

The *content* of this christology is Jesus Christ in his totality... In this volume, I set

³¹¹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 20. Peter H. Kolvenbach, the present Jesuit general, spoke in 1990 that "In the last fifteen years alone, thirty-two Jesuits have been killed because of their ecclesiastical or humanitarian activities. They cannot all be called martyrs in the technical sense of the word, since not all of them were killed out of hatred for the faith. In Latin America, the continent where we have seen the highest number of our brothers killed, their commitment to and with the poor has the effect of provoking to violence those people who do not want to change unjust social structures. This was also true in the case of the six Jesuits of the University of Central America in San Salvador." Peter H. Kolvenbach, Men of God. Men for Others: The Jesuits an Obedient Vanguard Confronting the Challenges of the Modern World. Interview by Renzo Giacomelli (United Kingdom: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 41.

out the life of Jesus in relation to three central dimensions of his life: his service to the *Kingdom of God*, his relationship to *God-the-Father* and his death on the cross. Throughout this I endeavor to stress the liberative, and so good-news, dimensions of both Jesus' *mission* and his *person*. Jesus' mission is good news (the Kingdom, God's mediation) and it is also good news that it is this very Jesus of Nazareth (God's mediator) who carries it out.³¹²

Sobrinó published his most recent reflection on following Jesus as a *locus* where the Spirit of God is strongly present. He explains that if Jesus' life is filled with the Spirit, then an act of following him in history can be and should be the dwelling place of the Spirit or at least a special place for the Spirit. Sobrinó gave several examples of faithful followers of Jesus such as Francis of Assisi who is still studied even by ecologists today, Dietrich Bonhoeffer who inspired this theology of following Jesus and demonstrated in his life his commitment to Christ, Archbishop Romero who convinced many Christians of the incarnation of Jesus' life in the reality of the poor today, and Ellacuría whose life and work had never ceased to analyze that insight from a pneumatological point of view. These people have brought creativity, newness and freedom to the Church. Indeed, the Spirit has illumined, inspired the church and continues to give strength and courage to many others to understand the truth of Jesus Christ.³¹³

The killing of the six Jesuits and their helpers gradually becomes the center of Sobrinó's theological/christological reflection. First of all, it brought him to the reality of

³¹²Sobrinó, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 6. See also Sobrinó, "Jesús Cómo Buena Noticia. Repercusiones para un Talante Evangélico," Sal Terrae (1988): 715-726. and Sobrinó, "Jesús cómo Eu-Aggelion," Diakonia 83 (September 1997): 70-88.

³¹³Sobrinó, "Luz Que Penetra las Almas: Espíritu de Dios y Seguimiento Lúcido de Jesús," Sal Terrae (January 1998): 8-11.

the poor in a more profoundly personal way. Secondly, it gives a anew and concrete understanding of the poor as his major *locus theologicus* especially articulated in the metaphor of the *crucified people* as well as what he also called the *martyred people*. His book Jesus the Liberator ends with the discussion of the death of Jesus and the crucified people while looking forward to his forthcoming volume that shall examine "the history of christologies and of faith in Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed as the Christ after his resurrection", or as indicated in his article "Jesús como Eu-Aggelion" it will take the experience of the victims as its point of departure.³¹⁴ Let us discuss these significant points further to better understand the place of the killing in the development of Sobrino's christology.

Sobrino crystallized the overwhelming memory of his murdered Jesuits friends and their co-workers and the impact of the event in a long, spontaneous and moving memoir, written shortly after the assassination. He openly reveals his own personal sense of loss and sincere gratitude of their exemplary Christian life and commitment. From the depth of this personal experience which also touched his faith, he rises to a hope and renewed faith in the loving and living God.

It seems that everything is against hope, but for me at least, where I see there has been great love, I see hope being born again. This is not a rational conclusion and perhaps not even theological. It is simply true: love produces hope and great love produces great hope...To keep going in the midst of such darkness is not at all easy, but it is something the poor and the martyrs help us to do so that it becomes

³¹⁴See Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 6, 254-273. Also his "Jesús cómo Eu-Aggelion," Diakonia 83 (September 1997) and a brief introduction in its table of contents.

possible. It is something we owe the poor and these martyrs.³¹⁵

It means also carrying on the vision and struggle his companions embodied: the service for the poor and their church, the commitment to justice and the solidarity with Christ crucified in history.

C. Christian Martyrdom and the Poor as "Crucified People"

Sobrino uses six christological themes which he developed in Jesus the Liberator. They are: first, the development of the understanding of Christian martyrdom; second, the historical Jesus as the main starting point of Christology; third, *Crucified people* as its *locus theologicus*; fourth, the *Crucified people* as the presence of Christ crucified in history; fifth, *Crucified people* as "people's martyrs"; and sixth, the *Crucified people* and the act of following Jesus today. Let us study those six themes with a special focus on indicating the influence of the killing of his six Jesuit friends and their co-workers for the cause of "the crucified people." The metaphor of the "crucified people" becomes a new key which subtly but critically reshapes Sobrino's christology, a christology that was done out of gratitude and love for their life and martyrial death.

³¹⁵Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 56. More than a decade before this killing amidst the suffering of his people, Sobrino wrote: "As Paul puts it, it is a 'hoping against hope' (Rm 4:18). Christian hope is not a hopeful optimism which looks *beyond* injustice, oppression, and death; it is a hope *against* injustice, oppression, and death. When the New Testament asks Christians to give an account of their hope (1 Pet 3:15), it is in the context of persecution. It is in a situation where injustice seems to triumph over goodness: 'If it should be God's will that you suffer, it is better to do so for good deeds than for evil ones' (1 Pet. 3:17). This simple verse expresses a profoundly Christian intuition: Hope arises precisely at the moment when it would seem obliged to disappear, at the moment when love and goodness fail to triumph." See Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 232.

1. The Development of the Understanding of Christian Martyrdom

Martyrdom is primarily a conscious and voluntary act to give a faithful witness even if one should undergo death for his/her belief. Historically there were at least two emphases in the understanding of martyrdom. *First*, an understanding that emphasizes on the physical suffering and death that was endured voluntarily in defense of the Christian belief. *Second*, an understanding that underlines a conscious act of deliberate choice. The bodily suffering and death was insisted on, for example, by Ignatius of Antioch (c. 116) as an antidote to docetist teaching that denied that Christ had a real body.³¹⁶ A martyr was one who perfectly imitated Christ in his suffering and death. On the other hand, Augustine said "It is the reason why, not the suffering that constitutes the martyr (*Martyrem non facit poena, sed causa*).³¹⁷ On the other hand, it is observable that the understanding of martyrdom has developed throughout the history of the Church down to our own contemporary situation. This development implies, therefore, a task for theologians as well as the people of God in general to interpret martyrdom according to their Christian faith in their particular situation. Beyond these various reasons, Sobrino urges us to rethink the methodological approach to Christian martyrdom especially through the death of Jesus, to

³¹⁶In the early Church for example among the Gnostics, there was a tendency, not primarily a formulated and unified doctrine, which considered the humanity and sufferings of the earthly Christ as apparent rather than real.

³¹⁷See Peterson, Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War, 93-117, also a brief explanation on the evolution of the understanding of martyrdom in the Christian realm could be found in Editorial Staff at the Catholic University of America, New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 9 (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1967), 312-313, and Juan Hernández Pico, "Martyrdom Today in Latin America: Stumbling-block, Folly and Power of God," Concilium 183 (1983): 37-42.

go back to Jesus in order to rethink all theological realities in terms of him.³¹⁸ Despite the official definition of martyrdom, he underlines the importance of going to the very basis of our faith which is Jesus Christ.

Before he was gunned down, Ignacio Martín-Baró, as it was narrated by a witness of his execution, shouted a statement of protest "This is unjust! You're rotten".³¹⁹ This voice pointed out the quality of the killing and that it was by no means justifiable. Christians of this century are obviously confronted with the problem of this kind of killing of Christians. Where do we stand? How do we understand this case in the light of the Gospel? What are we going to do to maintain our solidarity with those who "died for others"?

Sobrino points out that the many unjust deaths of Christians and of the poor in the Third-World have put us in a pastoral and theological dilemma. Christians need to speak up to make a claim from their own perspective of faith. This shows our solidarity with the victims and even more deeply it makes sense of our Christian faith, faced with the killings of those who have lived this shared faith in Jesus Christ and especially those whose life and "martyrial" death greatly resembles the life and "martyrial" death of Jesus. Sobrino asserts:

Latin America is the continent where, since Vatican II, more Christians have suffered violent death than any other. A theoretical argument has arisen about

³¹⁸Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 266 and Karl Rahner, "Dimensions of Martyrdom: A Plea for the Broadening of a Classical Concept," Concilium 183 (1983): 9-11.

³¹⁹Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 78.

whether to call them martyrs or not. What is important is not so much the name but the fact that if this problem is not solved we fall into the anomalous situation in which, on the one hand, martyrdom is the supremely Christian death, and on the other, those who today are killed in a way that most resembles Jesus' death are not held to share in this supreme death because they do not fulfill the canonical and dogmatic conditions for martyrdom. It is important for theological reasons, because in order to clarify it we have to look to Jesus: to his death, but also to his life; that is what he was killed for. This radically shifts the focus of the question and it now becomes: was Jesus himself a martyr or not?³²⁰

2. The Historical Jesus as the Main Starting Point for Christology

Sobrinho argues that our understanding of the historical Jesus is crucial for christological reflection. A Christology of liberation, elaborated from the standpoint of Latin America, stresses the historical Jesus over the Christ of faith.³²¹ There are three reasons which help us make this claim. *First*, Sobrinho observes that "In Latin America, Jesus is still an important reality; he is still present to the masses, unlike in Africa and Asia, and he is still actively present, unlike in Europe and the First World in general."³²² *Second*, Sobrinho writes that to grasp Jesus Christ in faith, we have to understand him as Good News, *eu-aggelion*, the appearance of the goodness of God (Tit. 3:4).³²³ It is important to remember that Christology should also be done out of gratitude and love. Accordingly, our traditional understanding of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* should also be understood as *amor, justitia, liberatio quaerens intellectum* as demanded by the historical

³²⁰Sobrinho, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 265.

³²¹*Ibid.*, 35.

³²²*Ibid.*, 4.

³²³*Ibid.*, 5.

reality that includes the poor of this world.³²⁴ *Third*, knowing Christ ultimately is following Christ. Christology finds itself looking towards the Christ who is Jesus of Nazareth.³²⁵

3. Crucified People as *Locus Theologicus*

Sobrino was in search for the "real presence" of Jesus Christ in our world today. He said that "it would be idle to say that Christ crucified has a body in history and not identify it in some way"³²⁶. Therefore he came to the historical reality of the world itself to see through human affairs a strong and continuous presence of the resurrected Christ, especially in the midst of the followers of Jesus and whoever suffered oppression and unjust death. His most striking experience is the reality of the people of El Salvador and the suffering and poverty of the Third-World in general. As we discussed earlier, in El Salvador the reality of the people of the last two decades before the killings of the six Jesuits was marked by worsening poverty and oppression. How do we make sense of this fact? Whether Jesus will be called martyr or not, *his life* shows a strong presence of the reign of God the Father, and *his death* demonstrates the importance of that divine presence particularly among the poor and the oppressed in our historical reality.³²⁷ God's

³²⁴Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 41-42.

³²⁵Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 35. More discussions on the historical Jesus will be added in Chapter Five and particularly my study of John P. Meier's criticism on Sobrino's limited treatment of the topic.

³²⁶*Ibid.*, 264.

³²⁷Sobrino affirmed: "Let us therefore conclude by saying clearly what seems to me essential to the revolution in question-namely *extra pauperes nulla salus* ('apart from the poor there is no

presence at the moment of the death of Jesus is beyond doubt, especially for post-Resurrection faith.

Sobrino belongs to the community where the six Jesuits lived and were murdered. Together they were one apostolic team who worked at the UCA. Intellectually and spiritually, they nourished each other. Gradually, they came to a deeper understanding of the reality of El Salvador through various studies and pastoral ministries and involvement.

Sobrino wrote in 1980 "my starting point is the reality of the Church and not a doctrine about the Church. Doctrine is of course necessary and important. But in itself, apart from the reality of the Church and apart from the manifestation of God in the Church, it cannot take any real historical shape"³²⁸ He explained that ecclesiological reflection starts with the reality of the people of God. His continuous concern is mostly pastoral as well as theological. Pastoral means that any ecclesiology should be helpful to the people of God to understand themselves as Christians who receive Christ's call within a particular ecclesial community. Theological means that our faith nourished by a concrete Christian practice of following Jesus naturally seeks for a deeper understanding of that faith amidst our contemporary world. This concern is rooted in an act of following Jesus in this world of today. In fact, our common vocation as Christians is to be companions of

salvation'). There is salvation, indeed, and in this hope lies the essence of Christian faith. But that salvation has its locus in the poor of this world. And that same real locus becomes a locus for theology when theology seeks to reflect upon Christian salvation in its historical concreteness," or in another theological terms, *Gloria Dei, vivens pauper*. See Brackley, Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought, xiv-xv; and Jon Sobrino, Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 1-58.

³²⁸See the introduction written in November 1980. Jon Sobrino, Resurrección de la Verdadera Iglesia: Los Pobres, Lugar Teológico de la Eclesiología (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1989), 10.

Jesus. Sobrino and the six Jesuits understood that what is meant to be a companion of Jesus today is to engage under the standard of the cross in the crucial struggle of our times: the struggle for faith and the struggle for justice which faith includes. Therefore, in 1991, Sobrino affirmed that "from the standpoint of the poor we think we come to know Christ better and it is this better-known Christ, we think, who points us to where the poor are".³²⁹

4. Crucified People as the Presence of Christ Crucified in History

In Latin America, the introduction of the western culture in which Christianity was an important part throughout the long period of colonization has caused great suffering to the majority of people because of marginalization, oppression, poverty and the killings of the indigenous people.³³⁰ On the other hand, since the beginning there were people who tried to make sense of this suffering and, even further, to enable themselves to learn where God was in the midst of all this suffering, as well as to struggle against such suffering.

Bartolomé de las Casas declared "In the Indies I see Jesus Christ, our God, being whipped and afflicted, buffeted and crucified, not once but thousands of times, as often as

³²⁹Jon Sobrino, Jesucristo Liberador: Lectura Histórico teológica de Jesús de Nazaret (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 72.

³³⁰Sobrino wrote that in Latin America about seventy years after the introduction of Western culture in 1492, the indigenous population has been reduced by fifteen percents. By the end of this century it was estimated that there will be about one hundred seventy millions Latinamericans will live in extreme poverty. Still this situation has been worsened by the oppressions and wars. Only in Central America, there have been about two hundred fifty thousands victims. See Sobrino, "Los Pueblos Crucificados, Actual Siervo Sufriente de Yahvé," Pagina 109 (June 1991): 75.

the Spaniards assault and destroy those people".³³¹ It is important to know that this theological-historical viewpoint has been present despite the strong current of scholastic theology in the sixteenth century that justified the exploitation of the indigenous people. There have been people such as Las Casas who were able to see through the exploited people, the poor, and found the meaning of the Gospel and even the ultimate example of the Gospel in Christ Himself.³³²

Like Ellacuría, Sobrino spoke about the poor as the crucified people and as the suffering servant, an image of the favored servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 42,53). He proposed three reasons for the significance of the idea of the crucified people. *First*, on the *factual level*, the poverty of the so-called third world causes not only people's suffering but massive untimely deaths. Systemic repression and wars have made the situation worse. "Cross means not only poverty but death". *Second*, on the *historical-ethical level*, Sobrino and many other liberation theologians found that the suffering and death of the poor people, especially of the third-world, was caused by global-local unjust structures that produced "institutionalized violence" against the poor. "Cross means that there are victims and there are executioners". *Third*, on the *religious level*, Christians can evoke the fundamentals of the faith which are sin and grace, damnation and salvation since "cross is the death Jesus died". In 1977, Romero addressed the poor people of El Salvador

³³¹Gustavo Gutiérrez, Dios y el Oro en las Indias (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1990), 156.

³³²Gustavo Gutiérrez, En Busca de Los Pobres de Jesucristo: El Pensamiento de Bartolomé de Las Casas (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1993), 644.

especially in Aguilares, saying "You are the image of the Pierced Savior".³³³

In this same line of thinking, Sobrino observed that this image of Christ, *Christ the liberator of the crucified people*, has challenged "an abstract image that gave no value to what was central in Jesus of Nazareth". The traditional images of Christ such as Christ as love or power, Christ the "Reconciler", an "absolutely absolute" Christ,³³⁴ lost their relevance among the people of God who suffered. Sobrino showed the significance of popular religion in Latin America that interpreted the divinity of Christ. From the perspective of popular religion, the story of the passion, persecution and the death of Christ, as demonstrated in the series of religious celebrations during Holy Week, has taken on an important role among the life of the people.³³⁵ People's efforts to make sense of their suffering in the light of their faith in Jesus Christ is an integral part of the faith of the people. It is important to learn that a Christology as taught in the doctrine of the Church or that a Latin American Christology, as explained by theologians, can indeed be very important. However, the reality of the life and faith of the people should have as its primary importance the need to hear a response. From this reality a relevant christological reflection should take into account seriously the people's experience.

Sobrino suggests "a refined Latin American Christology" based on his experience

³³³Sobrino, Martín-Baró and Cardenal, La Voz de los Sin Voz: La Palabra Viva de Monseñor Romero, 208. See also Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 254-255.

³³⁴See Sobrino's brief explanation of these alienating images of Christ in Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 14-17.

³³⁵Ibid., 11-12.

of being present among the poor of El Salvador and among the murdered community who opted to work for the poor. What he saw through this powerful experience is the continuous presence of the Cross of Jesus and God's love for the marginalized. The true Christian discernment, accordingly, cannot but respond and search for a way to transform that reality as Jesus did, namely, as the visible sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God.³³⁶

For our theological discussions, three important lessons of Sobrino's experience doing theology from the reality of the poor should be noted. *First*, methodologically speaking, the historical reality of the poor is in itself revelatory. It means that the poor and the impoverished of this world reveal the suffering side of our humanity and at the same time its divine aspect. This reality is unavoidably self-involving. The human family and its social-political structures have produced not only human progress but massive poverty and oppression. As Christians, we can choose to get involved in the liberation of the poor or to ignore it.³³⁷ Jesus chose to work for the poor as His Father's favorable people, even if it brought him into many conflicts. *Second*, theologically speaking, the reality of the poor presents the reality of sin and its social-structural ramifications. Jesus took seriously the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, as the final reality for Jesus, appears as good news in the midst of bad things, in the midst of the anti-Kingdom. The poor generates solidarity and teaches people to love and to hope. This love, however, will

³³⁶Jon Sobrino, *Jesús en América Latina: Su Significado para la Fe y la Cristología* (El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1982), 153-162.

³³⁷Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, 30-35.

not allow the poor to remain in their suffering and oppressed situation. At the same time, it makes us share in the Christian hope for the full coming of the Kingdom of God. *Third*, Sobrino is convinced that the immediate Christian response of taking sides with the poor is an inseparable aspect of the reality of knowing Christ. To know Christ presupposes an act of following Jesus Christ and taking seriously Christ's message and preferential ministry. From our Christian discernment he concluded that an act of following Christ is ultimately the will of God itself.³³⁸ With reference to Leonardo Boff, he wrote: "the true theologian can speak only from Jesus, that is, moved by his reality experienced in faith and love".³³⁹

5. Crucified People as *People's Martyrs*

Though the life and death of the six Jesuits have been the major focus of this section of the dissertation, the term "crucified people" refers obviously to many other Christians who suffered "persecution" and even killed violently. Sobrino deliberately refers to all of them as "martyrs" in a more popular sense, since the conditions for "a formal-ecclesial canonization" are still beyond the reality of various "popular martyrdoms" today. This claim is mainly based on a popular religious feeling and a solidarity in the death of many family members, friends, teachers, priests, nuns, who worked for peace and justice as Christians and many other poor people who were killed simply because they were poor. For Christian martyrs, especially in the case of the six murdered Jesuits, two fundamental reasons of the killings are: first, that many of them put into practice their faith in Jesus

³³⁸Sobrino, Jesús en América Latina: Su Significado para la Fe y la Cristología, 153-154.

³³⁹Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 5.

Christ, the liberator, in such a radical way that met "persecution" as its response; and secondly, that in fact they were Christians who took responsibility seriously to help the poor and the oppressed in their particular social-political context.

How then can we make a claim that their life and death in many aspects were an extraordinary witness of the "true follower of Christ" in their contemporary society? Sobrino suggests four important theological reasons to maintain this claim, to call them "martyrs". *First*, the different historical reality of today requires the reformulation of *odium fidei* into *odium iustitiae*. This presupposes that the condition "without violence" can allow for prophetic violence. Many victims viewed "persecution and death" as an unavoidable cost of being disciple, and as Ellacuría said: "the true people of God in a world dominated by sin because as the people of God it seeks to negate sin and to establish a Reign that to a great extent is the negation of existing structures".³⁴⁰ *Second*, methodologically speaking, the traditional notion of martyrdom should be strengthened by the starting point of the death of Jesus. Boff wrote: "Jesus Christ is the basic sacrament of martyrdom"³⁴¹. So our present day "martyrs" are considered to be "martyrs of the Kingdom and are recognized in terms of the Kingdom to be built or the anti-kingdom to be destroyed"³⁴². The six Jesuits maintained their denouncement against any unjust structures or actions in their society and their acts as mediator for peace, even if it meant

³⁴⁰Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 64.

³⁴¹Leonardo Boff, "Martyrdom: An Attempt at Systematic Reflection," Concilium 163 (1983): 12.

³⁴²Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 266.

that their lives were in danger. Similarly, Jesus proclaimed the "good news and liberation of the poor and the marginalized and never took back his message (Luke 4: 18-19). *Third*, Sobrino underlines the fact that "The essence of martyrdom is affinity with the death of Jesus". On the other hand "...the way of being a martyr does not have to reproduce historically Jesus' death or its historical causes".³⁴³ Many "popular martyrs" understood that to be followers of Jesus Christ meant to make his message and preferential ministry real in our society today. *Fourth*, for immediate pastoral reason, in the midst of the world of the victims, without reflecting on its significance immediately as the people did, "we may fall into the anomalous situation in which, on the one hand, martyrdom is the supremely Christian death, and, on the other, those who today are killed in a way that most resembles Jesus' death are not considered as sharing in this supreme death simply because they do not fulfill the canonical and dogmatic conditions for martyrdom".³⁴⁴ In fact, many of the victims kept their belief that to have a living faith in Jesus means to keep him alive in our history today. Accordingly we learned that the death of the six Jesuits and many poor brought us a strong message of their life as Christians and as "suffering servant".

This recognition of the "popular martyrs" theologically and ecclesially is important to reclaim their life especially as Christians who suffered an unjust death. It is also equally important in the case of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is the core meaning of our "Eucharistic remembrance". Jesus was executed because of his faith in God the Father and his

³⁴³Ibid., 267.

³⁴⁴Ibid., 265.

preferential ministry for the poor and the oppressed.

6. Crucified People and the Act of Following Jesus in Today's World

Faced with the reality of the killing of the six Jesuits and many committed Christians, one is called to give witness in word and action as a form of solidarity and as a recognition that what they did as fellow Christians was remarkably outstanding. Otherwise, Christians exclude one important element of our faith which is solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. Sobrino asserts that "the crucified people" make the crucified Jesus historical. Confronted by the reality of "popular martyrs" we can choose to stand with those who are indifferent even as Christians or we can decide to listen to the voice of the victims of that unjust death and keep them alive "in memory of them". The first choice will cost a deletion of their life, message and their unjust death completely from our memory. The second choice shows greatly our solidarity with the victims and implies a sense of responsibility as Christians as "discipleship" demands. Through the case of the six murdered Jesuits, we learn about "the cost of discipleship", that Christians should take into consideration seriously. In Ellacuría's word, even the cost could demonstrate and determine how seriously discipleship has been taken.

Along with many other committed Christians, Sobrino affirms that our solidarity with those who suffered persecution and an unjust death helps us to recognize their Christian commitment and grasp the meaning of their life-giving ministry. At the same time, such an understanding will strengthen our own sense of solidarity and commitment as followers of Jesus. Sobrino is aware of the fact of "Christians" who murdered other

Christians sometimes even justify their act by saying that they were defending the Christian faith. Solidarity with the poor majority and looking at the death of Jesus are our new criteria to discern who belongs to the "Kingdom of God" and who belongs to the "anti Kingdom". Lumen Gentium affirms this:

Since Jesus, the Son of God, showed his love by laying down his life for us, so too no one has greater love than they who lay down their life for him and their sisters and brothers (see 1 Jn 3:16, Jn 15: 13). Some Christians have been called from the beginning, and will always be called, to give this greatest testimony of love to everyone, especially to persecutors. Martyrdom makes the disciples like their Master, who willingly accepted death for the salvation of the world, and through it they are made like him by the shedding of blood. Therefore, the church considers it the highest gift and supreme test of love. And while it is given to few, all however must be prepared to confess Christ before humanity and to follow him along the way of the cross amid the church never lacks.³⁴⁵

Martyrdom, indeed, characterizes our vocation as Christian. Those who have given witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ and have died or been killed in a way most resembled to Jesus Christ are to be called "Christian martyrs", even if they do not meet the official legalities of martyrdom or go through a canonization process. Sobrino convincingly shows that Jesus Christ has to be the main criterion when one approaches the reality of martyrdom in our post-modern world.

In sum, the true and realistic picture of the crucified people who continuously suffer from injustice is Sobrino's christological locus. From his critical investigation their reality reveals a different face of Christ today and therefore a different mode of

³⁴⁵"Lumen Gentium" Chapter V, no. 42 in Austin Flannery, gen. ed. The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II Constitutions Decrees Declarations: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language, 63-64. See also the Encyclical Letter "Veritatis Splendor" (November 27, 1994), no. 90-94 on martyrdom, the exaltation of the inviolable holiness of God's law.

discipleship. The crucified people have discovered and offered a new image of God as merciful and Christ as liberator. This new image has challenged the alienating christological images such as the so-called "Abstract" Christ, Christ the "Reconciler" or the "Absolutely Absolute" Christ who unfortunately identifies only with the powerful and suggests a passive and "merciless" acceptance of unjust suffering and even of violent oppression. In the case of the "crucified people" as Sobrino's christological locus, that does make a decisive difference in his christology, it implies immediately that the poor are the privileged addressees of the Kingdom. On the basis of this reality, solidarity and conversion have become the fruits of the investigation. Theologians who remain at a quest for the historical Jesus or for the real meaning of the Kingdom of God will find that their reflections offer benefit only to the privileged academic addressees.

II. A Major Theological Locus: The Poor as the Crucified People

Sobrino's third christological book Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View (originally published as Jesucristo Liberador: Lectura Histórica-Teológica de Jesús de Nazaret, 1991), which clearly marks his contribution to the life of faith of the people of God as well as to christology, will be discussed in this chapter. Two of its major issues, the poor as *locus theologicus* and the metaphor of the "crucified people", will be discussed and explained. New emphases, changes and radicalization of Sobrino's christological insight especially after the killing of his Jesuit brothers of the UCA and their co-workers will be explained together with new and important christological insights of his latest publication, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde Las Víctimas (1999).

From the beginning of his christological reflections, Sobrino has taken the Latin American context seriously. A graduate from a German university with its own theological tradition, Sobrino has no doubts that his christology done from Latin America and El Salvador particularly, needs to be rooted in the reality of the Church in Latin America. This was reflected in his first book, Christology at the Crossroads, a strictly systematic christology. Rather than merely arguing for the demand to construct a christology "from the underside history", a Latin American christology, Sobrino showed both the possibility of doing it and how to do it. This book, as well his Jesus in Latin America, reflect his early recognition of the reality of suffering of the poor, his concern for such suffering and his first steps of a methodological formation that takes the poor as a major christological point of departure. In Christology at the Crossroads, Sobrino did not discuss his christological method in a separate chapter, yet he introduced a Latin American approach after he evaluated some other approaches. Overall, he offers a christology which comes forth from Christian faith as lived and experienced among the people of Latin America, a people crucified.

Jesus the Liberator, written after the assassination of six Jesuit friends of his community at the University of Central America and two of their co-workers, starts from the worsening reality of the poor of El Salvador. To go beyond the preferential option for the poor, his concern for and his solidarity with them, Sobrino arrives at a "contemplation on Christ" and finds his continuous presence in the reality of the crucified people today who became very close to his heart because of the murdered Jesuit friends and their co-workers. This for him became a major turning point to construct his own christology from

those crucified poor and to share this Good News beginning with them but finally reaching all people.³⁴⁶ A christology profoundly moved by mercy is rightly called to be a christology of mercy. This means to take the crucified poor as a major theological locus. Therefore, the following discussion will begin with his radicalized point of departure and continue briefly with the crucified people as presented in his book. Sobrino's book centers around three major issues: method, Jesus' faith and mission, and the circumstances as well as the meaning of his suffering and death. The implications of these major issues will be discussed in chapter three and especially four. There, we will consider the methodological aspects.

³⁴⁶At this point, it is important to take Sobrino's response into consideration. He writes: "En mi vida real por lo tanto no sólo los mártires de la UCA han sido momentos culminantes sino que también ha habido otros. Mi pensamiento, consciente o inconsciente, se ha dejado afectar por otros hechos. Pero, aunque obviamente, el martirio de los Jesuitas causó un impacto psicológico especial, no ha sido el único momento decisivo..." Jon Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author," June 30, 1999, 1-2. Sobrino highlights the significance of other important realities such as the assassination of Romero and the massacres of innocent people in the 1980s for him and his christological development. It is understandable and recognizable in his writings. For instance, in a very special way, Sobrino wrote quite extensively about Romero. Yet, in addition, in my view, the killing of his Jesuits brothers of the same community and their co-workers have made a significant impact on him, as indicated in the same letter to the author. Sobrino's reflection on the event, his "letters to Ellacuría", his re-thinking of his own "personal and intellectual conversion" in "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity" helped me to conclude that the event of the killing of the Jesuits and their co-workers provided him a true picture of Jesus' followers whom he knew personally very well and therefore he writes: "Remembering my dear Jesuit brother Ignacio Ellacuría...who was murdered with five other Jesuits and two pious women on November 16, 1989, I have learned that there is nothing as vital in order to live as human being than to exercise mercy on behalf of the crucified people, and that nothing is more humanizing than to believe in the God of Jesus..." Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 11. This is underlined by his two unique christological books, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth (1991) and La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas (1999), written after the killing that materialized strongly those insights (See Chapter IV).

A. The Poor as a Major Theological Locus. A Methodological Shift

Sobrino develops a methodological turn in his theological reflection when he refers to the poor as a major *locus theologicus*, a major point of departure of theology/christology. He explains this new theological insight as follows:

...the poor are the authentic *theological source* for understanding Christian truth and practice and therefore the constitution of the Church. The poor are those who confront the Church both with its basic theological problem and with the direction in which the solution to the problem is to be found. For the poor pose the problem of *seeking* God without presupposing that the Church possesses him once and for all. At the same time they offer the Church the place for *finding* him. Christian truth becomes a concrete universal when seen in terms of the poor. In the poor it acquires the potential that theology will develop for an understanding of history as a whole. In the poor we find the primordial conformity with the truth in its evangelical sources. With the poor as its starting point Christian practice recovers its concreteness, direction, and meaning; the poor have the final say about what is ultimate in Christianity--namely, love--about what love really is, about its necessary historical mediations, about its different expressions. The Christian understanding of sin becomes concrete when seen from the vantage point of the poor, for they suffer it, as no one else does, in their own flesh. They make it clear that sin brings death, and they show what kind of death it brings and what kind of hierarchy reigns in death.³⁴⁷

The poor in this sense, for Sobrino, are not merely a pastoral option but a source of theology itself.

³⁴⁷Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, 93-94. Among the Jesuits of the Central American province and other religious communities, Sobrino also spoke about the poor as the locus of the Christian life and of the spiritual life. He wrote: "The important thing about the decade of the 1970s, then, was our rediscovery of the real life of the impoverished majorities, together with our evangelical rediscovery that it is to them that the good news of the gospel is addressed. In this perspective, the poor become the locus, the place, of the Christian life, and hence of any Christian religious life whatsoever. And so--the most important thing of all for our topic--the poor were now the locus of the spiritual life as well. The content of the qualifier 'spiritual,' as attached to the noun 'life,' can no longer be understood or actualized in any other locus than that of historical life. In a word, the intuition that has gradually forced itself upon our perceptions is that without historical, real *life* there can be no such thing as *spiritual* life." Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 3-4; this part was first published as "La vida espiritual el las comunidades religiosas," Diakonia (Managua), 17 (April 1981): 9-22.

Within the circle of the Society of Jesus, Sobrino is part of an organization which has made a "preferential option for the poor". This "preferential option for the poor" was presented as a preferable direction and focus for any Jesuit ministerial activity in response to the historical reality of our modern world, marked, as it is, by poverty and oppression. "There is a new challenge to our apostolic mission in a world increasingly interdependent but, for all that, divided by injustice: injustice not only personal but institutionalized: built into economic, social, and political structures that dominate the life of nations and the international community."³⁴⁸ Sobrino spends one whole chapter discussing the preferential option in The True Church and the Poor. However, he ends up in Jesus the Liberator with a clearer methodological insight that the "...option for the poor is more than a pastoral option; it is an all-embracing option to grasp the whole view, but to see it consciously from one position...for christology this means using the light of the poor to penetrate better the totality of Christ..."³⁴⁹ In other words, for him the poor are a major *locus theologicus* for christological reflection, and this insight is well-explained especially by the ministry, teachings and death of the committed Christians such as Romero and Ellacuría whom Sobrino knew personally.

³⁴⁸Society of Jesus, Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 412 on Decree 4, no.52: "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice".

³⁴⁹Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 33.

1. An understanding of *Locus theologicus* before the Second Vatican Council

Sobrinho observes that since the time of Melchior Cano (1509-1560) whose posthumous *De Locis Theologicis* (Salamanca, 1563) established his reputation as theologian, what are called the sources of theology has been scripture, tradition, the magisterium, and some theological opinions.³⁵⁰

Adolf Alfred Tanquerey (1854-1932) in his *Brevior Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* (1911) wrote that

By reason of method, theology can be:

- a. *positive*, which explains and proves each dogma from the sources of revelation, Scripture and Tradition. It is called, on that account, *biblical* or *historical*;
- b. *scholastic*, which examines scientifically and philosophically the dogmas of faith by defining more clearly their meaning, by showing conclusions, by making evident the links which exist among revealed truth, by reconciling these truths with reason, and by combining them into one collection of doctrine;
- c. *mixed*, which harmoniously joins the positive method and the scholastic method. St. Pius X recommended this method and throughout this work we shall follow it.³⁵¹

Under the heading "The sources of revelation", Tanquerey reaffirmed that the sources are Scripture and tradition and these are the sources to use for doing theology whose primary task is to explain and prove the correctness of dogmas. He wrote:

This far we have proved that the Church has been instituted by Christ as a *living, authentic, and infallible interpreter of revealed truth*. Thence it follows that the *proximate rule of faith* is the *infallible authority of the Church*. The question to be asked now is this: *for what sources* is the *deposit of revelation* drawn which the Church proposes? According to the *Councils of Trent and of the Vatican*, Revelation is contained: 1. in *written* books, 2. in *tradition* not written. Therefore we have a twofold source of revelation: *Scripture* and *tradition*. Tradition is first in

³⁵⁰Ibid., 277.

³⁵¹AD. Tanquerey, *A Manual of Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1 (New York, Tournai, etc.: Desclée Company, 1959), 1.

time and in extent. We shall, accordingly discuss it first.³⁵²

Tanquerey's explanation reflects greatly Roman catholic theology, its point of departure and its major sources from the Council of Trent to the first Vatican Council. Theology of that period of time focused mainly on the authority of the Church and the equal value of tradition and Scripture. This way of doing theology opposes any theology that does not in the first place acknowledge the authority of the Church or its official teachings. It also tends to suspect theologies that underline the primacy of the Scripture and tradition. Under the polemical tensions against non-catholic theologies, the Catholic church took a defensive approach which has challenged greatly the process of creative thinking within the catholic theological circle even today. In a noticeable way, it has undermined the major importance of Scripture, the figure of Jesus Christ as portrayed by it and as lived by the people of God in their different social-political situations.

2. The Importance and the Main Contribution of the New Theological Insight Brought up in the Discussion of the Source of Theology

Sobrino questions and reviews the setting of theologies/christologies in the past and today. In his observation, the setting of many theologies and christologies is mostly based on "texts" such as theological opinions, magisterium, tradition and Scripture. This theology/christology is better understood whenever it is read in a particular place and when those who read it take the new demands of the situation, the sign of the times in the historical-pastoral sense, into their consideration. However, Sobrino shows a new setting

³⁵²Ibid., 169.

to be integrated into his methodological approach of doing christology. He writes: "For Latin American christology the setting of theology is first and foremost something real, a particular historical situation in which God and Christ are believed to be continuing to make themselves present..." Sobrino comes to see the poor, the crucified people as a real setting for his christology. He continues: "...this is therefore a theolodal setting rather than a theological setting, a setting from which the texts of the past can be re-read more adequately."³⁵³

Sobrino's reading of the Scripture especially the New Testament demonstrates the inseparable and necessary relation between the Kingdom of God and the poor. This portrays what Jesus thought on both of them and of God the Father. Sobrino highlights the insight of Puebla that "...by the mere fact of being poor, whatever the moral or personal situation in which they find themselves, God defends them and loves them, and they are the first ones to whom Jesus' mission is directed."³⁵⁴

Sobrino suggests three methodological approaches to verify what Jesus thought about the Kingdom of God. The first is called the *notional way* which "examines the

³⁵³Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 27 and 277. Sobrino observes that "Traditionally, since the time of Melchior Cano, the *loci theologici* have been scripture, tradition, the magisterium, theological opinions: that is, texts given to us that enjoy greater or lesser authority."

³⁵⁴Sobrino was impressed by Joachim Jeremias who wrote that: "By ascertaining that Jesus proclaimed the dawn of the consummation of the world, we have not yet completely described his preaching of the *basileia*. On the contrary, we have not yet mentioned its essential feature...the offer of salvation Jesus makes to the poor...The Kingdom belongs *uniquely to the poor*". Ibid., 80-81. See also the document of the bishop conference of Latin America in Puebla, no. 1142 in Episcopado Latinoamericano Conferencias Generales, Río de Janeiro, Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo: Documentos Pastorales. Introducción-Textos-Índice Temático, 437 and J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, part 1, The Proclamation of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1971; New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 119.

notion Jesus had of the Kingdom of God by comparing it with earlier notions in Israel. It starts from Jesus' historical consciousness, dependent in this, as in so many other things, on the Old Testament." Sobrino concluded that Jesus did not proclaim something absolutely new to his listeners. What was new was Jesus' concentration on this familiar theme of the Kingdom of God. "The essentially traditional expectation of the coming Kingdom of God was changed into the one decisive perspective."³⁵⁵ The second is called the *way of the addressee*. This is what has a decisive importance for his theological method. Sobrino explains that Jesus' main addressees are the poor. He concludes that "If Jesus' proclamation shows a correlation between the Kingdom and his audience, then the latter can tell us something about the former; this applies more if the Kingdom of God is presented not only as a *truth*, but as *good news*, since then the addressees will intrinsically clarify what is 'good' in the news."³⁵⁶ Sobrino brought up an important point of the role of the poor in our understanding of Jesus who preached the Kingdom of God. He realizes how obvious is this thought in theology. However, some theological currents such as the theology that underscores universal salvation, has undermined the reality of the poor as a major *locus theologicus*. Sobrino emphasizes "...the need to historicize the recipients of salvation in order to know, in turn, what salvation and that liberation is meant."³⁵⁷ The

³⁵⁵Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 69, 283. This claim has been explained previously by Pannenberg as indicated by Sobrino in his footnote. However, in my observation it is important to realize that Sobrino brought up this claim as an inseparable element to the two other approaches which are called the *way of the addressee* and the *way of practice*. These three approaches as a unit give a better understanding of what Jesus thought about the Kingdom of God.

³⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 70.

³⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 283.

third approach is called the *way of the practice*. This approach refers both to Jesus' words and actions in a broader sense as well as especially in what he said and did in the service of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Sobrino finally makes two critical observations that this methodological reflection should avoid any tendency of abstraction and also that modern theology is often one-sided. He wrote: "Modern theology, even in its progressive wings, generally uses what I have called the notional way, sometimes adding the way of practice, but generally ignores the way of the addressee."³⁵⁸

Who are the poor Jesus was thinking when he said that the Kingdom of God belongs to them? Referring to the study of Joachim Jeremias, Sobrino points to two different groups: the economic poor and the sociological poor. First, the economic poor are those

...who groan under some type of basic need in the tradition of Isaiah 61:1ff. So the poor are those who hunger and thirst, who go naked, strangers, the sick, those in prison, those who mourn, those weighed down by a real burden (Luke 6: 20-21; Matt. 25:25ff). In this sense, the poor are those who live bent (*anawim*) under the weight of a burden--which Jesus often interpreted as oppression--those for whom life and survival is a hard task.³⁵⁹

Second, the sociological poor are those who are

...despised by the ruling society, those considered sinners, the publicans, the prostitutes (Mark 2:16; Matt. 11: 19, 21-23; Luke 15:1ff), the simple-minded, the little ones, the least (Matt. 11:25; Mark 9:36ff; Matt. 10:42, 18: 10-14, 25: 40-45), those who carry out despised tasks (Matt. 12:31; Luke 18:11). In this sense, the poor are the marginalized, those "whose religious ignorance and moral behavior closed, in the conviction of the time, the gate leading to salvation for them."³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸Ibid., 70.

³⁵⁹Ibid., 80.

³⁶⁰Ibid.

In other words according to Sobrino, the poor are those whose "minimum of life" is denied and whose "minimum of dignity" is ignored. Sobrino is convinced that

To these poor Jesus showed undoubted partiality, so that what is now called option for the poor can be said to start with him (though it goes back before him to the prophets, and indeed to God himself): partiality toward the economic poor, as shown in the beatitudes in Luke, and partiality toward sociological poor, as shown in his standing up for publicans and sinners expressed with even more force, perhaps, than the former, precisely because their alienation on religious grounds was more provocative to him.³⁶¹

Sobrino adds three important notes to clarify his reflection of the poor. First, a spiritualistic interpretation of the poor does not address the concern of Jesus on the Kingdom of God which is closely connected to the poor. The poor are a reality, a historical reality and not merely an individual problem or the problem of the sum total of the poor individuals. Second, Sobrino understands that the poor are not all human beings, "...but those at the bottom, and being at the bottom in this sense means being oppressed by those on top"³⁶² Third, the partiality understood from the message of Jesus in the Scripture, as strongly pointed out by liberation theology, helps us to understand the universality of the Kingdom of God. Sobrino writes:

These poor are the majority, which is quantitatively important in itself, but important also for understanding the universality of the Kingdom of God... And the quality of these majorities also indicates that the Kingdom of God can come to be a universal reality: if life comes even to these (poor)--to whom it never has come--then one can indeed speak of the universality of the Kingdom of God.³⁶³

³⁶¹Ibid., 81.

³⁶²Ibid., 80.

³⁶³Ibid., 82.

What Sobrino explains has happened and is observable for example at the Latin American bishops conference in Medellín and Puebla which made use of the point of view of the poor to re-think and reformulate their understanding of Jesus Christ. Sobrino admits that

It is tragic that Christ's presence now on our continent should be overwhelmingly in the mode of crucifixion, though he is present also in the mode of resurrection. This crucifixion, however, because it is impossible to hide, is also beneficial because it forces christology to recognize that a body of Christ really exists in history, and to take it into account in its own activity.³⁶⁴

This is also what Sobrino calls a primary ecclesial context³⁶⁵ for christology today which is the Church of the poor. "When church and poor are brought into an essential relationship, then we get the church of the poor."³⁶⁶ This is a major setting for theology and christology and, within a wider social context, it also refers to the world of the poor as a whole. For Sobrino, this point of view holds a great importance for christology. It shows that

...Christology takes shape within the context of a particular moment in history; it is produced under certain specific modes of material, intellectual, cultural and ecclesial production, and is articulated in terms of certain concrete interests that are not always consciously adverted to...Liberation christology is at least conscious of this, and has the honesty to recognize it: its thinking is done from the world of

³⁶⁴Ibid., 31.

³⁶⁵Sobrino defines what he called *primary ecclesiality* as "the community's act of faith in Christ and the presentation of Christ in history in his dimension as head of a body that is the church" and *secondary ecclesiality* as "the church defined as an institution..., guardian of the deposit of faith and ultimate guarantor of truth." The two must be taken into consideration as a setting for christology. However, the primary ecclesiality has to be the foremost as a setting. Ibid., 29.

³⁶⁶Ibid., 30. In a word of Ellacuría, the church of the poor is "a church in which the poor are its principal motor and its internal structural principle." See Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 207-208.

the poor and is done to liberate them.³⁶⁷

Sobrino finally indicates his new insight of the resemblance between the suffering poor and the crucified Christ which will become his major christological reflection in his later writings. He explains:

Pauline theology says that the *crucified* Christ is wisdom, and John's theology says that we must fix our eyes on this man who was *crucified*. If these expressions are not understood as purely rhetorical, they are saying that there is something in this crucified man that gives our intellect a light it does not obtain in other places. This is exactly what I am trying to say about the world of the poor, and I might add that this is why it is so surprising that 'Christian' christologies, which are confronted of necessity with a crucified man and have to admit that in him there is a 'revelation' of God, are not able to integrate into their method, or even to understand, the option for the poor.³⁶⁸

In sum, it is noticeable that Sobrino develops his christological reflection toward a different methodological approach of doing theology and particularly christology.³⁶⁹ His understanding of the poor as a major social-ecclesial setting of theology becomes an important source of the development of his christology. Sobrino is approaching the poor and oppressed or the crucified people to address them collectively from a strictly christological point of view, as his privileged christological setting and the privileged "addressees" of his christology. In the following section, this methodological development

³⁶⁷Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 31.

³⁶⁸Ibid., 33.

³⁶⁹Sobrino indicates that he is in search of a new christological approach. He wrote: "Christology that attempts to become conscious of its social context must pay attention as far as possible to the findings of the social sciences, as is required by the principles of liberation theology. In my view, however, more important than any accumulation of sociological knowledge that theologians may possess--more or less in different instances--is that they should really make the epistemological break, that their intellect should begin to function in a different way, as we shall see later." Ibid., 278.

and turn in Sobrino's christological reflection will be our focus of discussion and is addressed from the perspective of the impact of the killing of his six Jesuit brothers and their co-workers.

B. Theological Significance of the "Crucified People"

If in Jesus in Latin America, Sobrino has a few pages on the crucified peoples' faith in the Son of God, to explain briefly the reality and meaning of faith in Christ *from the standpoint of oppression*, in Jesus the Liberator, Sobrino has treated the theme separately.³⁷⁰ He remarked that this theme "Crucified people" is not usually included in systematic christologies and also unusual to reflect from the cross of Jesus to "Jesus' body in history collectively". Yet it is strictly christological for two reasons. First of all, the aim is to identify the presence of Christ today for a pastoral reason and therefore one can better follow Jesus. Secondly, for Sobrino one needs to answer a christological question: whether this "body" is still crucified.³⁷¹ Sobrino develops his christological reflection from the teachings and writings of two martyred friends and Jesus followers, Ignacio Ellacuría with his writings on the crucified people and Monseñor Romero with his prophetic sermons. Finally it should be mentioned that "the crucified people" has become the

³⁷⁰Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 159-165 and Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 254-271.

³⁷¹This christological and theological quest assume a continuous questioning, investigation and search. In his recent article on Holy Spirit, Sobrino wrote that the Spirit of God illuminates our senses to recognize and understand the truth which is always new and beyond what we have captured and this Spirit of God also give us light to unmask all worldly untruths. See Jon Sobrino, "1998 Año del Espíritu Santo: Luz que ilumina la Vida Cristiana," Diakonia XXII (July-September 1998): 4-8.

center of Sobrino's framework of theologizing. Let us discuss this metaphor briefly.

The metaphor of the crucified people is used by Sobrino for three reasons. The first purpose is to identify the presence of Christ in history, in our present reality. Sobrino takes the cross of Jesus to figure out and understand this presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. The theological basis of this search is an ecclesiology that proclaims that Christ has a body that makes him present in history.³⁷² Sobrino writes: "Some analyze what the cross has to say about Jesus' Father and speak of 'the crucified God', but it is unusual to analyze what this same cross has to say about Jesus' body in history. Of course it is traditional to relate the cross of Jesus to individual sufferings, but not to relate it to the sufferings of his body as a whole."³⁷³ There are three questions raised by Sobrino: 1. what is "this body" crucified today?, 2. what element of "this body" is crucified? and 3. is this crucifixion in the presence of the crucified Christ in history?

³⁷²Reflecting Pius XII's outstanding encyclical letter "Mystici Corporis" (1943), the bishops of the Second Vatican Council wrote in article 7 of "Lumen Gentium": "In the human nature united to himself, the Son of God, by overcoming death through his own death and resurrection, redeemed humanity and changed it into a new creation (see Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17). For by communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body his brothers and sisters who are called together from every nation. In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). In this sacred rite our union with Christ's death and resurrection is symbolized and effected: "For we were buried with him by Baptism into death"; and if "we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be so in the likeness of his resurrection also" (Rom. 6:4-5). Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread". (53) In this way all of us are made members of his body (see 1 Cor. 12:27), "individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5)..." Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language (New York: Costello Publishing Company 1996 and Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996), 6-7.

³⁷³Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 254.

The second purpose is to express the gravity of the problem of the so called "Third World", the "South" or "developing countries". Sobrino calls the reality of those poor countries an historical catastrophe.

The third purpose is to demonstrate that the metaphor of the "crucified peoples" is a useful and necessary language in christology. The term "crucified peoples" is a useful and necessary language on the *factual* level. Sobrino explains that "'Cross' means not only poverty but death. And death is what the peoples of the Third World suffer in a thousand ways."³⁷⁴ The term "crucified peoples" is a useful and necessary language also on the *historical-ethical* level. Sobrino observes that the "'cross' makes it quite clear that we are not talking about just any death, but death that is actively inflicted by unjust structures--called 'institutionalized violence' by Medellin. To die crucified does not mean simply to die but to be put to death. So 'cross' means that there are victims and there are executioners, that the crucified peoples have not fallen from heaven (if we followed the drift of the metaphor, we ought to say risen from hell)."³⁷⁵ Finally, the term "crucified people" is a useful and necessary language on the *religious* level. Sobrino concludes that: "...the cross is the death Jesus died." Sobrino argues that this suffering world is "God's creation" . therefore a theological and christological approach to that tragedy of the developing countries is proper and right.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴Ibid.

³⁷⁵Ibid., 255.

³⁷⁶Ibid.

To develop his christological reflection, in a way similar to his predecessors Archbishop Romero and Ignacio Ellacuría³⁷⁷, Sobrino calls the crucified people, "Yahweh's suffering servant", an image of Isaiah 53. However Sobrino further develops this reflection saying that the crucified people is also a "martyred people".

1. The Crucified People as Yahweh's Suffering Servant

Two fundamental facts about the Servant according to Sobrino are that the Servant is an historical victim and that the Servant is a saving mystery. As a historical victim, it is observable that the crucified people live in a condition of "hunger, sickness, slums, illiteracy, frustration through lack of education and employment, pain and suffering of all kinds" as a normal condition and when they with their friends decide to struggle for establishing justice, "they are greeted with violence and the verdict that they are 'guilty of death'".³⁷⁸ As a saving mystery, Sobrino asserts that the election of the Servant is primarily a matter of faith, a scandalous faith in God's plan of salvation: "the one crucified is the one chosen to bring salvation."³⁷⁹ Sobrino shows two significant observations of the crucified people. First, it is true that the oppressed are their own agents of liberation. Sobrino writes:

...we may say that internalized oppression generates (or may generate) awareness

³⁷⁷See for example Ellacuría's theological reflection on the church and the people of God in Ellacuría, Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia, 25-63, 81-125.

³⁷⁸Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 256.

³⁷⁹Ibid., 259-260.

and this generates organization for liberation, which can unite the masses--the passive Suffering Servant, from whom no one expects salvation--with their leaders and defenders, equivalent to the active Suffering Servant, who are usually considered as bringers of salvation.³⁸⁰

Secondly, Sobrino asserts that "Speaking of the poor, those we have called the crucified people here, it says that they offer an evangelizing potential. It describes this potential as 'gospel value of solidarity, service, simplicity and openness to accepting the gift of God'".

He continues

Put into historical language, the poor have a humanizing potential because they offer community against individualism, service against selfishness, simplicity against opulence, creativity against an imposed copycat culture, openness to transcendence against bleak positivism and crass pragmatism. Of course, it is true that not all the poor offer these things. Many of them internalize opposite values and fall victim to them. But it is also true that the poor as a whole do offer them and, structurally speaking, they offer them in a way not offered by other worlds.³⁸¹

2. The Crucified People is also a "Martyred People"

Today many people among the poor and their defenders are dying in a context similar to that of Jesus. Sobrino shows that there are three typical situations. First, people have been murdered because in their lives they defended the Kingdom and attacked the anti-Kingdom. They exercised prophetic violence. Sobrino refers to archbishop Romero, many priests, nuns, catechists, delegates of the word, students, trade unionists, peasants, workers, teachers, journalists, doctors and lawyers. Second, Sobrino admits that "There are many Christians in the popular organizations, who defend the Kingdom by open struggle and make use of some sort of violence--beyond the prophetic word--social,

³⁸⁰Ibid., 260.

³⁸¹Ibid., 263.

political and even armed violence. Many of them are put to death, but not all of them are defenseless.³⁸² Third, there are masses who are innocently and anonymously murdered, even though they have not used any explicit form of violence, even verbal. Sobrino refers to peasants, children, women and old people, above all, who die slowly day after day and die violently with incredible cruelty and totally unprotected.³⁸³ Sobrino notes that there is a pastoral need to acknowledge this situation especially since, after Vatican II, Latin America is the continent in which more Christians have suffered violent death than in any other. Sobrino indicates the difficulty to solve the theoretical argument to come to a conclusion whether they are martyrs or not. However, he writes:

What is important is not so much the name but the fact that if this problem is not solved we fall into the anomalous situation in which, on the one hand, martyrdom is supremely Christian death, and on the other, those who today are killed in a way that most resembles Jesus' death are not held to share in this supreme death because they do not fulfil the canonical and dogmatic conditions for martyrdom. It is an important subject for theological reasons, because in order to clarify it we have to look to Jesus: to his death, but also to his life; that is, what he was killed for.³⁸⁴

In sum, the metaphor of the crucified people is very important to study the development of Sobrino's understanding of the poor as a major *locus theologicus*, a source of theology. Two reasons for this are: first, the metaphor has qualified the poor in a more specific way which is their death before their time as Gutiérrez put it. Secondly, precisely in the way they live and die, they become more like Jesus Christ. However in

³⁸²Ibid., 269.

³⁸³Ibid., 270.

³⁸⁴Ibid., 265.

Sobrino's observation and christological reflection, death is not its final word. In the epilogue of Jesus the Liberator, Sobrino writes: "The history of Jesus does not end with the cross, since God raised him from among the dead. The cross is not, therefore, the last word on Jesus, nor is the cross of the crucified peoples God's final word to them."³⁸⁵

Jesus the Liberator, that came out after the killing of Sobrino's Jesuit brothers and their co-workers, marked a new stage in his christological thinking. Noticeably, Sobrino wrote with extraordinary sensitivity and passion, a passion that grows from an evident love for Christ as well for Christ's poor and oppressed. This brings about a "methodological shift", emphasizes on the crucified people and on martyrdom, that still needs to be studied and explained for two reasons. First, from reading his three main christological writings, it is clear that Sobrino is in process of rounding up his christological and methodological insight. He shows that he has moved from the European approach to a Latin American approach. However, more than that he is now committed himself to integrate the insight of the poor more deeply and profoundly into his christological method. Secondly, he has come to a point where he is convinced that the poor has much to say to christology and "gradually" he points out that the poor is also a major *locus theologicus*.

³⁸⁵Ibid., 272. Sobrino explains this statement thoroughly in his 1999 publication, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas.

III. Jesus the True Liberator: A Solidarity to Take the Crucified People

Down from the Cross

Sobrino reflects on the cross of Jesus Christ in the light of the crucified people as an historical representation of the crucified Christ in our midst, yet Christ is also the true liberator and the savior. Surrounded by countless martyred witnesses, those who are dying slowly or violently before their time, including his own Jesuit brothers and their helpers, Sobrino introduces a "christology of mercy" that urges all efforts of thoughts and actions to take these crucified people down from their crosses and to combat against the power of the anti-kingdom. At least it is clear that under the name of Jesus there is no place for oppression.³⁸⁶ Let us now examine thoroughly Sobrino's radicalized point of departure and the original nucleus of his discussion on the metaphor of the crucified people, including a new mode of discipleship and a personal commitment of a theologian in the suffering world.

A. The Reality of the Poor: Changes in Sobrino's Point of Departure

It was mentioned earlier that Jesus the Liberator includes a final chapter that introduces the metaphor of the "crucified people". Terms, such as "third world", "the South" and "developing countries", indicate the problems in that part of the world in which something is going wrong. Sobrino enhances the discussion of the reality of the poor and particularly the metaphor of the "crucified people", because for him previous

³⁸⁶See the interview with Sobrino regarding his book Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View in Mission Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

terms do not communicate all that is wrong and still happening. Sobrino prefers to use the metaphor "crucified people" because for him it better communicates "the historical magnitude of the problem and its significance for the faith."³⁸⁷ The discussion on the crucified people holds a major importance in the development of Sobrino's christology. It explains more deeply his thought on the poor as his major point of departure.

The discussion of the crucified people is a new insight in Sobrino's christology and it reflects his progress in taking seriously the context (Latin America and El Salvador particularly) from which he is developing his christological reflection. In 1992, the year following the publication of Jesus the Liberator, we pointed out that for him the final chapter on the "Crucified people" is the most "original" part of his book. Sobrino asserts that it is common for christology to talk about the cross; some christologies even talk about the crucified God. However, it is new to incorporate the discussion on the crucified people. Therefore, in the final chapter of Jesus the Liberator Sobrino developed his new christological theme, the crucified people. Indeed, it is new to address an issue of "the continual martyrdom in the body of Christ which is the church", the people of God.³⁸⁸ His

³⁸⁷ Sobrino writes: "Existe, pues, una debacle histórica, y algún nombre hay que ponerle. Así lo hace el lenguaje actual y llama a estos pueblos 'tercer mundo', 'el sur', 'países en vías de desarrollo'... De estas formas se quiere decir que algo anda mal, pero este lenguaje no comunica todo lo mal que anda este mundo. Por ello se hace necesario hablar de pueblos crucificados, lenguaje metafórico, ciertamente, pero que comunica mucho mejor que otros la magnitud histórica de la debacle y su significado para la fe. En cualquier caso, evita mucho mejor el encubrimiento que operan otros lenguajes." See Sobrino, "Los Pueblos Crucificados, Actual Siervo Sufriente de Yahvé," Página 109 (June 1991): 75.

³⁸⁸ In the interview on his book Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, Sobrino explains: "Lo que sí es original es la última capítulo. Los cristologías hablan evidentemente de la Cruz y algunos de Dios crucificado, pero no suelen hablar del pueblo crucificado, de la prolongación del martirio en el cuerpo de Cristo que es la Iglesia. Así es como termino yo el primer tomo de la cristología." See Misión Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

discussion about the idols as ignored realities and covered up realities is equally significant and this will be explored in the next section entitled "Jesus the liberator and the struggle against the 'anti-kingdom'". Sobrino explains that we should not only say that Christ surrendered to the will of his Father and that he is faithful, but also that he struggled against the idols.³⁸⁹

As early as 1982, Sobrino tried to develop the idea of a crucified people. In the final chapter of Jesus in Latin America, he incorporated an article on "A Crucified People's Faith in the Son of God" which had been published in Concilium (1982).³⁹⁰ Sobrino showed the reality of the poor and many Christians who unconditionally commit themselves to Jesus in their life and death and therefore, similar to Karl Rahner, he witnessed to their well-tested and true faith in Jesus, the son of God.³⁹¹ From the standpoint of oppression the reality and meaning of faith in Jesus can be explained by recognizing the presence of the crucified Jesus in their midst and the life commitment on their behalf to Christ.

According to Sobrino, the bottom line is that there is an obvious resemblance between the suffering and death of the poor of the present day and the crucified Christ. Sobrino admitted that theologically it is not a matter of identity, but there is still an

³⁸⁹Ibid.

³⁹⁰See Edward Schillebeeckx and Johannes-Baptist Metz, eds., "Jesus, Son of God?," Concilium 153 (1982) especially on page 23-28.

³⁹¹Sobrino quotes: "if Jesus really makes such a compelling impression on a person that they find the courage to commit themselves unconditionally to this Jesus in life and death and therefore to believe in the God of Jesus,' then that person really and fully believes in Jesus as the Son of God." See Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 165 and, Rahner and Weger, Our Christian Faith: Answers for the Future, 93-94.

important need to analyze in what precisely this resemblance consists. However, for Sobrino the fact that there is a resemblance cannot be denied. Ellacuría himself had been examining how a crucified people can today be the continuation of the servant of Yahweh. Nevertheless, both of them agreed that there is no doubt that many people in Latin America show and reproduce one or more of the characteristics of the servant of Yahweh, "either simultaneously or complementarily".³⁹² Looking at the crucified people, one recognizes the suffering servant of Yahweh as portrayed by Isaiah, even the reality of the crucified people brings one to a better understanding of the mystery of God in the crucified Jesus.

Sobrino explained that there are six basic features of the servant of Yahweh.³⁹³ First, the servant's mission is saving. "Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver, nor be crushed/until true justice is established on earth" (Isaiah 42:3-4). Second, the servant is chosen, "but his election is not only a manifestation of the sovereign freedom of God, which could be arbitrary, but of a scandalous will on God's part, since he has chosen to save him whose life is despised, whom the nations loath,... the slaves of despots" (Isaiah 49:7). Third, the servant appears destroyed by people in history so that he "seemed no longer human" (Isaiah 52:14ff.; 53:2ff); he is abandoned with no one to come to his defense or plead his cause (Isaiah 53:8). He is even shown as sharing the lot of sinners, being taken for one of them (Isaiah 53:12), given a tomb with the wicked (Isaiah 53:9), regarded as an outcast, someone punished, struck down by God (Isaiah 53:4).

³⁹²Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 161.

³⁹³Ibid., 160-161.

Fourth, the servant's destiny was produced by the sins of humankind. The servant dies for these sins and these sins lead him to death. The historical correlation between sin and producing death is affirmed and elevated to a universal drama (Isaiah 53:5,8,12). Fifth, The great paradox and scandal is that in the death that comes about through bearing the sins of many, there is salvation (Isaiah 53:5,11). Sixth, the servant has triumphed through being a servant (Isaiah 53: 10-12).³⁹⁴ These six basic features are important to understand christologically the reality of the crucified people. Sobrino explains:

These characteristics of the servant of Yahweh, of the crucified Son of God, have been rediscovered in Latin America not through mere exegetical curiosity, not just through apologetic concern to support a soteriological theory which affirms that--an the end of the day--life comes out death. This would be to mock those who are truly oppressed, an a priori dialectical, but not necessarily Christian, theodicy. If *these* characteristics of the Son of God have been rediscovered, it is because they have common ground, affinity, likeness with the situation there.³⁹⁵

Sobrino found this common ground, affinity and likeness in the life of the crucified people in Latin America. He reports that there are

peoples who no longer appear human, as Puebla reminded us, who are deprived of all justice, their basic rights violated, and in particular their right to life threatened by sudden arrest, torture, assassination, and mass murder. They are also peoples who, like the servant, try to bring right and justice, who struggle for liberation, this being understood not only as liberation of the group that fight for it, but as liberation of the whole people of the poor. Then they are peoples who not only express oppression in the facts of their own existence, but who are actively repressed and persecuted when, like the servant, they try to establish right and justice. Finally, they are peoples who know that they have been chosen as a vehicle of salvation and who interpret their own oppression and repression as the road to liberation. Taken as a whole, many peoples in Latin America are the expression and product of the historical sin of human kind. They bear sin, they struggle against it, while the power of historical sin is turned against them, bringing them

³⁹⁴Ibid.

³⁹⁵Ibid., 161.

death.³⁹⁶

Sobrino's final chapter of Jesus the Liberator explains the crucified people and its resemblance to the servant of Yahweh in an even more extensive way. Curiously, Sobrino introduced one part which he called "the crucified people as a 'Martyred People'" for "immediate pastoral reasons and broader theological reasons".³⁹⁷ Sobrino concludes:

If we consider martyrdom in terms of the anti-Kingdom's response to those who struggle actively for the kingdom, the *analogatum princeps* of the martyr is that exemplified by Archbishop Romero. If we consider it in terms of really bearing the sin of the anti-Kingdom, the *analogatum princeps* becomes the unprotected masses, who are put to death in huge numbers innocently and anonymously. Earlier we called them Yahweh's Suffering Servant, now we call them the "martyred people." They are the ones who most abundantly and cruelly "fill up in their flesh what is lacking in Christ's passion". They are the Suffering Servant and they are the crucified Christ today.³⁹⁸

In 1993, Sobrino pointed to his continuous effort to develop this new christological insight.³⁹⁹ In an interview with Misión Abierta, Sobrino said that there are two main periods in the development of his way of doing theological/ christological reflection. The first refers to a period before the assassination of his "close and dear friends", especially Archbishop Romero, after so many of them had already been

³⁹⁶Ibid.

³⁹⁷Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 264-265.

³⁹⁸Ibid., 271.

³⁹⁹Sobrino writes: "... El vivir en una situación de tanta cruz, eso cambia el modo de pensar de uno y la manera de hacer teología. Entre los libros que yo he escrito, en el más reciente, Jesucristo Liberador, trato de decir cosas que han dicho otros mejor que yo; y cito a Rahner, cito a Moltmann, cito a Ellacuría, cito a Boff, por supuesto. Pero hay un capítulo al final, que me parece que no suele estar presente en otras cristologías, El pueblo crucificado. Esto trae un punto distinto a la reflexión teológica..." in Misión Abierta 6 (June 1993): 7.

murdered. In this period, he had not incorporated profoundly the reality of the victim, "the crucified people", though he had discussed broadly the poor and its special place in theology/christology as *locus theologicus*. The second refers to a period after the killing of those close and dear friends culminated in the assassination of his own Jesuits friends of the same house and community together with their co-workers. In this period, especially after the assassination of Romero and before the killings at UCA, Sobrino began to develop the metaphor of the crucified people together with Ellacuría. Sobrino recalls that Ellacuría was a very important person, especially for his life as a professional theologian. When Romero was murdered, Ellacuría was still alive. Together with him, Sobrino began to develop what Ellacuría had called "the crucified people".⁴⁰⁰ This explains the turning points in his christological reflections. Sobrino's way of doing theology/christology has changed. Though the discussion of the crucified people in Jesus the Liberator was still limited, it is inseparable from his post-killing christological reflection as a whole. Sobrino's recent publication, La Fe en Jesucristo proved his maturing theological/ christological reflection in which he developed the discussion of the crucified people into a major perspective of the victims and showed the possibility to construct a christology from that perspective as well as demonstrated its importance for today's world marked by the

⁴⁰⁰Sobrino writes: "Si hemos de hablar de dos etapas en mi vida profesional de hacer teología, yo pondría el corte entorno a monseñor Romero. Es decir, ésta experiencia de la barbarie escalofriante que llega a asesinar hasta a las personas cercanas y queridas por no dejar asesinar al pueblo, empezó antes. Cuando mataron a monseñor Romero, estaba en vida Ignacio Ellacuría, que para mi vida profesional fue muy importante, y junto con él empazamos a pensar teológicamente en eso que él llamaba 'el pueblo crucificado'." See Misión Abierta 6 (June 1993): 7.

innumerable victims.⁴⁰¹

To understand better the reality as discussed above, it is important to study especially Sobrino's understanding of the so-called historical reality. Through his writings, Sobrino indicates his great interest in understanding "reality". The reality of the poor in El Salvador and Latin America in general has been his major point of departure. According to Sobrino, coming to understand better the reality of the poor implies partiality, a stance on the side of the poor and thinking for the benefit of them. Sobrino has shown that this insight is rooted originally in Jesus and his ministry. In his Christology at the Crossroads, Sobrino had remarked:

It would be anachronistic to look to Jesus for an analysis of classes such as we find in the work of present-day sociology. Yet his general attitude makes it clear that in trying to understand justice Jesus adopts a stance that is rooted in the poor and is meant to benefit them. Justice as a universal ideal cannot be understood or rendered operational unless one somehow does that through concrete experience of injustice. In that sense the first principle for concretizing moral values is nothing else but the first principle of Christology itself: i.e., incarnation. One must deliberately adopt some partial stance in order to comprehend the totality. To look for some stand that will give us the totality directly is to do the very opposite of incarnation.⁴⁰²

This partiality principle in Sobrino's approach to understand the whole reality in a very concrete way remains one of his major insights. He explained it once more in his writing on the murdered Jesuits and their university's Christian inspiration.

⁴⁰¹Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 69-103. The discussion on the perspective of the victims will be developed in part V of this chapter.

⁴⁰²Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 124. Sobrino on this point refers to two other important elements in the life of Jesus, his ministry and his disciples or followers which are the element of conflict and the "conversion" of the subject. This is important to note because there are direct implications of taking stance on the side of the poor as Jesus did and it shows his major concern of his christology on today's world reality.

The option for the poor, then, is something that has to do theologically and anthropologically with every human being at every level of their reality--whether they know it or not; it is no mere regional and pastoral entity. Nor is it, on the other hand, a threat to the university: because empirically, humanity in general is quantitatively poor; but more important yet, because the option for the poor does not mean to focus on a part of the whole in order to ignore the rest, but rather to reach out to the whole from one part.⁴⁰³

In his interview with Mision Abierta in 1992, Sobrino indicated the crucial importance of the development of his understanding of the reality in his christological reflection. In a more specific way, he refers to the period after the assassination of Romero and later his six Jesuit friends and co-workers as a cutting line where the new face of the reality of the poor was gradually revealed to him.⁴⁰⁴ As a result of this unfolding period, there had been changes in his understanding of the poor as the crucified people as well as victims. Additionally, Sobrino has incorporated a different, real and more personal experience of that reality of the poor. This eventually also reshapes his way of doing christology, precisely because of these different elements newly introduced to his understanding of the reality.

In the 1992 interview with Misión Abierta, Sobrino pointed to two important elements in his christology of mercy. First, there is a different weight given to the reality over the scriptural and theological texts.⁴⁰⁵ On one hand, Sobrino affirms the role of

⁴⁰³Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 162.

⁴⁰⁴See "El Autor y Su Obra: Jesucristo Liberador," Misión Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

⁴⁰⁵The word reality in Sobrino's christological reflection refers to the dynamic historical events in the life of human family and specifically it refers to the poor/the crucified people. See his broader discussion about this reality in Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 14-20.

several important texts in his life as theologian. Important texts such as the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the text of St. Irenaeus are among his favorite spiritual, scriptural and theological texts. On the other hand, for Sobrino the reality is still superior to all the texts. The reasons are, first, that on the theological level the reality can also be a theological argument and that the reality has helped him to know the crucified Christ better.⁴⁰⁶ The second is about his understanding of the task of a theologian. Sobrino explains that for him "doing theology is seeing if God is present in our reality and how God is present." The question of the fundamental theology is "do we see God or not" in the sequence of our history. Because of that, for Sobrino, it is extremely wrong to cover up the reality with lies and misleading information. This would blindfold oneself from seeing God in the reality.⁴⁰⁷ Indeed, seeing God is transforming for him.

In Jesus the Liberator and La Fe en Jesucristo Sobrino points out that one reality

⁴⁰⁶Misión Abierta 6 (June 1993): 7. Comparing the significance of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and the massacre at Mozote, El Salvador, Sobrino writes: "Honradamente he de decir que, si yo leo la primera carta a los Corintios, un texto que me impacta muchísimo, y voy al Mozote, la realidad del Mozote, las cruces reales del Mozote, me hacen entender mucho mejor al Pablo que estaba enojado con los carismáticos alienados. Además, la realidad, la realidad del Mozote no me hace ignorar a Cristo del que habla Pablo; al contrario.

Por decirlo así, yo veo a Dios presente, no sólo en la Palabra de la Escritura (esa yo la creo por fe, además uno ve cómo esa Palabra genera vida), sino también en la realidad que tengo privilegio de ver..."

⁴⁰⁷Ibid. Sobrino asserts: "Para mí hacer teología es ver si Dios está presente en nuestra realidad y cómo está presente. Es delicado. Uno puede equivocarse, y si te equivocas, la metida de pata es sonada, verdad? Pero si no acabamos de decir si Dios está presente en nuestra realidad, qué significa nuestra teología?

En la estructura de la historia, me parece a mí, la pregunta teológica fundamental es: vemos o no vemos a Dios? Por eso es tan grave el encubrimiento de la realidad con la mentira y con la desinformación, porque no se deja ver a Dios en la realidad."

that triggers his thinking is suffering. He agrees with the statement of Feurbach that "Suffering precedes thinking". However Sobrino goes further by saying that suffering does not just make one think or precede thinking or change one's manner of thinking. Suffering forces one to think and forcibly suffering produces thinking.⁴⁰⁸ Particularly, Sobrino refers to the situation of the majority poor of Latin America and Christ as lived by them. Sobrino first, claims that "Both Christ and the continent are today crucified." He continues: "If the situation of crucified peoples--and of Christ in them--does not force us to think, one can ask what will, or what other thinking can be more necessary and urgent than this."⁴⁰⁹ Secondly, Sobrino refers to the reality of Christ as good news, *eu-aggelion* or the reality of the goodness of God (Tit. 3:4). Sobrino observes that indeed in Latin America, Christ is grasped as good news and referred to gratitude. Therefore, if Boff states that "the true theologian can speak only from Jesus, that is, moved by his reality experienced in faith and love"⁴¹⁰, Sobrino goes further by saying that the experience of witnessing an unwavering commitment and hope as well as generous selfgift of many people in the midst of suffering and death not only enables us, but *forces* us to speak. Christology is done out of gratitude and love.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 5.

⁴⁰⁹Ibid.

⁴¹⁰Leonardo Boff, Jesucristo y la Liberación del Hombre (Madrid, 1987), 196.

⁴¹¹Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 5 and La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 22, 611 and 385-390. Sobrino also explains: "Vivo en un país donde hay dos realidades fundamentales; una: que han matado a 75.000 personal en estos últimos años, y gente cercana a mí cómo Mons. Romero o cómo los jesuitas de la UCA. Eso hace pensar. El sufrimiento hace pensar. En segundo lugar es muy sorprendente que en medio de esta cruz, surge en la gente un compromiso, una esperanza, una entrega. Hay vida en medio de esa

It is a new face of the reality that helped Sobrino greatly to develop his commitment to the poor as well as his christological reflection especially its point of departure. The killings of many of his close friends especially Romero and the six-Jesuits of his community at UCA and their helpers has shed more light to Sobrino's understanding of the reality of the poor. The crucified people becomes a new face introduced into his understanding of the reality of the poor. While Sobrino had discussed the poor as a major *locus theologicus*, this idea has been further developed through the metaphor of the crucified people (particularly in Jesus the Liberator), and even radicalized through the perspective of the victims (particularly in La Fe en Jesucristo). Let us now continue our study on Sobrino's christology of mercy with a discussion of his next major christological issue of Jesus the Liberator: the struggle against the "anti-kingdom".

B. Jesus the True Liberator and the "Combat" Against the Anti-Kingdom

According to Sobrino, there are two kinds of activities which Jesus did. The first is what he refers to as "practice", that is, Jesus' activities in the service of the Kingdom, his deeds and sayings. The second is what he refers to as "prophetic praxis", that is, Jesus' activities, particularly verbal ones, in the form of debates with the unmaskings and denunciations of his adversaries. "This praxis is also at the service of the Kingdom, but it mainly brings out the reality of the historical anti-Kingdom, and is related to Jesus'

muerte. También esto estimula el pensamiento.

Karl Rahner decía que los hombres somos modos deficientes de ser Cristo. Lo de 'deficientes' se comprende fácilmente, pero lo de 'modos de ser Cristo' es justamente lo que he visto allí." See Misión Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

theological experience in upholding the true God and denouncing idols."⁴¹² This is an important clarification since it involves the major themes in liberation theology and so Sobrino shows his position as theologian and, more than that, he addresses broadly a new theme in his christology which is the denunciation of the "anti-Kingdom", an action done purposely by Jesus to demonstrate his message of the Kingdom of God in the historical reality of his own time. Further, Sobrino explains how this understanding of the Kingdom of God distinguishes it from other present-day theologies of the kingdom. For Latin American theology, the Kingdom of God belongs to the poor, in the presence of and against the anti-kingdom and therefore obviously historical.

Sobrino presents a conflictual approach on purpose since it is obvious in his context of Latin America and El Salvador in particular that "the anti-Kingdom determines the whole structure of society and puts human beings to death."⁴¹³ Therefore, a conflictual understanding of the prophetic mission of Jesus is highly relevant as well as appropriate in his study of Jesus and the mission of Jesus, in the concrete historical situation of the society in Latin America and in many other poor countries where people are oppressed and killed or die "before their times". Sobrino claims that "... the positive proclamation of the Kingdom has to be made in the presence of the anti-Kingdom by upholding the true

⁴¹²Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 160. Sobrino distinguishes between "theological" or "teological" and "theological" or "teológico". Theological means related to God and theological refers to the study of theology. See also Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 14.

⁴¹³Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 162.

God. This is carried out in the midst of conflict, and therefore implies struggle."⁴¹⁴

Because of this Jesus was involved in controversies such as the controversy over the greatest commandment and in unmasking of ignorance, lies, and the mechanism of an oppressive religion which implies the structure of his society as well.

To focus on the main groups who were strongly criticized by Jesus as presented in the New Testament because of their abusive and oppressive conduct, let us study the main denunciations. Sobrino specifies that in the context of denunciations, Jesus addressed the groups which are mainly the rich, the Scribes, Pharisees, Priests and the rulers. These groups hold economic, cultural, religious and political power. Jesus denounced them as groups rather than as individuals. The main reason is that they are "oppressive groups, collective sinners, who produce structural sin..."⁴¹⁵ Sobrino explains that Jesus points to historical agents as responsible for the anti-kingdom rather than to an abstract concept of evil.

1. Denunciations of the Rich

Sobrino examined what the Bible, especially the New Testament, said about the rich and their riches. Though the rich do not usually appear to be one of Jesus' direct

⁴¹⁴Ibid. See also Osborne, The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation, 150-151 which highlighted Sobrino's point as well as of theologians such as Boff "...that the kingdom of God must involve a diminishment of evil, particularly evil social structures, which are found both in the social-political arena and the ecclesiastical arena. A kingdom-of-God theology and spirituality that are not evident in social-political struggle are hardly consistent with Jesus' teaching. A kingdom-of-God theology and spirituality that are not evident in a Christian ecclesiastical struggle are even less tolerable."

⁴¹⁵Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 170.

opponents, they are clearly present in Jesus' denunciations. There are three basic problems with the rich and their riches.

(1) Riches in our reality of massive poverty are an offensive abundance of some in contrast to the inhuman poverty of others. Therefore, there is a serious question about this unjust collection of wealth, the ways of accumulating it, the social system that allows this unjust accumulation and the ways to use what had been collected individually or communally. Poverty portrays an unjust social system as well as the incapability of being "good neighbors". In relation to oppression, Sobrino specified that the present economic sphere is determining and representing the most basic level of oppression.⁴¹⁶ The implication is that riches have become a means of dehumanization not only of the poor but also of the rich. Sobrino asserts strongly that only those who set their hearts on God and seek the Kingdom of God are truly humanized. Riches have turned out to be the biggest obstacle to open oneself to God. For those who hold on to riches, riches ultimately can mean only damnation.

(2) Sobrino reminds us of the strong point on the causal opposition in the New Testament and even stronger in the Old Testament between the rich and the poor, as impoverisher and impoverished. In the New Testament Jesus is presented as one who does not only juxtapose both of them but at times opposes the rich. His opposition reflected the reality of the gap and separation between them. For Sobrino the continuing fact of a coexistence of rich and poor remains insulting and intolerable. This is one of the major

⁴¹⁶Ibid. "By beginning with the rich, I am attributing to Jesus a vision that would see the economic sphere as determining everything else, and so representing the most basic oppression."

problems of our world today. This problem is relational. A relational problem means it has to do with the rest of the people other than the poor and that it reflects a social system that permits the prolongation of this situation. Therefore, Christians should face this problem seriously, and the rich have to ask themselves about the origins and the use of their wealth.⁴¹⁷ Riches can involve those who possess them in grave social evils because of the unjust ways and means of collecting it. Their riches often are taken directly or indirectly from those who are becoming poor, and therefore "This is an indication that the ultimate evil of riches is relational: the oppression of the poor."⁴¹⁸

(3) "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13) points to a problematic and even antagonistic relation between riches and faith in God. Proclaiming the Good News among the poor requires a critical view on both realities. The quotation from Matthew 6:24 contains a clear indication of "bringing out the final theological evil of unjustly accumulated or used riches and explains why those riches reach such a degree of evil."⁴¹⁹ In other words, to those who hold on to riches, get them directly or indirectly from those who are then becoming poor, and adore riches as "god", Sobrino says:

⁴¹⁷Sobrino in commenting Luke 1:53, pointed out to the strong remarks of the fathers of the Church. "Several Fathers of the Church read the verse in this way: Clement of Alexandria used it to argue that all wealth is unjust and therefore it is right to hand over even the worthiest money. St. Jerome is even sharper on the point: 'For all riches proceed from injustice, and unless one has lost, the other cannot find. So this proverb seems to me most true: either a rich man is unjust or he has inherited from an unjust man.'" Ibid., 173. Sobrino referred to two important works of J. I. Gonzalez-Faus, Jesús y los Ricos de Su Tiempo (Mexico City, 1987), 69 and Vicarios de Cristo: Los Pobres en la Teología y Espiritualidad Cristianas (Madrid, 1991) that discuss the theme and give an extensive references on the reality of rich and poor in the history of the Church.

⁴¹⁸Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 173.

⁴¹⁹Ibid.

We can say, then, as a conclusion to this section on Jesus and the rich, that riches are not only a partial evil allowing some complementarity with good. They are a radical evil because they are an idol: they act against God, dehumanize those who render them homage and need victims in order to survive. Jesus did not use these words, but this is what he was saying. And this institution runs through the New Testament in various forms: "...the pride in riches comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16); "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).⁴²⁰

2. Denunciations of the Scribes and the Pharisees

Sobrino describes the denunciations in the Gospel mainly against the power-holders of any groups who abused their power to oppress the people. The denunciations against the scribes and the Pharisees are usually presented as intertwined.⁴²¹ In the Gospel, there are two kinds of denunciation against both groups. First, Jesus denounced the hypocrisy of both groups. "They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have seats of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the market places" (Matthew 23:5-7; Luke 11:43; Mark 12:38). Secondly, and above all, they took advantage of their position and power to oppress other people: the widows, the poor, the outcasts. "Vanity is bad, Jesus seems to be saying, and hypocrisy is worse, but what is absolutely intolerable is oppression, which makes the vanity and hypocrisy

⁴²⁰Ibid., 174.

⁴²¹For a critical note on the discussion of the denunciations against the scribes and Pharisees see footnotes of the discussion about the denunciations of the Pharisees and John P. Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 5.

something not only insulting, but cruel."⁴²² Sobrino concludes: "So the scribes and Pharisees, the teachers and fervent practitioners of the law, neither teach nor observe it in truth. They do not help the people, but hinder them. Worse they oppress them and are able to oppress them because of the ideological and symbolic-exemplary power they possess through their close identification with the law."⁴²³ Let us study briefly each group to understand the denunciations against each of them.

a. Denunciations of the Scribes

Scribes are the doctors of the law. They possess intellectual and ideological influence in their society. According to Sobrino, in a religious society the Scribes represented a great power. Jesus' attitude toward the law can be summarized as defending it as far as it is God's law and putting it into practice in support of human beings. How did they use this power? Will those who have power to enforce it prefer to bring the people to God or mainly to oppress the people?

There are two main references from the Gospel of Mark and of Luke used by Sobrino to illustrate the denunciations against the scribes. First, Sobrino explains:

In Mark 12:40 the scribes are condemned because they "devour... widows' houses" while saying long prayers for the sake of appearances. That is, they oppress the

⁴²²Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 175.

⁴²³Ibid., 176. Again, it is worth noting that there are different arguments and opinions on the issue of the Scribes and Pharisees. Chapter V will discuss some of the problematic interpretations, for example as presented by a well-known biblical scholar, John P. Meier. Systematic theologians such as Sobrino and Segundo need to be more cautious in the way they speak of the gospels and particularly of those issues.

poor with the added malice of doing so under the cloak of religion. This is their basic sin, to which their hypocritical vainglory is added. "Beware of the scribes," Jesus says, obviously echoing--for the reason he adduces--the harsh denunciation of priests in Hosea 4:8: "They feed on the sin of my people, they are greedy for their iniquity."

Second, Sobrino asserts:

The anathemas against the scribes do not so much stress their hypocrisy as directly attack their oppressive and objective wickedness:

Luke 11:46: they load people with heavy burdens without lifting a finger to help them;

Luke 11:47-51: they build tombs for the prophets, but their ancestors killed them and they approve of their ancestors' deeds;

Luke 11:52: they have taken away the key of knowledge and deny others access to it.

It is obvious, therefore, that the main reason for the denunciations of the scribes is that they have abused their power to teach the law. They have oppressed other people, the poor and the unfavored by society, with their position and power.

b. Denunciations of the Pharisees

Pharisees are fervent observers of the law. They possessed a religious influence. Like the Scribes, they have a great power over the people who were deeply religious. In Sobrino's christological writings especially Jesus the Liberator, the Pharisees are discussed more extensively. The question is the same: how did they use the power entrusted to them? Did they use this power to help the people to come to God or did they abuse it and burden the people? Sobrino observed that "The *Pharisees* are reproached for their actions and warned that they will incur God's wrath, since they are blind guides (Matt. 15:14), see the speck in another's eye and not the beam in their own (Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 6:41ff), are

bandits and robbers instead of shepherds (John 10:6-21)."⁴²⁴ Though there are many similar denunciations directed against them and the scribes, there are some differences, for example, between the denunciations against the scribes as noted in Luke 11:46-52 and the denunciations against the Pharisees as noted in Luke 11:39-44. Sobrino wrote that the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was "thrown back in their faces".

Luke 11:39-41: they clean the outside of the cup and are full of greed and wickedness internally;
 Luke 11:42: they tithe herbs and forget justice;
 Luke 11:44: they are like unmarked graves that cannot be seen (Matt. 23:27 explains this: they are white outside but full of corruption inside).

Sobrino explains:

These curses clearly point up the inner/outer contradiction: the outer is good while the inner is bad. And this inner badness is expressed both internally and externally: they are full of greed and wickedness within and forget justice outwardly, and this-justice--is exactly what they "ought to have practiced" (Luke 11:42). The solution to this incongruity lies not in reconciling inward and outward attitudes so as to avoid hypocrisy at least, but in doing good: "So give for those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you" (11:41).

The Gospel presents denunciations against the abusive power-holders who oppress the marginalized and the poor. Again, hypocritical and oppressive behavior of a group has been unmasked. The limited scriptural references used by Sobrino, especially from the Gospel of Luke, portray the basic denunciations primarily against the abuse of power to oppress the people and against hypocrisy that covers up those unjust practices committed by the scribes and Pharisees. For Sobrino, this is an urgent message to be analyzed

⁴²⁴Ibid., 101.

reasonably and to be revealed in time.⁴²⁵ The active presence of the anti-kingdom makes it urgent and necessary to do it. A concrete historical reality is before him. Otherwise, it means the prolongation of the reign of the anti-kingdom which means ultimately maintaining the power of anti-life especially against the poor and powerless.

3. Denunciations of the Priests

According to Sobrino Jesus did not have a frequent contact with the priests except at the end of his life especially when he was called by the Sanhedrin and their high Priest to be questioned of what he taught and did. The denunciations against the priests as written in the New Testament can be explained in three points as important elements of Jesus' teaching: (1) A new setting to encounter God is community (Matthew 18:20); (2) the place to meet God is now primarily the poor (Matthew 25:31-49) rather than a Temple or other places of worship; and (3) finally it is in "spirit and truth" (John 4: 21,23) the true believers shall worship the Father. According to Sobrino, Jesus is very critical to the Temple of Jerusalem and its implications: rites, sacrifices and the priesthood mainly

⁴²⁵In the discussion of the denunciations against the scribes and Pharisees by Jesus, Sobrino clearly did not intend to present a whole exegesis with its problems. Indeed later Sobrino wrote some critical notes such as that "From a historical point of view, the Pharisees' responsibility is exaggerated, and reflects the church situation after the year AD 70, when the church distanced itself from the synagogue; on the other hand, the responsibility attributed to the priestly aristocracy is historical." Ibid., 198. John P. Meier also noted that the author of the Gospel of Luke "has shaped his sources to depict an evolution of hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees" and describes that "it is within the travel narrative that conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees reaches its peak". See John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Two: Mentor, Message, and Miracles, (New York, London etc.: Doubleday, 1994), 479. This eventually implies a question of those who really delivered the denunciations, the time of the denunciations and even the reasons for these denunciations. This is a challenging question to any theologian who seriously makes use of the historical-exegetical approach to the Scripture.

because of those reasons, theological reasons but also for an obvious historical reason.

The Temple had been a center of the economic, political and social life of the country. "All major political decisions were taken there (by the high priests), the treasury was kept there, and the priestly caste benefitted from association with it. It was a source of work for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, while it was a source of burdens and taxes for the country peasants. And it sanctioned the superiority of the Jews over other peoples."⁴²⁶ Sobrino comes to a conclusion that this Temple eventually expressed the way of life and social structure of Palestine at the time of Jesus which Jesus was opposing. "'Destroying the temple' is a symbolic expression denouncing the reality of the false God and the oppressive structure of society, upheld by religious power and justified in the name of religion."⁴²⁷ Sobrino concludes:

I should like to stress that Jesus not only proclaims the Kingdom and proclaims a Father God; he also denounces the anti-Kingdom and unmask its idols. In doing so he strikes at the roots of a society oppressed by all sorts of power: economic, political, ideological and religious. The anti-Kingdom exists and Jesus, objectively, gives an account of what its roots are. And he is not content with denouncing the Evil One, a trans-historical reality, but denounces those responsible for the anti-Kingdom, who make up a truly historical reality."⁴²⁸

. God of Life and Idols of Death

It is important to recognize the contribution made by the Liberation Theology, drawing to attention the theme of life in the midst of many deaths "before their times" in

⁴²⁶Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 78.

⁴²⁷Ibid.

⁴²⁸Ibid., 179.

our century and therefore the faith proclamation in the God of life. In his christology, Sobrino underlines the importance of the theme, as well as the discussion about idolatry, as structural parts of the reality of our society. He notes:

Shortly after Medellín, Juan Luis Segundo voiced the suspicion that theology was covering up the problem of idolatry; as I would put it, that the Western world was victim and made other others victims of a colossal theological deception in making idolatry a thing of the past. So his 1970 book on God started from the following proposition: 'Our reflection begins much more interested in the antithesis--apparently out of fashion--*faith-idolatry* than in the --apparently topical--*faith-atheism*.'⁴²⁹

The christology of Sobrino addresses three emphases: on the actual reality of the Kingdom of God, on God of the Kingdom and on the analysis of what is opposing the God of life. Sobrino explains that Latin American theologies, such as those articulated by Gutiérrez, Boff and Ellacuría, examine and analyze idolatry theologically from the reality of death-life of the masses of the people. This analysis shows that (1) "... idols are not a thing of the past, nor realities that occur only in the religious sphere, but currently and really exist: they are actual realities that shape society and determine the life and death of the masses"⁴³⁰; (2) they are idols in the strict sense, since they take on the trappings of divinity: ultimateness, self -justification and untouchability; (3) the root of these idols is the economic configuration of society which is unjust, structurally destructive, supported and perpetuated by military, political, cultural, juridical, intellectual and often religious agents; (4) these idols demand rites and an orthodoxy or ideology, and promise salvation

⁴²⁹Ibid., 181 and J. L. Segundo, *Faith and Ideologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 18.

⁴³⁰Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 185-186.

to their worshipers while they "dehumanize" them; (5) as a result, these idols produce many innocent victims "whom they dispatch to the slow death of hunger and the violent death of repression."⁴³¹ Sobrino concludes:

In Latin America, then, we remember--with force and in detail--the "forgotten" gods, and this memory--as the initial quotation from Juan Luis Segundo showed--is decisive for theology and for christology. In relation to idolatry, as a minimum, the faith we have in God should be actively anti-idolatrous, and the primary task of our enlightenment will therefore be not to demythify, but to deidolize God. Put positively, God will be a God of life on the side of the victims, and knowing this God will promote life.⁴³²

Sobrino's explanations of the denunciations against various influential groups in the Gospel points to a reality of a society with structural marginalization and oppression and to an understanding of following Jesus Christ in a concrete way. For Sobrino, the reality of massive poverty and oppression is obvious. Who are Christians or who is the Church in such a social situation and what role will the Church and Christians play in the immediate future? The Gospel shows how Jesus Christ was understood and proclaimed by the early Christian communities, a group of Christ's disciples. It also shows, for example in Luke's Gospel and its author's overall theology, that Jesus' message is really responding to a

⁴³¹Ibid., 186.

⁴³²Ibid. Roger Haight explains the development of Sobrino's idea of God in his *Jesus the Liberator* as follows: "... Two of three chapters on the historical Jesus are dedicated by Sobrino to Jesus and God in *Jesus the Liberator*. This represents a development in his christology in which he explicitly formulates his idea of God through a portrayal of the kerygmatic historical Jesus following the pattern suggested by Segundo." Previously Haight has explained that: " Juan Luis Segundo interprets the doctrine of Chalcedon functionally and epistemologically as meaning that we only know the nature of God through the concrete humanity and life of Jesus. The doctrine does not mean 'Jesus is God,' but 'God is Jesus.'" See Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 381 n.33-34. Reference is to Juan Luis Segundo, *The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 29-40.

concrete social situation.⁴³³ Sobrino's christology of liberation has delivered the similar concern and therefore brought Christians back to the basic understanding of themselves as Jesus' followers as individuals and as a group (a community called Church).

5. The Idea of Anti-Kingdom in His Previous Works

To learn of Sobrino's continual concern and effort to develop and root his christological reflection in the reality of the crucified people, let us take a look the germinal discussions and ideas of the idea of the struggle against the anti-Kingdom as integral in Jesus' mission in his Christology at the Crossroads and Jesus in Latin America. It is very interesting to see that at first Sobrino tends to be more abstract in his discussion of the anti-Kingdom and later he becomes more direct, simple and includes more reflections and documents from Latin America itself.

In Christology at the Crossroads, Sobrino had discussed briefly the idea of "anti-Kingdom" under the title of "The Reign of God and Sin". In his reading of the Scriptures, instead of naming certain groups of people who are mostly responsible of their abusive and oppressive conduct in their society, he focused his discussion on the idea of sin. He explained that (1) Jesus' preaching of the good news is situated in a sinful world and (2)

⁴³³See also Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Two: Mentor, Message, and Miracles, 427. Meier indicated his favorable stance to the interpretation of this Lukan message, yet he explained that to show how the historical Jesus is relevant to present-day concerns, for example what has done in Sobrino's christological reflections, is a different thing. Meier then made himself clear that a thorough historical project of investigations (at least such as what Meier did) is important (p. 522). In this respect, one thing should be remembered that Meier and Sobrino dealt and presented a different approach to the pressing social issues and academic concern. Therefore, Meier's criticism should rather benefit Sobrino's christological reflection than remain as criticism.

Jesus views sin in strictly theological terms, sin is saying no to God and to the Kingdom of God.

Regarding certain groups who were denounced by Jesus, Sobrino writes:

Sinners are frequently described as hypocrites by Jesus, and their hypocrisy is verified in their sin against the kingdom. Jesus hurls anathemas at the Pharisees because they pay no attention to justice; at the legal experts because they impose intolerable burdens on the people and have expropriated the keys to knowledge for their own use; at the rich because they refuse to share their wealth with the poor; at the priests because they impose restrictions on people's freedom; and at the rulers of the world because they govern despotically.⁴³⁴

Sobrino adds that these are primarily collective anathemas and mainly they are directed against the improper use of power, either religious, intellectual, economic, or political. At this point, he was convinced that Jesus certainly saw the relation between the improper use of power and the situation of oppression. "Religious oppression exists *because* the Pharisees impose intolerable burdens on people. Ignorance exists *because* the Levites have expropriated the keys to knowledge. Poverty exists *because* the rich will not share their wealth."⁴³⁵ Though Sobrino has already addressed these particular groups, his discussion was focused on sin and its "personal" dimension. He concludes:

Though Jesus does not speculate on the essence of sin in exactly these terms, his view of the person with power as the prototype of the sinner clearly suggests that human self-assertion always has two dimensions. On the one hand it is assertiveness against God, grounded in one's own works; on the other hand it is assertiveness against others grounded in the use of one's own power.⁴³⁶

In Jesus in Latin America, Sobrino had discussed this theme at length: "Jesus'

⁴³⁴Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 53.

⁴³⁵Ibid., 53-54.

⁴³⁶Ibid., 55.

struggle against the divinities of death". Jesus is a non-conformist in his vision of God.

Therefore, Jesus

...struggled resolutely against any type of social force that in one way or another, mediately or immediately, dehumanized human beings, causing their death. In this respects, the human being, living and living fully, was a clear cut criterion of Jesus course of action.

In that struggle, Jesus discovered that forces of death had come to be justified by explicit religious concepts of live, or those that implicitly assumed some type of divinity as absolute. Hence much of his public ministry was aimed at unmasking false divinities.⁴³⁷

Regarding particular groups who were denounced by Jesus, Sobrino presented them also from his Scriptural analysis. There is a condemnation of the intrinsic root of the evil of wealth, the evil means to acquire it and a built-in injustice. Against the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, he explains that they commit injustice against others by robbing and imposing intolerable burdens on them, depriving them of knowledge and of entry into the kingdom. "The priests have committed the horrendous crime of defiling the essence of the temple...The priests misuse their vocation, which is to conduct worship for the glory of God. Instead, they engage in business, and accrue profits."⁴³⁸ Jesus rebukes "those with political powers". According to Sobrino: "Regardless of the fact that, in a given era, power may have grandeur and honor, and even God's blessing, Jesus condemns power whose historical consequences are oppression and the deprivation of life-
-here, in the realm of political rights."⁴³⁹ On the bottom line, Sobrino explains that their

⁴³⁷Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 101-102.

⁴³⁸Ibid., 110.

⁴³⁹Ibid., 111.

abusive and oppressive conduct only deprives the life of others in its various spheres. He concludes: "...in his anathemas, he does not use merely formal logic, analyzing how certain attitudes dehumanize the human being, but material logic as well, observing how human beings become dehumanized by dehumanizing others."⁴⁴⁰

The root of this abusive and oppressive conduct, according to Sobrino, is the conflicting notions of God and the fact that other divinities are invoked to attack and finally to eliminate Jesus.⁴⁴¹

If Jesus' death had its causes in his concrete life, then conflict and adherence to an alternative must also be sought there. Hence, putting aside all pietistic or merely symbolic qualities, his life cannot be understood apart from "the battle between God and the gods--that is, between God whom Jesus preached as his Father and the god of law, as interpreted by the guardians of the law, and the political gods of the Romans occupation forces."⁴⁴²

This conclusion also indicates Sobrino's germinal discussion on idolatry.

Sobrino shows his continual effort and concern to understand Jesus' activities, his practice and prophetic praxis from the perspective of the poor and oppressed in Latin America. His conflictual approach and reading of the Gospel focus on the denunciations against the so-called anti-Kingdom, on efforts to discuss "idolatry" from a christological point of view, and on an option for the poor and solidarity with the victims. These are always present in his christological writings under different theological terms. It is noticeable that Sobrino has incorporated many materials and reflections from the church in

⁴⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴⁴¹Ibid., 116.

⁴⁴²Ibid., 122.

Latin America, especially from the documents of the Latin American Bishops conference.

Finally, it is true that his basic orientation remains the same, that is, to follow Christ in this world. He writes

Christology needs to and must draw out the powers of human intelligence, but also other human powers. Its approach has to be rigorously--even doctrinal, some would add--but its deepest essence lies in being something "spiritual", in that it should be help persons and communities to meet Christ, to follow the cause of Jesus, to live as new men and women and to conform this world to the heart of God.⁴⁴³

After examining the immediate challenge and opposition of the so-called the anti-kingdom in Sobrino's christological reflection, against the coming of the Kingdom of God, we can turn to two major elements in Sobrino's christology: personal commitment and involvement in doing christology, and the act of following Jesus in today's world. In doing this, we will see better radicalized elements and refined method of Sobrino's christology after the killing, a christology of mercy.

C. The Importance of Personal Commitment

In doing theology/christology, Sobrino has emphasized personal commitment. By this, Sobrino means a faith commitment to follow Jesus and get involve in Jesus' mission to bring the Good News through words and deeds, through an intellectual effort and a struggle for making the Good News a historical reality for all. This entails a self-preference to respond to the cause of the poor and oppressed. Sobrino emphasizes a methodological preference that starts from the poor and for the purpose of "taking the

⁴⁴³Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 7.

crucified people down from the cross". The importance of this self-commitment is placed in the area of a personal relation with the poor and oppressed directly and indirectly. In the case of Sobrino and his murdered Jesuit friends, the involvement in the work of the university and in the peace resolution on the national level for the cause of many victims of the war in El Salvador has shown their personal commitment and preference, even with the repetitious death threats. The reality of the poor has clearly awakened them from an indifference and lukewarm self-disposition.

In the following discussion, a personal commitment and preference for the poor and oppressed as rooted in the mission of Jesus the liberator will be presented. The reality of the people and faith commitment to follow Jesus entails a personal involvement. Then its formative influence in the method of doing theology/christology of Sobrino will be discussed as a structural form of a personal commitment in doing theology/christology.

1. Faith Commitment to Follow Jesus: Christology that Entails Personal

Involvement

There are urgent questions to be answered continuously: How much poverty, marginalization, oppression and "death before time" has our world today produced? Has God's creation turned out better or worse? In the christology of Sobrino, it is perceived clearly that a true faith in Jesus Christ amidst the reality of our society and world today entails a personal and communal involvement as an act of following Christ. In the context of El Salvador, Sobrino indicates this unavoidable "call" of the reality, saying that "The challenge posed by the situation of El Salvador does not render christology superfluous,

but makes it all the more necessary to put all one's intellect into elaborating a christology that will help the resurrection of the Salvadoran people."⁴⁴⁴ The reality of the poor and oppressed demands an explanation as well as an immediate Christian response. Since the beginning of his writings, Sobrino observed the growing poverty and oppression in our world which was obviously true in El Salvador. In 1990 he wrote:

Oppression in the Third World is not a fashion, but something very present and increasing. Latin America's wound is not healing but growing bigger and more infected...Poverty is increasing in the Third World, the gap between the rich and poor countries is widening, there are wars--more than a hundred since the last world war and all of them in the Third World. Cultures are being lost through the imposition of foreign commercial cultures...Oppression is not a fashion.⁴⁴⁵

In his theological/christological reflection, Sobrino begins directly with a question of the reality of the poor. "What I ask myself is what theology is going to do if it ignores this fundamental fact of God's creation as it is. How can a theology call itself 'Christian' if it bypasses the crucifixion of whole peoples and their need for resurrection, even though its books have been talking about crucifixion and resurrection for twenty centuries?"⁴⁴⁶ Sobrino deals with the reality of the poor theologically and christologically. However, it is immediately clear that this is also a life commitment and a personal involvement. This explains why he understood theology as *intellectus amoris, misericordiae, iustitiae*.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴⁵Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 50.

⁴⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷Sobrino remarks: "Ignacio Ellacuría made an outstanding contribution to this work, insisting that theology should take seriously the signs of times, so that theology should be the raising of social reality to the status of a theological concept, that theology should be understood as the theory of a historical and ecclesial praxis. (Personally I have reformulated this by saying that

Theology is a work of love, mercy as well as a struggle for justice. For him, some outstanding examples of such theologians are Romero and his murdered Jesuit brothers of the UCA. Referring to the center of his life and spirituality as well as what had been to his Jesuit brothers, he writes: "...In any case, at least for brother Jesuits who want to do theology, the theology of these Jesuits, liberation theology, shows that it is the most Ignatian theology in the world today, because it is guided by the search for God's will in order to put it into practice and by its following of Jesus today, the Jesus who was poor and lowly."⁴⁴⁸

A true faith in the historical Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the New Testament is indeed inseparable from the call of discipleship as perceived by the "Christian" community from Jesus' time up to the present time. Sobrino underscores this way of understanding faith in Jesus Christ as well as his perception on christology. A christology of liberation perceives undoubtedly a mutual importance of our faith and the act of faith:

The theoretical premise is the correlation between *fides quae*, the content of faith, that is the reality of Jesus Christ, and *fides qua*, the act of believing in this content. It is not that faith creates its object, which is why we always have to go back to the New Testament in order to see if the act of faith corresponds to the reality of Christ, but it is nevertheless true that there is a correlation between the act of believing and what is believed, in such a way that the one refers to the other and therefore "it is perfectly legitimate for a christology to start from our relationship with Jesus Christ."⁴⁴⁹

theology is *intellectus amoris, misericordiae, iustitiae*.)" Ibid., 48 and also Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 27-46.

⁴⁴⁸Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 48-49.

⁴⁴⁹Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 26-27.

It is the task of christology to discern that kind of faith which Sobrino called a real faith in Christ, beginning from the one who is doing a christological reflection him/herself.

Analysis of actual faith in Christ is thus important a priori for christology, but I want to insist now that this is also the lesson of Latin American experience. Not only believers' "image" of Christ, but their act of faith, their response to and correspondence in the reality of their lives with this image, helps christology to penetrate the reality and understand the texts about him.⁴⁵⁰

An act of following Christ, a personal commitment and an involvement in the struggle for "taking the crucified people down from the cross", are present in theology of liberation as well as in the christology of Sobrino. Finally, it should be mentioned that this involvement opens to the very concrete possibility of being killed unjustly, which happened to many poor and oppressed. Yet, this readiness to embrace the cost of discipleship is considered "native" to the act of following Christ especially since Christ, himself underwent crucifixion at the hands of those who opposed his mission.

2. Methodological Preference: Commitment to the Poor

This personal involvement according to Sobrino, has to be understood strictly in the context of doing theology that begins from our concern for the poor and oppressed. It is obvious that Sobrino's theological/christological reflection has been more rooted in the reality of the people and a response to their life experience of poverty, oppression even untimely death. Sobrino illustrates his opinion on this case by explaining what liberation theology is. First he says that

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., 27.

Liberation theology is not--directly--a theology for the masses, for the people, anymore than any other conventional theology, but it is related very specifically to the lives of the mass of the people because it deals with their real situation, certainly their poverty, their suffering and hope. Not only that; it also draws on many of the reflections and popular theologies of the communities. Those who do theology about this may be few, an elite; but the situation they study is that of many, the poor.⁴⁵¹

Second, this concern for the poor and this theological endeavor to take sides with the poor have their goal in the poor themselves. For Sobrino our theological/christological reflection to make sense of that painful reality should serve the people and bear fruits for them.

If the mass of ordinary people today understand a little better that what they are suffering is the sin of the world, that God is a God of the poor, their God, that what Jesus proclaimed was a kingdom of life and justice for them, that it was for this that he suffered the fate of the poor and was murdered; if these poor people feel a little more encouraged to work and struggle generously and nobly for life to belong to all, then, even if they have not heard a word of liberation theology, it has still reached them.⁴⁵²

Sobrino presents a challenging christological perspective when he says that there is a close affinity between the crucified people today and the crucified Jesus. In the area of spirituality, this kind of understanding has often been suggested and presented. In his christology, Sobrino switches the focus to the crucified people as his primary concern and

⁴⁵¹Sobrino, Ellacuria and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 49.

⁴⁵²Ibid. Sobrino refers mainly to the mass of Christian poor especially because it assumes familiarity with Jesus Christ and his mission or at least to those who knows the Gospel story about Jesus Christ. From his christological point of view, it should only show his ceaseless effort, based on his faith in Jesus Christ the liberator, to understand and shed light to the reality of massive poverty and oppression. Therefore his theological/christological claim should be understood as an open argument on behalf of the "crucified people" as a whole.

his point of departure. Therefore, he is consciously incorporating them as an important element in his christological method. One of his major reasons is that he has come to an understanding that what happened in the world of the poor and oppressed today has explained in a much clearer way, who Jesus Christ is. His view on the affinity and resemblance between the crucified people and the crucified Jesus truly reflects his christological insight from the world of the poor and oppressed.

If this faith is ultimate in character, this means that it is responding to an ultimate reality and so, whether or not the divinity of Christ is mentioned, the radical quality of the act of faith is a statement that Christ is really an ultimate. And the lived content of the act of faith also throws light on aspects of Christ. For example, discipleship in practice is an introduction to the Jesus we follow, real martyrdom is an introduction to Jesus the martyr. Consequently, in analyzing the reality of Christ, Latin American christology has put emphasis on one Jesus and not another, with specific features different from those of other christologies (partiality for the poor, his practice of denouncing and unmasking idols, a person merciful and faithful to the last ...).⁴⁵³

Sobrino further observed that in fact there are many committed Christians whose life has been transformed in the light of the new image of Christ of Latin America. Their way of living faith in Christ corresponds strongly to Christ's image, and therefore they have become followers of Christ and a communal witness to Christ the liberator. This observation has brought another important transformative role to a christology of liberation, a role which finally leads to conversion in one's faith and, according to Sobrino, this has produced many committed Christians whose lives have been transformed into Christ. According to Sobrino, what is significant in this conversion process is eventually the power of Christ the liberator who becomes undoubtedly present in our midst today.

⁴⁵³Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 27.

Corresponding to this new image is *a new way of living faith* in Christ. Many Christians today believe--existentially--in a way that is different and even contrary to their former way, have undergone a radical conversion in their mode of belief and have borne witness to it by an impressive commitment that includes sacrificing their lives. Many Christians have been murdered in Latin America, but not just any Christians, rather those who act consistently in accordance with the new image of Christ the liberator. This fact of generalized martyrdom is the best proof that there really is a new image of Christ, one more faithful to the Christ who is Jesus. Faith in Christ means, first and foremost, *following Jesus*.⁴⁵⁴

From the perspective of Sobrino's explanation on the relation between theology and Christian praxis, it is affirmed that personal commitment and praxis of liberation, love, service and justice is necessary for theology.⁴⁵⁵ The reason is that the praxis of liberation in our world marked by massive poverty and oppression is an important process to attain a liberative way of knowing and to come to the content of theology. Sobrino argues:

More simply, one knows reality better when one is acting within it. Or, in more technical terms, one knows reality when one not only understands reality (*hacerse cargo de la realidad*, the ethical moment) but when one takes charge of reality (*se hace cargo de la realidad*, the praxic moment) (I. Ellacuria). In biblical terms one knows God when one does justice (Jeremias, Osea); one knows by loving (1 John); one realizes what it means to be human when one serves those in need (although such knowledge may not be explicit) (Matt.25).⁴⁵⁶

This is what Sobrino claims to be real faith in Christ. "If, *per impossibile*, there was, in fact, no real faith in Christ in history, Christ would cease to be Christ. This formal

⁴⁵⁴Ibid., 13.

⁴⁵⁵Sobrino explains that "Praxis--understood as love, service, or justice--is necessary element in the constitution of all knowledge, including theological knowledge. But the theology of liberation also stresses that theology, insofar as it is already constituted--or more precisely, in process of constituting itself--is the noetic element in all praxis. Here we have an important difference between liberation theology and other theologies that understand themselves solely as carrying out a noetic, explanatory, interpretative, or significative role." Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 38.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid.

statement, which some may find audacious, means that it is important for christology not only to analyze the texts about Christ and take account of his presence now in history, but also to discern and analyze real faith in Christ."⁴⁵⁷ Sobrino is single-minded when he comes to the purpose of his theological/ christological endeavor which is the elimination of the world's suffering. He concludes:

The insistence of liberation theology on praxis and its self-understanding as a moment of praxis are rooted ultimately not in a theoretical discussion about the perennial question, What is theology? (although liberation theologians raise and try to answer that question) but, in two primary options analyzed above: Before a world of suffering, the primary response must be a compassion that seeks to eliminate such suffering; and this response must be present in every human, religious, and Christian activity. Every activity will be carried out according to its specific nature, but what is specific in every activity, including theology, must be subordinated to, and directed toward (and later illuminated by), the elimination of the world's suffering. What always holds priority, therefore, is the elimination of suffering from this world, which is a praxis to which other activity will make its specific contribution.⁴⁵⁸

Up to this point we have tried to focus our discussion on the christology of Sobrino after the killing. A christology of mercy has been crystallized by the event. The killing of the six Jesuits has left a permanent mark in Sobrino's christology, a compassionate way of doing it, and has become a driving force to entreat mercy and solidarity. His insight on the poor as a major christological point of departure has been sharpened with his focus on the reality of the crucified people, a metaphor used to explain the final reality of the poor and its christological nature that sets the core of their reality. The killing of the six Jesuits offered an inalienable explanation and affirmation of that

⁴⁵⁷Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical- Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 26.

⁴⁵⁸Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 39.

insight. The core message of the Good News is therefore Jesus the liberator. At the same time, it is clear that this Good News has to be shared in the struggle against the power of the "anti-kingdom" which clearly embodied its evil plan in the untimely death of many poor people and it has killed Sobrino's Jesuit brothers and co-workers. The presence of the anti-kingdom has become real and unavoidable in the killing of six-Jesuits. Sobrino's Christology cannot but deal with it. A personal commitment becomes irreplaceable and present in the process of doing christology of liberation. The main reason for this is that christology deals with real people, the poor and the crucified people through whom we will come to a better understanding of Jesus Christ, the crucified and the resurrected one.

Let us now continue our discussion on another major theme of Sobrino's christology of mercy: the primacy of praxis in christology as an act of following Jesus.

IV. Praxis Before Theory: Discipleship and Christology

It has been said that, for Latin American theologians such as Boff and Sobrino, in order to know Christ one must first follow Christ. This insight is important not only for meeting a major pastoral need among the Churches in Latin America or functioning as a criticism against a strong tendency of dogmatism and "abstraction" when it comes to christology, but also to reconstruct some basic christological formulas themselves in such a way that they will make sense to the people of Latin America. The real presence of Jesus and his uniqueness can only be known and affirmed in the praxis of historical, social involvement. Praxis becomes both the starting point and the criterion of a christological reflection. Sobrino wrote: "everything we know or say about Jesus must be continually

confirmed, clarified, and perhaps corrected in the praxis of living his vision within the changing contexts of history."⁴⁵⁹

On the following pages, an act of following Jesus even up to the cross will be discussed in the light of our search of the christological "concrete embodiment". Ellacuría's vision and prophetic teachings on the crucified people and on the radical act of historicization of the Kingdom of God proclaimed and initiated by Jesus Christ as presented in chapter II, are worth recalling. Sobrino and Ellacuría are strongly connected on these issues both in their theological/christological thinking and "apostolic" life amidst the people of El Salvador. A prophetic act of following Jesus and his cause ought to function as a possible criterion for evaluating theological/ christological approaches which seeks to "take the crucified peoples down from the cross" in terms of solidarity.

A. Following Jesus is the Precondition for Knowing Him

The importance of an act of following Jesus in the reflection of Sobrino's christology does not point only to a question of an individual spirituality or to a necessary implication of his christology. Sobrino understands this act of following Jesus Christ as a spring to draw out our knowledge of him and, more importantly, to know him personally. From this point of departure it is possible to develop a christology of liberation. The reality of an emerging new self-awareness among the poor and many committed Christians and their involvements in the struggle for justice and liberation inspired by the Gospel has become a major background of Sobrino's christology, especially as regards the place and

⁴⁵⁹See Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 346-395.

role of the act of following Jesus.

In Christology at the Crossroads, Sobrino had mentioned his concern to elaborate a different point of departure which ultimately will become a hermeneutical principle to understand Jesus Christ within a Latin American context. Sobrino wrote that "The problem of choosing a starting point becomes the quest for some focus on Christ that will best reveal him in his universality and do so in concrete rather than abstract terms. Needless to say, that is no easy task. It explains why in *historical* fact different starting points have been chosen."⁴⁶⁰

Through his reflection, based on the reality of Latin America, Sobrino turned to the "historical Jesus" and developed a christology of mercy (in his Jesus the Liberator) from that point, the concrete history of Jesus. This means "... It is the person, teaching, attitudes, and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth insofar as they are accessible, in a more or less general way, to historical and exegetical investigation."⁴⁶¹ Taking historical Jesus as a point of departure in this case is not extraordinarily new. What is original in Sobrino's approach is the way to have access to the person of Jesus, which is following him up to the Cross. Christology of liberation begins with a confession of the humanity of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the Gospel and refers especially to his historical life. This emphasis does not mean that one is neglecting the importance of the resurrected Christ, since the Gospel message undoubtedly involves it. The two reasons involved in this view are that following Jesus means that we take Jesus' faith and the faith in the resurrection

⁴⁶⁰Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶¹Ibid.

seriously and that, according to Sobrino, we need to pay a special attention for not bypassing the historical Jesus whenever we want to know about Christ. Otherwise, we will fall into the position of treating Christ more as some kind of a myth. Therefore, Sobrino shows the prior importance of the historical Jesus in a christology of liberation. At the same time, he stressed the role of discipleship which only indicates the historicity of Jesus even in the life of his present followers.

Thus there is a tension existing between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, between cultic worship and discipleship. It does not mean that we are faced with an either-or situation, that the two dimensions are mutually exclusive and we must choose between them. My point here is to point up where the logical priorities lies, and it lies with what is prior chronologically. It lies, in short, with the historical Jesus. This means that access to the Christ of faith can only come through access to the historical Jesus, through discipleship. And the ultimate reason for this is that the Christ of faith is not just some vague, exalted Lord but the very man who lived a certain kind of life and died a certain way because of that.⁴⁶²

Several years later, in his Jesus en Latin America, Sobrino explained some additional points for an understanding of the historical Jesus: as a person who has a particular teaching, attitudes, activities, life progress and fate.⁴⁶³ These are explainable and understandable, insofar as they are accessible, in a more or less general way, to historical and exegetical investigation. Throughout the analysis there is another question addressed in Sobrino's christology. Which element of the proclamation of Jesus Christ by the authors of the Gospel is most historical? Sobrino answers:

The most historical element in the historical Jesus is his practice, that is, his activity brought to bear upon the reality around him in order to transform it in a determinate, selected direction, the direction of the kingdom of God. This is the

⁴⁶²Ibid., 275.

⁴⁶³Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 64.

practice that in his day unleashed history and that has come down to us as history unleashed. The historical here, as Jürgen Moltmann defines it apropos of Christ's resurrection, is what drives history.⁴⁶⁴

For Sobrino, the two elements, to understand the historical Jesus and to follow Jesus, are mutually dependent. Following Jesus helps to come to a fuller understanding of and to know Christ. Therefore it clear that Sobrino does not intend to write a biography of Jesus Christ. Nor did the authors of the Gospel intend to compose a biography but rather to proclaim that the one who has been crucified is now resurrected and that they clearly indicated the importance of following Jesus as disciples in order to live the Good News. In other words, this is an act of narrating the history of Jesus and at the same time proclaiming it through a real act of following him here and now.⁴⁶⁵ Andrés Gallego, a liberation theologian from Peru, asserts that Latin American christology clearly reminds us that Christ is Jesus of Nazareth, and if we hold onto this, it will be our assurance that Christ will not remain a myth without history.⁴⁶⁶

It is true that at first Latin American christology understood the historical Jesus as the totality of Jesus' history. However, its finality is to recognize and enhance the continuation of Jesus' history and the discipleship implied in the present.

⁴⁶⁴Ibid., 66. Reference is to Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology, trans. James W. Leicht (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967), 240-241. Here Sobrino's use of "history" is not totally clear. Two basic points that can be helpful to approach his idea of history, are in Sobrino's writings (1) history is not something given but created and therefore can be directed to a particular goal and (2) theologically speaking, Sobrino distinguishes between historical statement and doxological statement. For example, if a faith in Jesus is a call to discipleship which has been underlined by Sobrino, then the world and its history are important. Faith in Jesus should be lived out and made credible within history.

⁴⁶⁵Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 64, 96-97.

⁴⁶⁶Gallego, El Seguimiento de Jesús en la Cristología de Jon Sobrino, 15.

The historical element in Jesus, then is not primarily simply that which can be situated in space and in time. Nor is it the doctrinal element, in the latter's hypostatization unto itself independently of Jesus' practice. Neither is it the prime finality of a christology that returns to the historical Jesus to be able to learn about his geography and temporality or his pure doctrine. This requires an understanding of the New Testament in general and the Gospel narratives in particular, not only, and not basically, as description and doctrine, but as accounts of a practice that are published precisely in order that this practice be continued. For us, then, the historical element in the historical Jesus is first and foremost an invitation (and a demand) to continue his practice--or, in Jesus' language, an invitation to his discipleship for a mission.⁴⁶⁷

A concrete act of the following of Christ or discipleship is for Sobrino an inseparable element of christology.

To carry on the history of Jesus means also to continue the history of his faith and finally the faith of the resurrection. The experience of temptations, failures, suffering and crucifixion in a special way strongly shows Jesus' faith, his view of life and his mission.

The salvific dimension of the Christ event is expressed in an act of following rather than in a cultic understanding of the saving sacrifice of Jesus. What Sobrino seeks is a real history of Jesus. Otherwise, the history of Jesus must be considered unreal. Were this the case, his life would be only a well-interpreted history but would never influence anybody. In this kind of abstract christology the issue of following Jesus is irrelevant. Sobrino reminds us of the importance of reclaiming the history of Jesus and he points out that what remains at the center is Jesus' faith.

What are the roots of Jesus' humanity? Sobrino explains that our discussion on the historical Jesus has to come to the depth of his reality as a human being and as a son. At this point, the discussion of Jesus' faith has been developed as an important issue in the

⁴⁶⁷Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, 66.

history of Jesus. Indeed, the New Testament has indicated clearly this faith dimension in Jesus life and ministry. It is more common in the New Testament to find about faith in Jesus than about Jesus' faith. However, there are passages, such as Hebrew 12:2 and Mark 9:23, where the faith of Jesus is indicated and presented. For example, the letter to the Hebrews says "...looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrew 12:2). This is an extraordinary verse of the New Testament that proclaims and points to Jesus as the pioneer and our model of faith. Therefore this text has been used to show that Jesus has faith.⁴⁶⁸

Sobrino explains that faith is primarily a way of life and trust in God who gives security and meaning to one's life. Because it deals with a way of life, faith is historical. For Christians, the example is Jesus himself whose life was dedicated to preaching the Kingdom of God and making it, present, based on his faith in God the Father. Jesus' faith is exemplary and engaging since it touches the very center of Christian faith which is Jesus Christ himself or a gift of God to follow Jesus.⁴⁶⁹ Sobrino concludes: "In concrete terms

⁴⁶⁸Sobrino presents the interpretations of Mark 9:23 and Hebrew 12:2 as a confirmation and insight to the discussion of Jesus' faith. Jesus' faith is seen as "a way of life vis-à-vis God, quite in line with the Old Testament view. Faith is trust in God, a way of life grounded in Another who gives security and meaning to one's own existence." In the Letter to the Hebrews faith is presented as "...the very mode of Jesus' existence and that it has history." Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 88-91.

⁴⁶⁹See "Dei Verbum", no. 5, which understands faith primarily as God's gift. "The obedience of faith" (Rom. 13:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor. 10:5-6) must be our response to God who reveals. By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God, making "the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," (4) and willingly assenting to the revelation given by God. For this faith to be accorded we need the grace of God, anticipating it and assisting it, as well as the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, and opens the eyes of the mind and "makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth". (5) The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by

the faith of Jesus can be summed up in his attitude of exclusive confidence in the Father (vertical relationship) and his total obedience to his mission of proclaiming and making present the kingdom (horizontal relationship). This twofold attitude makes explicit the unique faith of Jesus."⁴⁷⁰

There is no doubt that in Sobrino's christology an act of following Jesus Christ and the totality of his faith in God the Father are integral parts. The New Testament had introduced this kind of christology and a Latin American context makes it urgent to go back to this kind of christology.

What, then is the meaning of the New Testament declaration about faith *in* Jesus? Obviously it has nothing to do with a merely nominalist orthodoxy that now includes Jesus in the pantheon of deities. Faith is always directed to the absolute of God and his kingdom. Faith in Jesus means accepting the fact that in him there has been revealed the Son--which is to say, the way to God. That can be done in orthodox confessions and in cultic acclamations. But faith in Jesus attains its maximum radicality when we accept his path as normative and traverse it. The most radical and most orthodox affirmation of *faith in Jesus* is affirming that the *faith of Jesus* is the correct way to draw nearer to God and realize his kingdom, and then acting accordingly.⁴⁷¹

B. New Importance of Following Jesus in "Jesus the Liberator"

It is clear from the beginning of Sobrino's "Jesus the Liberator" that following Jesus, to live faithfully in accordance with Jesus' way of life, is the essence of Sobrino's christological reflection. Following Jesus is an unalterable way of knowing Jesus and living

his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more deeply understood." Flannery, ed., The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language, 99.

⁴⁷⁰Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach, 103.

⁴⁷¹Ibid., 108.

a Christian faith.

This involves all human powers and efforts, not merely intellectual powers.

Christology needs to and must draw out the powers of human intelligence, but also other human powers. Its approach has to be rigorously intellectual--even doctrinal, some would add--but its deepest essence lies in being something "spiritual", in that it should help persons and communities to meet Christ, to follow the cause of Jesus, to live as new men and women and to conform this world to the heart of God.⁴⁷²

However, it needs to be recognized immediately that Sobrino never fails to remind us of the main horizon of Jesus' life and ministry which is God, who is the father and the gracious mystery. Therefore, this means that the two have to be considered in all of his christological reflection. Sobrino underlines that "...christology can show a way--that of Jesus--in which human beings can meet the mystery, call it 'Father', as Jesus did, and name this Jesus as the Christ."⁴⁷³

Sobrino ends his book with the cross of Jesus and a reflection on the crucified people of the world today. The conclusion is more than just a christological observation and a reflection that takes the suffering, poverty and oppression of the people of our today seriously. Sobrino witnessed a continuous existing hope in the life of many poor and oppressed people, and, particularly in his christological reflection, the cross of Jesus opened a new horizon to understand and face that "unacceptable" reality.⁴⁷⁴ Sobrino brings

⁴⁷²Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 7.

⁴⁷³Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴Hope continues to be one of Sobrino's major theological/christological themes. In the celebration of the ninth anniversary of the killing of the Jesuits and their co-workers in November 1998, Sobrino delivered a lecture entitled "Hope and National Reality" and concluded that hope remains a historical truth in El Salvador. In a paradoxical way, the martyrs remain the source of hope. Perhaps it is not for all people, but it surely is for the poor and for those in solidarity with

back an important yet basic christological point that the Good News is what Jesus died for. This Good News has been heard and actualized in many people who follow the footsteps of Jesus. Yet it is tragic to come to a conclusion that the great love has been put together in the world of unreasonable structural egoism with death.⁴⁷⁵ This is true and obvious for Sobrino in the event of the killing of Romero and of his Jesuit friends. It is significant in Sobrino's book that after the killing of the six Jesuits of the UCA, an act of following Jesus involved immediately a possible persecution and even a mortal consequence. Indeed, in his book Jesus the Liberator Sobrino has a particular chapter on persecution. This shows its importance to understand Sobrino's christology of mercy.

C. Persecuted for the Sake of the Kingdom

Sobrino brings up the issue of persecution for the sake of the Kingdom as a reality and a real context for christology, and therefore for those who commit themselves to follow Jesus and his cause. Sobrino argues that in the face of reality of persecution and the killing of the poor and of those who had brought the Good News to them, events which were and are very real in El Salvador and Latin America in general as well as in many other countries, his question is different than that of many European theologians. "Among

them. Sobrino, "Esperanza y Realidad Nacional," ECA LIII (November-December 1998): 1105-1121.

⁴⁷⁵Sobrino wrote: "La cruz del estilo de la de Jesús, tan presente hoy en muchos lugares, es esperanza porque abre un horizonte. La tragedia de este mundo es que grandes amores son puestos fin con la muerte. Y ello porque este mundo es de un egoismo estructural enorme. El que haya un gran amor como el de Jesús, llevado hasta el final, eso es Buena Noticia, eso crea esperanza." See Mission Abierta 4 (April 1992): 16.

us the question is not, as it keeps being described in Europe, how to do theology *after* Auschwitz, but doing it *in* Auschwitz, that is in the midst of a terrifying cross, and that is why I said at the beginning that the title of this book is not obvious, and that it might well have been called *Jesus Christ Crucified*.⁴⁷⁶ At this point it is worth to be mentioned again that both realities of "the cross of Jesus" and "the crosses that exist today serve as a hermeneutical point of reference for a christology from Latin America."⁴⁷⁷

Sobrino's christological reflection on the reality of persecution and killing begins with Jesus himself as the crucified one, who died a violent death. Two questions he proposes are: first, based on a historical view point regarding the causes of his death; why was Jesus killed? Second, from a theological view point on the meaning of his death; why did Jesus die? The following discussion will be focused primarily on the historical causes of Jesus' death as witnessed in the New Testament. As I pointed out earlier the second question for Sobrino brings us finally to the gracious mystery of God itself.

For Sobrino it is readable from the Gospel that there are historical causes that led Jesus to his persecution and his death. Jesus was most probably very aware of this situation. Sobrino's brief analysis on the Synoptics indicates the main elements of persecution that Jesus had undergone. Persecution began very early in his ministerial

⁴⁷⁶Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 195.

⁴⁷⁷Sobrino writes "I want to say that the cross of Jesus points us to the crosses that exist today, but that these in turn point to that of Jesus and are--historically--the great hermeneutic to enable us to understand why Jesus was killed and--theologically--express in themselves the question that cannot be silenced, the mystery of why Jesus died. The crucified peoples of the Third World are today the great theological setting, the *locus*, in which to understand the cross of Jesus." Ibid., 195-196.

contacts with his society. The main historical causes of his persecution are: his vigorous life of service for God's Kingdom that favors the poor, marginalized and the oppressed; his faith in God the Father; and what Sobrino's calls "Jesus' struggle against the Divinities of death".⁴⁷⁸ It needs to be mentioned that in reference to the struggle against the "divinities of death" and the "anti-kingdom", Sobrino made a point of its importance for Latin American christology. These historical causes involved conflicts and denunciations that led to a foreseen and an almost unavoidable persecution up to the possibility of being killed violently.

The main indications of Jesus' persecution according to Sobrino are the following (1) attacks against him at the beginning of his mission according to Luke's Gospel, when "...his fellow townspeople, full of anger, threw him out of the town and wanted to throw him over the cliff (Luke 4:28ff)."⁴⁷⁹ (2) In Mark's Gospel, there are many controversies with different groups of people, for example the Pharisees who "watched him, to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him" (Mark 3:2 par.) and "...went out, and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him" (Mark 3:6 par.).⁴⁸⁰ (3) In Matthew's Gospel, as also in the other synoptic gospels, there are five scenes that show that Jesus' life is at risk: the story about the

⁴⁷⁸These three main historical causes have been explained in the earlier parts of this thesis. In Sobrino's *Christology at the Crossroads* see especially chapter 3, 4 and 5, also part II chapter 4 and 5 of his *Jesus the Liberator*; and in his *Jesus in Latin America* see part II that brought up a special issue on "Jesus' struggle against the divinities of death" which will be amplified and sharpened in part II chapter 6 of his *Jesus the Liberator*, a discussion on Jesus' prophetic praxis as upholding the true God against the anti-kingdom.

⁴⁷⁹Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 197.

⁴⁸⁰Ibid.

payment of tribute to Caesar (Matthew 22: 15-22 and its parallels), on resurrection from the dead (Mark 12: 18-23 and its parallels), the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11: 15-19 and its parallels), the parable of the murderous vine growers (Luke 20: 9-19 and its parallels), and the greatest commandment (Matthew 22: 34-40 and its parallels). These passages lead to a final conclusion that "The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him" (Luke 22: 1-2 and its parallels).⁴⁸¹

(4) Sobrino explained that in John's Gospel there is a more detailed analysis of the climate of persecution throughout Jesus' life. Suspicions (2:24), attempts to arrest Jesus (7:32, 11:57), to stone (10:31) or to kill Jesus (7:19) fill many stories and conversations in John's Gospel.⁴⁸²

Finally, it is necessary to consider that in an act of following Jesus, a possibility to be persecuted must to be taken into account. Sobrino shows that Jesus' persecution is not mainly a cruel historical accident but something that could be foreseen. Therefore, Jesus did not suffer a peculiar fate; rather he suffered a fate common in such cases. The Gospels show that there was a constant and increasing persecution against Jesus, particularly because of Jesus' condemnations of oppressive power, specifically, religious power. Moreover, Jesus defends the victims. Sobrino concludes that "Real, constant and

⁴⁸¹Ibid., 198.

⁴⁸²Ibid., 198-199. In this respect, there are two important notes to be remembered. First, Sobrino did not consider all details are equally historical yet he is convinced that "the Gospels show a constant and increasing persecution, such that Jesus' end was not accidental, but the culmination of a necessary historical process. Second, various groups of people have been named as responsible for the persecution, yet above all, according to Sobrino, we need to determine where the fundamental responsibility lies. "The important point is that all of them are groups that, directly or indirectly, hold some type of power... and that all these groups come together, in fact, in persecution."

increasing persecution shows objectively that 'the conflict is not something isolated, accidental,' and subjectively, that it is a process that 'Jesus accepts with increasing lucidity... not only suffers it but also provokes it'. This makes it clear that Jesus must have been aware of the possibility of a tragic outcome. This point is important to make us aware of Jesus' freedom and' ultimately, of his love."⁴⁸³

Sobrino's claim for the act of following Jesus as the precondition for knowing him comes from his own experience, his critical observation and his christological reflection on the life and death of many "martyrs" in El Salvador and in Latin America generally. Later these observation and reflection become more personal and urgent for Sobrino after the killing of his own Jesuit brothers and their co-workers with whom he thought through and tried to live true Christian discipleship. This is his main reason when he says that "Faith in Christ means, first and foremost, *following Jesus*."⁴⁸⁴ and that "...knowing Christ is, in the last resort, following Christ."⁴⁸⁵ At this point, to better understand his insight, it is important to review the relation between Sobrino's understanding of discipleship and Ellacuría's idea of historicizing the Kingdom of God which was proclaimed and initiated by Jesus. Two main reasons for this are: first, that both Ellacuría and Sobrino are the main theologians of the UCA who clearly shared their vision and mission; and secondly, that for Sobrino it is clear that Ellacuría and his friends were murdered "... for trying to create a truly Christian university. They were killed because they believed in the God of the poor

⁴⁸³Ibid., 200.

⁴⁸⁴Ibid., 13.

⁴⁸⁵Ibid., 35.

and tried to produce this faith through the university."⁴⁸⁶

IV. A Christology From the Perspective of the Victims

The following discussion will center at Sobrino's latest christological writings especially La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas that takes the resurrection of Jesus as its principal theological problem.⁴⁸⁷ The focus remains on the elaboration of his Christology after the killing or more precisely a christology of mercy done from the perspective of the victims as now fully developed in his christology.

There are four points worth-noting from Sobrino's previous reflections on the resurrection, that will enable us to examine the development of Sobrino's theology of the resurrection, and especially his decisive point of departure, the victims of our world. These four points are: first, the resurrection primarily reveals God. Second, three basic questions to approach it are: what can we know? what may we hope for? and what should we do? Third, Sobrino underlines the importance of praxis as a hermeneutical principle for understanding Jesus as well as his resurrection. Fourth, the understanding of the resurrection has much to do with our understanding of history. Sobrino elaborated and developed the four points in his latest christological writings, a christology done

⁴⁸⁶Sobrino, "Companions of Jesus" in Sobrino, Ellacuría and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 29.

⁴⁸⁷See Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas. By this publication, Sobrino fulfills his promise to provide the second volume of his well-known book: Jesus The Liberator, which will be "...tracing this history [of Jesus] from the faith unleashed by his resurrection down to the faith of our own time." See Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth, 272.

"purposely" from the reality of the victims today and profoundly grounded in God as the Absolute Mystery.

Let us now continue our discussion on Sobrino's christological insights by explaining the four related points developed in his latest christological writings: first is on Sobrino's "radicalized" christological approach: from the perspectives of the victims. The second is on the resurrection and God. The third is on the faith in the resurrection as the triumph of justice (a faith unleashed in the resurrection and a faith shared by the victims). The fourth is on the resurrection and history (an experience of the Victims). Finally, the discussion of these four points will indicate Sobrino's maturing theological/christological sensitivity especially after being confronted by the reality of the victims.

A. "Radicalized" Christological Approach: From the Perspectives of the Victims

From the introduction of La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, Sobrino made clear that "the victims" of our world are his main concern and interest, and therefore a starting point and even a major theological locus for his christological reflection.⁴⁸⁸ This newly published book introduces a novel way of doing christology, the resurrection of Jesus as Good News and an extraordinary faith in him unleashed by the event. Sobrino's purposely chosen and radicalized point of departure, the victims, shows his decisive

⁴⁸⁸Sobrino wrote: "Pues bien, el desde dónde de este libro es una perspectiva *parcial, concreta e interesada*: las víctimas de este mundo. Todo ello viene exigido por la revelación de Dios y también por la realidad del mundo actual, aunque esto se decide siempre dentro de un círculo hermenéutico. El argumento en favor de esta perspectiva es, pues, en último término, indefenso, pero en nuestro mundo es razonable y necesario. Por ello, aunque nos alarguemos un poco y no suela ser habitual en un libro de cristología, a modo de recordatorio queremos comenzar con un breve excursus sobre las víctimas." Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las Víctimas, 14.

theological/christological point of view. The victims serve as his fundamental theological/christological perspective. Eventually, for Sobrino, this implies a different way of understanding and presenting a theological reflection on Jesus Christ in his totality. Namely, his book now is presented as a kind of "parable" about Jesus Christ that for him, immediately demands its reader to take stance, to take a decision to follow the way of Jesus Christ or not to follow.⁴⁸⁹ Sobrino claims that the perspective of the victims is unavoidable in order to read christological texts and finally to better understand Jesus Christ and his mission. On the other hand, "this Jesus Christ" will help us to better understand the victims, and above all, to work for their defence.⁴⁹⁰ In doing this he demonstrates his attempt to make use fully of this perspective of the victims and this is materialized in his La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas. There are two important reasons involved that simultaneously show his new insights: First is his new understanding of the reality and second is his definition of the so-called christology of mercy.

⁴⁸⁹The demand of following Jesus or discipleship is an integral part of Sobrino's christology and has marked all of his christological reflections. In his new book, the demand remains true, yet he introduces a different way of reading his christological presentation, which is now as a "kind" of parable that requires a stance of its reader, as in the case of Jesus' parables, and not "only" a merely abstract christological reasoning. He writes:

"Por último, hemos insistido en el seguimiento de Jesús y su estructura fundamental--lo qual hay que re-hacer con espíritu y en el Espíritu--, y en que ese seguimiento es el camino a Dios.

De estos elementos están hecho ambos libros y la cristología que subyace en ellos. Esta cristología, en definitiva, pensamos que es como un parábola acerca de Jesucristo, la cual, como toda parábola, exige una toma de postura y una decisión de parte del lector." See Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 598.

⁴⁹⁰Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 21.

1. New Understanding of Reality: The Victims and the Primacy of Reality

The term "victims" is a radicalized definition of the crucified people as well as the poor and the oppressed who are more often used in his previous theological/christological writings. One reason of this change, as already indicated in his first christological book after the killing, has been an overwhelming number of the poor and the oppressed who died slowly or violently as well as many of those who worked in solidarity with them. Sobrino came to a profound personal understanding of the reality and what it means to be "poor and victim" after the killing of his own Jesuit brothers of his own community and their co-workers.

In his Jesus The Liberator, Sobrino had explained what had been happening to the crucified people and its christological significance. Therefore, he called them "martyred people". The metaphor of the "crucified people", introduced by Ellacuría, has functioned similarly to qualify what they had been called before: the poor and the oppressed. Currently, in La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, Sobrino re-defines the basic reality of our world today as a world of the victims. He explained that the word "victim" is used to express the word poor and its consequence of being poor. In his social observation, he sees that poverty, in the first place, is still the reality in which the great majority of human beings live, bent under the burden of life, "to survive is their great difficulty and a slow death is their nearest destiny."⁴⁹¹ Therefore, more than just poor, for him, the word "victim" becomes more appropriate and it can frequently be its stronger

⁴⁹¹Ibid., 15-16. Sobrino also pointed out to the scandalous inequality in this one human family; the fundamental roots of this poverty which is historical, namely, a structural injustice; and that poverty is the most lasting form of violence and is committed with the greatest impunity.

expression than the metaphor of the crucified people.⁴⁹²

Sobrino develops his argument that amidst this world marked strongly by poverty, the reality of "the victims" has to be continuously taken into our consideration and for his christological reflection this reality becomes the most appropriate theological/christological locus. The two main reasons for that are, first, is his study of the revelation of God reflected in the Bible and secondly, the reality of our world today in itself. The first reason has to do with Sobrino's way of reading the scripture especially the New Testament in dialogue with biblical scholars and theologians (H. Kessler, J. I. González-Faus, E. Schillebeeckx, J. Moltmann etc.). Sobrino explains:

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World makes this surprising declaration: "The people of God... labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs, and desires in which this people has a part along with other people of our age" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 11)... They are signs of the times in the historical sense of God's intervention in history.

The question--the most important question for theology--is where these signs occur, and whether the historico-pastoral sign coincides with the historico-theological sign. In other words, the question is not whether the sign of the crucified people is the most characteristic sign of our world, but whether it is also the privileged locus of the presence of God. Scripture, Medellín, Puebla, Archbishop Romero, and the theology of liberation have taken this fundamental question seriously. Moltmann did so too, in another context, many years ago now, when he wondered whether the *true* church subsisted "in the manifest community, through word and sacrament, or in the latent siblingship of the universal judge hidden in the poor."

The answer that liberation theology has given is that the crucified people are also the privileged place of God's presence--which, of course, explains Moltmann's daring formulation, "the crucified God." And let us add that this theological reading of reality not only does not trivialize the historicity of that reality, but actually radicalizes it. And at the same time, it is this crucified reality that enables us, and demands of us--with all the cautions to be observed in the

⁴⁹²Sobrino, *La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas*, 14.

application of human language to God--to speak of God crucified.⁴⁹³

Accordingly, for Sobrino what is also important is to underline that the christological texts do not only speak about Christ, but also a call to take stance with or against Jesus before a concrete reality of our world today. The second reason has to do with the reality of our world today marked by poverty and oppression. There are undeniably necessary and urgent demands to respond to the worsening reality of the poor and the victims today.⁴⁹⁴ Quoting J.M. Mella Vázquez, he noted for example: "In 1960, the poorest 20% of the population of the planet shared 2.3% of the world income--a percentage that dropped to 1.7% in 1980 and to 1.4% in 1990. Meanwhile, the richest 20% climbed from [a] 70.2% [share of the world's income] in 1960 to 76.3 in 1980 and 82.7% in 1990."⁴⁹⁵

One impressive development in Sobrino's christology is that it has become more and more direct and mainly argues with reality rather than with other theologians, though Sobrino never lost interest in them. As regards "reality", Sobrino understands this in two ways. First, as also articulated by Ellacuría, is that reality is something that has to be handled by theologians.⁴⁹⁶ Since this involvement in the reality also means to take the

⁴⁹³Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 168-169. See also Dean Brackley, "La Experiencia de Dios," *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* XI/32 (May-August 1994) especially part 3: La experiencia de Dios desde los pobres on page 189-196.

⁴⁹⁴Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 169.

⁴⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁹⁶Though his interest in reality is incomparable, in an interview with the writer, Sobrino reminded me that he has been in a constant dialogue with scholars such as biblical experts, theologians, major figures and trends of thoughts. Indeed, his La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas also incorporated more contemporary North American and Asian sources, such as P.

responsibility to transform the sinful one, committed theologians can foresee the upcoming of persecution and even martyrdom. Sobrino asserts: "The world that theology ought to try to transform is fundamentally sin, anti-reign, and negativity, and all of this in active form: those acting against that world ought to expect that world to act against them. Put simply: in doing theology as *intellectus amoris* we must be prepared to take upon ourselves the onerous element of reality."⁴⁹⁷ This prophetic theological insight was embodied in the martyrdom of Ellacuría himself and his companions and co-workers preceded by that many of others especially Monseñor Romero. Secondly, Sobrino gradually captured the "harvest" of their self-giving commitment as the an integral and positive part of the reality. Indeed, martyrdom has generated tremendous hope and faith, strength and courage, self-giving love and abundant grace. Sobrino asserts conclusively that "The premise is that reality contains not only negativity, but positivity as well. Not only does sin exist, but grace as well. In taking up reality, theology takes up as well the element of grace in that reality, and thereby reality takes on theology. And this is verified in experience."⁴⁹⁸ This is a process of what Sobrino called by "allowing oneself to be

Carnley, K. B. Osborne, E. A. Johnson, E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, G. M. Soares-Prabhu, Aloysius Pieris, etc. as well as European thinkers. See p. 105-151 and Jon Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author," El Salvador, 30 June 1999.

⁴⁹⁷Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, 172.

⁴⁹⁸Ibid., 173-174. Theologically speaking, Sobrino explains: "When we take on victims, the later take us on--offer us *light* to know content and to recognize that which has always been in revelation but has gone unperceived. It is sort of light that the Servant of Yahweh offers when he is 'set...as...as a light for the nations (Isa. 42:6). The victims are like a light we carry when we are looking for something. No one looks at the lamp, and yet, in its light, we find what we are looking for because we can see it. And furthermore, the victims offer content to the intelligence. The concepts of this content may have long existed, but may frequently have been ignored, or been

picked up by reality."

2. Theology is *Intellectus Amoris* and *Intellectus Gratiae*

Sobrino observed that the oppression has generated "persecution and martyrdom", also against those who committed themselves in a work for the defense of the poor and the oppressed. On the discussion of the resurrection from the perspective of the victims, Sobrino begins with his previous christological insight that the whole life of Jesus, not only his death and resurrection, is the Good News and is the subject of his christological reflection, and therefore for him, evidently our discussion on the resurrection is the continuation of our discussion on the history of Jesus. At this point Sobrino raised a significant point that it is important to identify precisely who had been resurrected by God and what this resurrection means? Sobrino's answer is first, that the resurrected one is no other than the victim, Jesus of Nazareth. God did not just raise up any corpse of any person. Secondly, the resurrection directly shows the triumph over the injustice and not simply about the triumph of the omnipotent God over death. Sobrino points out that the resurrection is the Good News for the victims. This also reveals who God is.⁴⁹⁹ Therefore, the victims are a major hermeneutical place to understand the resurrection and that both

unknown in terms of their actual weight."

⁴⁹⁹Sobrino, "La Pascua de Jesús y la Revelación de Dios Desde la Perspectiva de las Víctimas" in *RLT* XII (January-April 1995), 81. "Lo más específico de la resurrección de Jesús para conocer a Dios no es, entonces, lo que Dios hace con un cadáver, sino lo que hace con una víctima. La resurrección de Jesús muestra en directo el triunfo de la justicia sobre la injusticia, no simplemente el triunfo de la omnipotencia de Dios sobre la muerte. La resurrección de Jesús se convierte en directo en buena noticia para las víctimas: una vez, y en plenitud, la justicia ha triunfado sobre la injusticia. La víctima sobre el verdugo--como anhelaba Horkheimer. Y Dios se convierte--como en el éxodo, en los profetas, en Jesús de Nazaret--en el Dios de las víctimas."

the God who resurrected Jesus and Jesus the resurrected explain and illuminate one another.

Referring back to our discussion on the reality, in other words, Sobrino persuasively demonstrated that:

In the same reality, then, there exists the positive that bursts in conjointly with the negative. Not only has evil irrupted, but good as well. Not only has the victims' cry burst in, but their hope and longing for liberation. Therefore, just as we have reformulated theology as *intellectus amoris*, now we wish to reformulate it as *intellectus gratiae*. And the ultimate reason for the latter formulation is in the Christian acceptance of the fact that God is present, patently or concealed, in the victims of this world. Therefore to do theology from amidst, for, and with the victims is to do theology while being borne by reality.⁵⁰⁰

This is a maturing definition of what we earlier called the christology of mercy and a radicalization of his understanding of the reality of the crucified people as its theological locus. Indeed, another new insight in his latest christological reflection has to do with this new understanding of theology as both *intellectus amoris* and *intellectus gratiae*.

Basically, this means for him that theology is both "a critical reflection upon praxis to liberate the victims" and done out of gratitude of the grace of God given to us through the victims.⁵⁰¹ This is an integral part of his discussion on the important role of the

⁵⁰⁰Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 174. Read also his talk in the faculty of theology of Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität, June 8, 1998, in Münster on the challenge of the the crucified people: to carry the burden of their cross in solidarity and to be carried by the crucified people in grace. Jon Sobrino, "Die Theologische Herausforderung der 'Gekreuzigten Völker'" in Zeitschrift für Missions-Wissenschaft un Religions-Wissenschaft 82, 4 (1998): 281-292.

⁵⁰¹Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 22. The development of Sobrino's theology/ Christology reflects his maturing thought on the reality of the poor and the victims within a their context, particularly in a country like El Salvador. In 1988, his article on "Theology in a Suffering World", he explained his theological definition: "As is known, liberation theology understands itself specifically as a theology of praxis--a praxis of eliminating unjust

historical reality for theologians that moves and uplifts them as well as giving them motivation in their commitment and solidarity. Indeed for Sobrino, eventually this is not just a theological endeavor but the very content of Christian faith, a praxis of taking the victims down from the cross in a hopeful journey, that God does justice and that the executioner will never triumph over the victim, and in gratitude of God's grace especially manifested through the victims.⁵⁰²

Sobrino asserts that we should keep this perspective of the victims at the center of the faith. Theology from amidst the victims is even more urgent since, first, there is a strong tendency to forget the poor and the victims and secondly, they have always been

suffering from the world. Consequently, I wish to formally define liberation theology within the great theological tradition as *intellectus amoris*. As such, it integrates and retrieves--but in a more radical way--what is contained in theology understood as *intellectus fidei* and *intellectus spei*." Sobrino explained further that "Theology becomes an *intellectus*--a knowing of the mystery of God and of the mystery of humanity and history before God... Theology can be understood as *intellectus fidei* in order to stress what in the mystery of God is the truth to be known and what in human nature is the means to know it. But theology can also be grasped as *intellectus spei* in order to stress what in the mystery of God there is of promise and of gifted love, salvation, and gospel, and what in human nature enables persons to correspond to this gift through the practice of love...

If we can talk about a *fides quaerens intellectum*, we can also speak of a *spes* and a *c  ritas quaerens intellectum*. In his theology of hope, Moltmann asserts that hope is something that seeks understanding and that the logos of eschatology functions as an *intellectus spei*. Within his theological analysis of the future as ultimate and as radically new, this is entirely reasonable. But the theology of liberation affirms that is love--the concrete liberation from suffering in the Third World and the transformation of this world into the reign of God--that seeks understanding. This, too, is entirely reasonable in view of the horrible suffering of the Third World, on the one hand, and the essence of Christianity as insisting ultimately in the realization of love, on the other hand. I would say that it is the very essence of Christianity that requires theology to be, before all else, an *intellectus amoris*... But it is also the historical reality in which we are living that makes the same demand. So, we must also speak of an *amor, justitia, liberatio quaerens intellectum*. Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from The Cross, 28, 41-42. Sobrino's new discovery of theology as *intellectus gratiae* eventually should better be understood from the perspective of post-civil war in El Salvador. Only after the war, a new dimension, *gratia*, is decisively presented theologically by Sobrino.

⁵⁰²Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las V  ctimas, 610-611.

God's sacraments and unsurpassable presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. They give light and utopia; They demand our conversion; They a sign of welcome and forgiveness. People addressed them as martyrs because they reproduce the life and death of Jesus. They shed a powerful light.⁵⁰³

Finally, Sobrino gives two important critical notes on our discussion of the resurrection and the perspective of the victims. First, he reminds us of a danger of reductionism. Indeed, to understand the resurrection of Jesus, we should not leave out the crucified God. Yet he is against a reductionism of the cross as well, as if God is only revealed in a total solidarity with the victims and ignoring other Good News of the liberation.⁵⁰⁴ Secondly, Sobrino is aware of the difficult question of the possibility of a perspective of the victims. He suggested that we begin with the fact, the reality of different groups of people such as "the haves" and "the have nots" that see things such as human rights, democracy, freedom or means to attain justice as well as their understanding of religion, faith and hope, and ultimately on life and death, in different ways. Sobrino also sees that God's privileged people, the main addressees of God's revelation who are the poor and the victims are unable to do theology as generally understood in an academic sense, and that we who are able to do theological reflection are usually those who are non-poor and non-victims. Sobrino's answer is affirmative for two reasons. He writes that what will happen is something analogical, an entwining horizons between the faith of the victims, peasants, ordinary faithful men and women and the faith of the religious leaders,

⁵⁰³Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid, 87.

pastors and more educated thinkers. Moreover, in the suffering of oppression and a hope for liberation, both different historical and existential faiths, he believes, could converge. Therefore, in solidarity with the victims and a shared faith in the midst of suffering, the eyes of the non-victims can be opened to see things in a different way. Finally, Sobrino believes that our perspective can be changed since the victims give us a special light to see adequately the so-called "objects" of theology such as God, Christ, grace, sin, justice, hope, incarnation and utopia.⁵⁰⁵

In sum, this is Sobrino's new emphasis in his latest christological reflection, demonstrating his decisive stance. His book, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas is done entirely from the perspectives of the victims. In his previous writings, as indicated earlier, the poor or the crucified people which is now identified also as the victims, was still in the process of becoming a new key which subtly but critically reshaped Sobrino's christology and its method.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵Ibid., 20-21.

⁵⁰⁶In the "Foreword" to Brackley's Dinive Revolution: Salvation and Liberation in Catholic Thought especially on page ix, Sobrino asserted: "I personally share the author's theological point of view and can only add from my vantage amidst the reality of the victims of El Salvador certain reflections that may help the readers of the countries of the North to read this book with profit. To put it somewhat provocatively: *If the reader has no interest in the victims of the third world—and of the first—if the reader thinks that this reality is not a central reality for faith; if the reader does not allow himself or herself to be affected by the real death of millions of human beings, then this book will not say much to the reader's faith and humanity. it is possible to read this book with the curiosity of those who scurry about after the latest novelties, or with the academic interest of those who study the history of ideas, but these approaches do not bring with them the preunderstanding and antecedent interest that are alone adequate for an authentic understanding of the book. And this, in my opinion, is the major problem facing books like this one.*" I think this is also true for Sobrino's book La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas.

B. The Resurrection and God

It has been widely-noticed that Sobrino has a very limited discussion on the Resurrection of Jesus. In his previous three christological books, he spent only three small chapters and a few pages to discuss the resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁰⁷ This brief reflection contains his main ideas on the resurrection of Jesus, on which he developed extensively in his latest christological reflections. La Fe en Jesucristo published in early 1999 is his one whole volume on the resurrection of Jesus and the post-resurrection faith in him, fulfilling his promise indicated in his book, Jesus the Liberator. Continuing his previous discussion, Sobrino maintains that the resurrection of Jesus sheds light on the mystery of God. The resurrection first of all reveals who God is. According to Sobrino, the resurrection reveals that first, God took the side of the victims and of those who do justice; second, it indicates that God was in a battle against the idols of death; and third, God is at the same time "maior" and "minor"; fourth, God is all in all at the end, and that is God's future.

The resurrection of Jesus as an eschatological action of God is a privileged moment of God's revelation. Precisely at this moment, by resurrecting the crucified Jesus, God's partiality with the victims was demonstrated definitively. God the liberator did an ultimate justice for the victims. Sobrino points out that the resurrected is the crucified one. It means, for him, that this concrete action of God should be the point of reference of our understanding of the resurrection.

Jesus of Nazareth who had been resurrected is a just man, innocent. He announced

⁵⁰⁷ Gerald O'Collins, SJ, "The Resurrection: The State of the Questions" in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins, eds., The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26-27.

the coming of the Kingdom of God to the poor and denounced the abusive power-holders. He, therefore, was persecuted and was condemned to crucified death. Yet Jesus remained faithful to the will of God and maintained his radical faith in God the Father. He can be called "victim". On the other hand, in raising Jesus, God is revealed to be God who resurrected not just any man but Jesus, not just any corpse but a victim. In resurrecting Jesus, God triumphed over the unjust death. Thus, a faith in the mystery of God is the hope of the victims in the justice of God, and Jesus is the culmination of the affirmation of that Good News for this world marked by massive poverty and marginalization.⁵⁰⁸

In the line of the early Christian preaching on the resurrection, Sobrino follows a dialectical and antagonistic scheme and shows that the resurrection reveals God's reaction against the unjust action of those who killed Jesus. Though the New Testament lessened the charge against those who killed Jesus for example by saying that they did that because of their ignorance (Acts 3:17), it does not change God's action as related essentially with those who killed Jesus. The resurrection remains revealing the action of God provoked by the action of those who killed the just one. Eventually the resurrection shows the triumph of God over the idols. Sobrino understands the transcendence of God not only that God transcends any creature but also that God is against those creatures absolutized as idols. Therefore, the resurrection indicates that God is in a battle against the idols of death and affirmed that God triumphed over them.⁵⁰⁹ Again, this is a good news of hope for the

⁵⁰⁸See Sobrino, *La Fe en Jesucristo*, chapter 14 especially 388-390, 399-401.

⁵⁰⁹Sobrino, "La Pascua de Jesús y la Revelación de Dios Desde la Perspectiva de las Víctimas" in *RLT* XII (January-April 1995): 82-83.

victims and those who take their side and struggle with them.

At this point, Sobrino asserts that in our discussion of the resurrection, we should not forget the silent God on the Cross. Sobrino believes that the resurrection did not annul the revelation of God on the cross. His main reasons are: first, in the New Testament the writings of Paul, Mark and Matthew, do not eliminate the silent presence of God on the cross. While proclaiming the triumph of the resurrection, the passion narrative was presented even more extensively in the Gospel; second is that the resurrected Jesus appeared with marks of the crucified one.

Sobrino concludes that both the cross and the resurrection are revelatory moments of God. The silent and inoperative God on the cross is the expression of God's absolute nearness to the victims, a God who shared with them in solidarity all the way to the end. Sobrino gave some specific examples of the victims of our century such as of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, El Mozote, Bosnia, Rwanda, and East Timor.⁵¹⁰ In the resurrection, the power of God becomes credible. These complementary moments of God's revelation hold both salvific and liberating dimensions of God's action. Sobrino refers this dialectical revelation of the cross and the resurrection to the reduplicative mystery of *Deus maior* and *Deus minor* (of the greater God and the lesser God).⁵¹¹ By this he means that the revelation of God both in the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus is better understood from the point of view of our experiences of God amidst, for example, the situation of the victims that

⁵¹⁰Ibid., 84 and Sobrino, *La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas*, 19.

⁵¹¹Sobrino, "La Pascua de Jesús y la Revelación de Dios Desde la Perspectiva de las Víctimas" in *RLT* XII (January-April 1995): 84-87.

seems to be reflecting more the absence of God. Sobrino explains that "one cannot approach God in the same way from all experiences, but rather that such an approach must take place from adequate experiences and, more specifically, from those experiences which *prima facie* would seem to have absolutely nothing to do with God."⁵¹²

Finally, Sobrino offers two critical notes. First, though it is true that immediately Jesus's cross and resurrection become a universal symbol of human destiny, Sobrino noted a danger of universalization that will overlook the event. Secondly, though, it is true that the crucified Jesus was resurrected, Sobrino notes a danger of reductionism that will overlook the event as primarily the revelatory action of God. For Sobrino, first of all, the resurrection reveals the mystery of God.⁵¹³

Sobrino asserts that the revelation of God happens in a process toward a final revelation when God will be "all in all". The future is God's way of being. Yet, it is important to note that from the perspective of the resurrection, it was explained that the future is not just a provisional end but a victory over all negativity and when all enemies will be defeated.⁵¹⁴ This means that in history, cross and resurrection, word and silence, power and powerlessness, manifestation and of being hidden will remain side by side and

⁵¹²See Sobrino, "La Pascua de Jesús y la Revelación de Dios Desde la Perspectiva de las Víctimas" in *RLT* XII (January-April 1995), 86. In his earlier writings, the discussion of the issue above was illustrated briefly in Sobrino's article in honor of Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology in Latin American Theology." In William J. Kelly, S.J. *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner, S.J.* (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1980) especially his discussion on the experience of the Lesser God on page 212- 216.

⁵¹³Sobrino, "La Pascua de Jesús y la Revelación de Dios Desde la Perspectiva de las Víctimas" in *RLT* XII (January-April 1995), 88.

⁵¹⁴*Ibid.*, 89.

almost surely there will not be God's revelation that will annul one or the other. However, again, the mystery of God in the resurrection has demonstrated God's partiality with the victims and God is God of the future, the final destination of our humble walk with God in history.

What is new in Sobrino's christological reflection on the resurrection is his emphasis that an act of following Jesus, the victim is a constitutive element of a Christian faith "before and toward the mystery of God".⁵¹⁵ Therefore, according to Sobrino, our faith in God should include elements: first, hope of the resurrection before the presence of many crosses of the history; secondly, "humility" in our walk without pretending to know what will only come at the end and with awareness of the mystery of God, letting God to be God, the Absolute Mystery; thirdly, the element of praxis in our walk that is actualized in justice and building the Kingdom. Therefore, our hope will not be only a hope of purely expectation. This concrete walk of faith finally will produce joy and meaning of life, an experience of history and people who says "yes" and can call that mystery, Father.⁵¹⁶

C. The Faith of the Resurrection as Hope of The Triumph of Justice

The continuation between Sobrino's Jesus the Liberator and La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas is Jesus Christ himself as *Eu-aggelion* and that we are continuing our discussion about him. On the other hand, there is an obvious discontinuation between the two books. Sobrino explains that unlike the discussion of the

⁵¹⁵Ibid., 90.

⁵¹⁶Ibid., 91.

historical Jesus of Nazareth who is basically "an exterior data" (Jesus the Liberator), a historical reality and presumably can be analyzed and theologized in itself, the discussion of the resurrection (La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas) refers to a different "data", a historic-eschatological reality. The texts about the resurrection first of all, expressed an experience and true faith of the witnesses. Therefore, the christology of the New Testament and of the Ecumenical Councils are basically a reflection of faith that affirmed who Jesus Christ is in the light of faith in him. In other words, there are "two kinds" of christological texts: the first group of christological texts presents the history of Jesus (though read also in the light of faith) and the second group presents the history of faith of some followers of Jesus (though its reference and origin remain Jesus Christ).⁵¹⁷

Sobrino examined that in the New Testament and our history, a faith in Jesus Christ means not only a response to his reality (that Jesus is both divine and human), but also a response to the totality of reality. The faith in Jesus Christ is more than a faith "in

⁵¹⁷ Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 11. "En este libro seguimos hablando sobre Jesucristo, pero de una manera diferente a como lo hacíamos en el anterior [Jesus the Liberator]. La vida de Jesús, en efecto, está escrita desde la fe, pero, con todo, Jesús de Nazaret es un dato objetivo exterior a nosotros, dato que, en principio, puede ser analizado y teologizado en sí mismo. La resurrección, sin embargo, no es una realidad histórica como la de Jesús, sino que es una realidad distinta, histórico-eschatológica, de modo que los textos sobre ella expresan, ante todo, la experiencia y la fe reales de los testigos. Y las cristologías neotestamentarias y conciliares son ya claras reflexiones de fe, afirman quién es Jesucristo una vez que ya existe fe en él. En otras palabras, los textos sobre Jesucristo son de dos tipos: unos presentan la *historia de Jesús* (aunque sea leída desde la fe), y otros presentan la *historia de la fe de unos seres humanos* (aunque tiene un referente, Jesucristo, que la origina). Y aquí está la discontinuidad fundamental entre los dos libros." In addition, the distinction between the two kinds of christological texts can be further discussed. One could ask whether the distinction is valid. La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las Víctimas consists three main parts. The second part is on christology of the New Testament from a Latin American perspective. Particularly it discusses christological titles of Jesus in the New Testament. The third part is on christology of the Ecumenical councils. Reading these two parts is helpful to better understand the distinction in question.

him" since it also refers immediately to the real historical reality. Therefore, for Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas is not strictly a christological book or a mere conceptual analysis of the reality of Jesus Christ. Sobrino explains that he wanted to argue mainly with the reality directly and presented his reflection on Jesus Christ as a kind of open parable. The reader, not only a Christian, is invited to take a position to accept Jesus' significance or not to accept him before a concrete historical reality we live in.⁵¹⁸

Further, Sobrino made it clear that a Christian faith in God means also a faith in the resurrection.⁵¹⁹ In this respect, he refers to two basic elements of faith. First, its content is hope and second, faith is primarily a way of life of "the resurrected". For Sobrino, the way of presenting it in the Gospel indicates that the disciples who experienced the resurrection of Jesus saw the need of a universal resurrection as well and responded to it. Their proclamation also captured the salvific and definitive presence of God in the resurrection of Jesus.⁵²⁰

The resurrection itself is not first of all to be understood but to be lived.⁵²¹ Sobrino, asserts that living a Christian faith is living as "the resurrected". This means that a life in its fulfillment or a life that reflects the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is possible living it today. Sobrino, therefore, convinced that in our history, with all its limitations, Christians can live a life resurrected and celebrate with good understanding, hope and

⁵¹⁸Ibid., 13.

⁵¹⁹Ibid., 154.

⁵²⁰Ibid., 116 and see for example Matthew 27: 51-53.

⁵²¹Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 143.

deeds. This is necessary to understand the resurrection of Jesus. However, Sobrino affirmed that the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus goes beyond this "hermeneutic". For him the most important thing for Christians and therefore their identity is the true existence of a real Christian life today that reflects the resurrection of Jesus and its significance. This is nothing else than the following of Jesus and carrying on his mission in our history and Sobrino immediately continued that from the point of view of the resurrection, there is more in this following of Jesus which is a sense of fulfillment, triumph and victory both in our hope and praxis in favor with the crucified today.⁵²²

The discussion on the faith unleashed from the resurrection is significant in the sense that its content refers conclusively to God of the victims and their future victorious hope. Sobrino made a new emphasis that a faith in this kind of God who resurrected Jesus, means basically: first, to hope that the executioner did not win over the victims; second, a real commitment and praxis against other gods; third, to let God to be God, the Absolute Mystery; and finally, fourth, a journey in history toward its fulfillment. From the point of view of the resurrection, Sobrino offered an insightful reflection on the historicity of the changes in the disciples after the resurrection and their theological significance as well as on the reason of responding or ignoring the disciples' experience of the resurrection analogically.⁵²³

⁵²²Ibid.

⁵²³See Sobrino's unedited writing "Primera Parte: La Resurrección de Jesús. Capítulo I: Introducción 'Vivir como Resucitados en la Historia'" delivered in his class of the UCA on Christology in June 1995, 13 and also La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 25-68,

D. The Resurrection and History

In the writings of Sobrino, history is primarily presented as revelatory, as hope, promise, praxis and as a journey toward a future. This understanding of history is underlined through Sobrino's theological reflection on the resurrection of Jesus. At this point, Sobrino reminds us that the question of the resurrection of Jesus should not only refer to what can we know? but also, more importantly, how do the Christians who believe in it live as "the resurrected"?

The question of what can we know or what is historical in the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus points to two kinds of answers. What are objectively provided by our study is that first, there are some texts in the New Testament that indicate strongly that something had happened to the disciples of Jesus "at the resurrection". This was explained as their personal encounters with Jesus who was called the resurrected one. This is historical. Secondly, there had been a change in the life of the disciples of Jesus, though scholars have different opinions on how much did they really change. In the New Testament at least it was portrayed the difference between their life before and after Easter as expressed literally in a different forms such as a geographical change: from Galilee to Jerusalem; a behavioral change: from fear to courage, their faith: from "we had hoped...it is now the third day since this happened" to "The Lord has risen indeed..."⁵²⁴ In other words, Sobrino explains that first, the faith of the disciples in the resurrection is something

129-151.

⁵²⁴Luke 24:13-53 and see Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Victorias, 124-125.

historical and real, and secondly, it is historical and real that for the disciples, this subjective faith corresponds to an objective reality that happened to Jesus. From the historical point of view, for Sobrino, we cannot go beyond this affirmation.

Though these arguments are greatly convincing and are able to point to a discontinuity in the life of Jesus' followers before and after "the resurrection", Sobrino is aware that there are scholars who emphasized rather its continuity. Basically, Sobrino understood the points of the emphasis on a continuity, yet, his study of Pauline letters and christology enables him to see a change, even a radical change, in the life of the disciples caused by the experience of "the resurrection." Agreeing with J. I. Gonzalez-Faus, Sobrino asserts that eventually it is to remember that there had been a proclamation of the Good News and the New Testament only because of and initiated by the experience of the resurrection, and not primarily because of the life of Jesus nor of his death.⁵²⁵

According to Sobrino, the question of how do the Christians who believe in the resurrection live or how can we accept the resurrection of Jesus subjectively today needs to be answered with a "reasonable faith". There are three main approaches for this. First, it needs to be clear on who are the Christians. Sobrino used John 20:29 to define the basic Christian identity before the resurrection: they are "those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Secondly, it needs to be understood that the resurrection fundamentally is an eschatological action of God. Therefore to approach the resurrection is principally to

⁵²⁵Sobrino, *La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas*, 125-126. Sobrino argues that for those who do not believe or have a suspicion of a possible collective hallucination, the discussion could go *ad infinitum*. On the other hand, the common argument of the empty tomb would not solve the problem. Therefore we need to be realistic and keep the two basic questions on what can we know and how do we live as "the resurrected" of today.

affirm one's faith in God and to accept God's action in Jesus, the resurrected one. Third, Christians finally have to take a stand before the reality initiated by the resurrection. There is an invitation through this reasonable faith to proclaim the Easter message that God has resurrected Jesus from the dead.⁵²⁶

Sobrino adds that finally the question of what can we celebrate rounds up the previous questions to approach the resurrection: what can we know, what can we hope for and what should we do. Eventually, this is also very important to enhance our understanding of the resurrection. Sobrino asserts that the question of what can we celebrate was one of the most original in the early church since they did not only proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ or just adopted the ritual norms in their "liturgical gathering". What we celebrate is Jesus Christ the resurrected one, the Good News. The meaning of Jesus' resurrection goes beyond any hermeneutic. It opens to a possibility to live even now "as the resurrected" and according to Sobrino for Christians, there is no other way of life than a life following Jesus. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus introduced a significant aspect or a sense of its plenitude, of triumph, of victory both in our hope and praxis in favor with the crucified peoples.⁵²⁷

For Sobrino, the resurrection of Jesus is ultimately a Christian answer to an eternal human question of the justice to the victims. Referring to Moltmann, Sobrino says that the resurrection founds history and opens to an eschatological future. Yet, Sobrino reminds us that the resurrection should not only be understood from those presuppositions, but in

⁵²⁶Ibid., 126-127.

⁵²⁷Ibid., 143, 145.

some ways should be able to be lived faithfully in the steps of the crucified. Sobrino, convinced that those who hold their hope in the victims of this world, will be able to sense a hope analogical to the hope emerged from the resurrection and therefore, to orient their commitment to take the crucified people down from the cross. For Sobrino amidst the history of the crucifixion, those who are able to celebrate the resurrection and have freedom to give their life for others, must have seen the history not as something absurd or only repetitious, but as a promise of "something beyond" that motivates us. Finally, all of this must be able to be called "a walk with God in the history" as called by Micah or "an encounter with God who resurrected Jesus in faith, hope and love."⁵²⁸

Conclusion

To conclude our analysis on Sobrino's christological books, it should be admitted that it is true, as Sobrino said that "wherever Jesus Christ is a little better proclaimed, there is life emerging".⁵²⁹ Sobrino evidently contributed to this proclamation of Jesus Christ by his capability of articulating his maturing christological reflection especially that takes the poor and the victims seriously in all levels of critical reflections. His Jesus the Liberator and La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas have made important contributions to the field of christology in the line of theology of liberation, a christology

⁵²⁸Ibid., 150-151.

⁵²⁹An interview by Norberto Alcover writes "Y veo que donde se testimonia a Jesucristo un poquito bien, allí surge vida" and Alcover explains "Es decir, que la pésima estructuración mundial tiene, por lo menos, una vía creyente de solución: procurar que la crezca la vida de la transformación aparentemente imposible precisamente por testimoniar 'un poquito bien' a Jesucristo." See Norberto Alcover, "Desde Las Víctimas" in Misión Abierta 4 (April 1999), 48.

from the perspective of the victims of our world today which simultaneously shows that Jesus Christ is the good news from God. His critical reflection upon Christian faith which is theologically profound and anthropologically sound reflects a process of theological development and even deeper, a gradual personal conversion especially within a context of his commitment in working constantly in solidarity with the poor and the victims.⁵³⁰

At this point, it is evident that Sobrino has developed his christology in a gradual maturing process especially focusing on his effort to address the reality of the poor and the victims, the crucified people. He was, step by step, radicalizing and specifying his theological point of departure which is the poor and the victims, born of his concern of the absence of their significance in theology and of a possible affirmation of their "theological status". On the other hand, the reality of the poor and the victims has been unfolding itself gradually to Sobrino and many other committed people, in solidarity with them.

The overwhelming personal experience of the killing of Ellacuría and the other members of his Jesuit community as well as Romero and many others lent a personal dimension shaping powerfully his formal theological/christological endeavor and guided him in a very special way to the center of their identity of the so-called crucified people in his christological terms as Ellacuría himself had named the poor and the victims while

⁵³⁰Sobrino asserted that "In El Salvador, we have rediscovered that the faithful response to this world of victims is the constant exercise of mercy, as in the parable of the good samaritan, which Jesus uses to describe the true human being...

Remembering my dear Jesuit brother Ignacio Ellacuría, rector of José Simeón Cañas Central American University, who was murdered with five other Jesuits and two pious women on November 16, 1989, I have learned that there is nothing as vital in order to live as a human being than to exercise mercy on behalf on a crucified people, and that nothing is more humanizing than to believe in the God of Jesus..." Jon Sobrino, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity" in his The Principle of Mercy. Taking the Crucified People From the Cross, 10-11.

meditating on the suffering servant of Yahweh and Jesus crucified. Their "martyrdom" indeed made a great impact that inspired a deeper commitment to his original theological/ christological analysis as clearly expressed directly in his many writings about the event, and indirectly in his theological/ christological method and content culminated in his latest publications, particularly La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas.

This self-giving or "martyrial" commitment to the poor and oppressed undoubtedly has made one of the most credible criteria for understanding the act of following Jesus Christ and living in the light of the resurrection. It was already explained that a Christian discipleship implies a preferential option for the poor as Jesus chose them to be the principal addressees of the Good News of the coming of God's Kingdom. The event of the killing of those who had been committed to the poor made Sobrino better understand the commitment to the poor required of all Christ's followers and anchored him in a new urgency to make sense of their death christologically and theologically. The impact of the event, indeed, led him to an intellectual conversion and above all to be a person of mercy and a believer in the God of Jesus and his Good News.⁵³¹ Moreover, from the point of view of his discussion of the resurrection, it should be said that this life-committed is the act of faith in Jesus equipped with a tremendous sense of fulfillment, triumph and victory both in its hope and praxis in favor with the crucified today.

Lastly, Sobrino's affirmation that the perspective of the victims helped greatly his christological reflection to be more praxis-oriented, mistagogically revealing and

⁵³¹ Jon Sobrino, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity" in his The Principle of Mercy. Taking the Crucified People From the Cross, 11.

existentially grounded is truly convincing.⁵³² In this respect Sobrino came to a conclusive theological view that theology is both *intellectus amoris* and *intellectus gratiae*, reaffirming what he called before a christology done out of gratitude and love.⁵³³ This evidently captures Sobrino's own christological position that the experience of solidarity and of sharing life with the crucified people of Latin America is a simultaneously difficult but ultimately the grace-filled encounter with the risen Christ.

I have always been encouraged--perhaps because I have happened to live surrounded by martyrs--by words of Jürgen Moltmann: "Not every life is an occasion of hope, but this life of Jesus, who took upon himself, in love, the cross and death, is." And let us read that carefully, lest we be accused of being doloristic: it is life--although not every life, but the life shot through with mercy and love--that keeps us hope, and that takes on theology.⁵³⁴

⁵³²Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 19; See also "An Email from Jon Sobrino to Hartono Budi," El Salvador, 3 September 1999.

⁵³³See Jesus the Liberator, 5 and La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 22 that reads "Al mantener a las víctimas en el centro de la teología, no queremos ser obsoletos obstinados ni masoquistas impenitentes. Queremos ser honrados con la realidad y responsables ante ella. Y queremos ser cristianos que ofrecen una buena noticia: Dios y su Cristo están presentes en nuestro mundo, y están no en cualquier lugar, sino muy principalmente allá donde dijeron que iban a estar: en los pobres y víctimas de este mundo. De esta manera, pensamos, se puede hacer teología, y cristología, como *intellectus amoris*--la teoría de la praxis de liberar a las víctimas--y como *intellectus gratiae*, desde la gracia que se nos ha dado en ellas. A todo ello, este libro quisiera ser un modesto aporte, poner un granito de arena."

⁵³⁴Jon Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 175.

CHAPTER FIVE

SYNTHESIS, CRITIQUE AND CONTRIBUTION

OF SOBRINO'S CHRISTOLOGY OF MERCY

I. Synthesis

There are many important points in Sobrino's christology of mercy which took shape amidst the reality marked by "martyrdom" and a faithful act of following Jesus Christ the liberator. Let us draw together these many points of Sobrino's christological thoughts as discussed before into five headings in order to help us to affirm the stated thesis.

These five main points that need to be explained to make a conclusive synthesis of Sobrino's christological thoughts as far as presented in this study, are: the first is a christology of mercy from the perspective of the victims; the second is Jesus as the liberator and Good News; third, martyrdom is a major criterion for Sobrino and his christology; the fourth is truthfulness to the reality; the fifth is a christological method gradually shaped by this reality.

A. A Christology of Mercy from the Perspective of the Victims

From his first christological book, Sobrino has shown his maturing insight on the poor and the crucified people. He came to a conclusion that they are also victims and he further explains that "Victims are not the sole *reality* of our world, of course. But unless they are given a central place in our accounting, we shall fail to grasp the fundamental

element of our historical reality, and theology will be in serious danger of becoming unreal: of failing into a kind of *docetism of reality*--the docetism that, in any of its forms, has always been the greatest threat to theology."⁵³⁵ This concrete perspective for Sobrino who is doing theology/christology in El Salvador, is the massive reality of the poor and victims (the crucified people in the language of Ellacuría proclaimed by Romero).⁵³⁶ This reality is historical in the sense that it is fundamentally the result of the structural configuration of the world, and it is social because it has to do not only with individuals but with entire peoples, two thirds of humanity. This must not be understood as one context among many other contexts but the underlying reality of the overall situation of our world today and this must not be approached as merely a concept but as a true historical reality.⁵³⁷

In this world of oppression, the world of the poor and of the victims, liberation has been discovered theologically, "just as freedom has been the important object of theology in secular societies where there is an abundance of goods". Finally, doing christology from a perspective of the victims demands partiality and commitment to the "interest" of those

⁵³⁵Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims." In Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 164.

⁵³⁶Roger Haight affirms: "What makes liberation christology distinctive, then, is its hermeneutical principle or key which in some respects has become symbolized in the phrase 'option for the poor.' Jesus is interpreted from the point of view of the social and cultural situation of destitution that allows people barely to survive in subhuman conditions." Then he adds that "The best example of Latin American liberation Christology is Jon Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator..." See Roger Haight, Jesus Symbol of God, 20.

⁵³⁷Sobrino reminds the importance of the distinctions personally to better understand his christology. Jon Sobrino, interview by author, phone-tape recording, Santa Tecla, El Salvador, 20 June 1999; also his view on the different themes developed along with the liberating message of the Latin American liberation theology. Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 10.

crucified peoples which is a response to the plea that we take them down from the cross.⁵³⁸ For this very reason this liberating message and action will lead to martyrdom beginning with the cross of Jesus to the innumerable martyrs of today. They are martyrs of the reign of God, of justice and of liberation.⁵³⁹

B. Jesus is the Liberator and Good News

Sobrino is not just introducing the image of Jesus which had been overlooked, neglected or even purposely abused to legitimate an unjust act to marginalized and oppressed, the poor and the powerless. He goes back to the scripture, as urged strongly by the Second Vatican Council and finds a Christian scriptural perspective that presupposes first, making the *reign of God* central to theology; second, having *liberation* as its goal. Theology is understood not only as a theory of praxis but a reflective understanding of love, determining that the *poor*, as the *victims* of this world, are its theological locus. Jesus is primarily the liberator and Good News amidst the poor and the oppressed.

As a result of this approach, Sobrino came to a conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth

⁵³⁸In other words, "Liberation christology is explicitly hermeneutical and concerned with salvation; it never seeks the 'historical facts' of Jesus' life for their own sake." Roger Haight, Jesus Symbol of God, 20.

⁵³⁹This post-war El Salvador is the timing of the birth of Sobrino's christological reflection on the resurrection (*La Fe en Jesucristo*) and a theology and christology as *intellectus amoris* (a theory of praxis of liberating the victims) and as *intellectus gratiae* (from the grace that we have received in them). See Sobrino, *La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas*, 22. This brings us to a similar process of the emergence of the theology of hope as developed by Sobrino's main predecessors such as Moltmann that marked the post-war theological horizon, after the Second World War and after Auschwitz.

was in a constitutive relationship to the kingdom of God. Jesus also was in a relationship of absolute trust with a God who is *Father* and he also demonstrated an absolute availability before a Father who continues being *God*. In the life of Jesus it is shown that temptation was his internal climate and persecution was his external climate. Yet, Jesus remained faithful to God the Father in embodying God's kingdom especially among the poor and oppressed. Therefore, Jesus is also Good News for them and those who walk with them in his path.

The death and resurrection of Jesus leads the disciples to preach a bold message about what had happened to him such as proclaimed in the Acts of the Apostles: "You killed the just one, but God raised him from the dead" (Acts 2: 22-34). For Sobrino this also mark the beginning of a new kind of relationship with Jesus, the Risen One in faith which in its most radical sense means living and acting like Jesus.⁵⁴⁰

C. Martyrdom is a Major Criterion for Christology

To identify some crucial changes in the development of Sobrino's christology of mercy, first, it has to be clarified that the killing of the six Jesuits and their co-workers served more as a culminating point of an important decade beginning around the assassination of Romero and preceded by the killing his close friend, Rutilio Grande which for Sobrino is an equally meaningful moment in early 1980. For Sobrino, this whole

⁵⁴⁰It is to be noted that this 'following' takes on an epistemological dimension, viz., that in 'being' like Jesus one is given the affinity that is necessary for confessing his otherness; thus the believer is required to make the leap of faith." Jon Sobrino, "Jesus Christ" in William R. Farmer and others (Eds.), The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 256.

decade of the 1980s was a deeply-felt formative period as he was witnessing how the poor and "their defenders" were being killed slowly and violently. The events created a very profound impact in Sobrino's life and theological-christological thought. Second, these events also caused him to engage in a process of radicalization in his commitment to the poor and the victims and in his insight of the reality itself which now is not merely as sinful and oppressive but gracious, liberative and revealing the gracious mystery of God. Therefore, his christology of mercy, marked by Sobrino's theological sensitivity, was embedded in hope, joy and faith of the victorious "resurrection" of the victim. Sobrino also continues to emphasize a *via praxis* which is following Jesus as a constitutive element of a Christian faith that opens more consciously to all its consequences including martyrdom⁵⁴¹ and also a solidarity that will enable the non-victims to reflect from the perspective of the victims. The perspective of the victims accordingly becomes a constitutive perspective of his christology.

At this point, Sobrino's christological endeavor can be named an "advocacy scholarship" on behalf of the poor.⁵⁴² However, it is not just any advocacy for its own sake. Eventually, at the center of Sobrino's christology is a profound spirituality of living

⁵⁴¹ Martyrdom here will be primarily understood as participation in the sufferings of the oppressed people as modelled by Monseñor Romero. Yet, also it includes fundamentally a faith in Jesus Christ the liberator and an act of denouncing the anti-kingdom. In the words of Moltmann, these are the three dimensions of today's martyrdom. The first dimension is suffering for faith's sake as explained traditionally. The second is suffering through resistance against unjust and lawless power such as in the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the third is taking part of the suffering of the oppressed people. Jürgen Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions (London: SCM Press, 1990), 202-203.

⁵⁴² Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York : Seabury Press, 1975), xii.

and witnessing the Good News of Jesus Christ the liberator and it gathers us in a walk of faith that leads to the gracious mystery of God.⁵⁴³

D. Truthfulness to the Reality

Sobrino's theological endeavor can be summarized as Jesus' follower in search of the truth of the reality which is formed significantly by the innumerable victims and ends in the illuminating and powerful "revelation" of a soteriological aspect of the same reality. Therefore, the continuity in Sobrino's christology rests on a fundamental thing: to be honest to the reality and to be responsible to it.⁵⁴⁴ Accordingly, the development in Sobrino's christological thinking should not be perceived as "mechanical" but it is involving both Sobrino's personal and intellectual commitment.⁵⁴⁵ Sobrino has always been demonstrating that christology is not primarily an intellectual project isolated from the historical reality. It emerges from a particular historical reality and one's understanding of Jesus Christ and his concern. Therefore, it is real, concrete and historical as well as spiritual or, in other words, theology is an exercise of faith in Jesus Christ.⁵⁴⁶ To put it

⁵⁴³Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 597-598, 610.

⁵⁴⁴Ibid., 22.

⁵⁴⁵Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", El Salvador, 30 June 1999.

⁵⁴⁶Karl Rahner, ed., Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975) on "Spirituality" especially on pages 1633-1634. "(iii) *The new world-picture*. The shaping of the world is displacing more and more the acquisition of knowledge as the human task. Following Blondel and others, Teilhard de Chardin surmised that the encounter with God would take place in action, rather than in preliminary knowledge. This has little if anything to do with the ancient distinction between action and contemplation.

(iv) *The new picture of society*. The religious conscience of the individual is linked to society and its shaping of the future. This has been brought clearly to the fore in the debate with

differently, a theological/christological reflection becomes an intellectual walk, enforced by the reality. The development of Sobrino's christology portrays the development of his own self and intellectual commitment alongside the commitment to and understanding of the reality. This is well-explained in his reflection on "how my mind has changed" and in his recent talk in Münster on the challenge of the crucified people, receiving a doctorate of honoris causa from Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität. Theology from the perspective of and a walk with the crucified people is a developing process into the core of their reality: from *intellectus veritatis* (an awakening from the sleep of inhumanity) to *intellectus amoris* (taking the crucified people from the cross) to *intellectus crucis* (to be taken to the cross of the crucified people) and finally to *intellectus gratiae* (to be carried by the crucified people).⁵⁴⁷

E. A Christological Method Gradually Shaped by the Reality

It is important now to explain my observations on Sobrino's method based on this study. First, we can say that in his earlier stage such as in his Christology at the Crossroads, basically Sobrino employed a method similar to the approach of liberation theology: a critical reflection on praxis. Theology, therefore, is the second act since the first act will be a commitment in favor of the poor. Thus, its privileged theological locus is

Marxism. The biblical truth of the social nature and social effectiveness of Christian faith (i.e., of the Church) has thereby been rediscovered. It is to be hoped that this controversy will bring theology as a whole nearer to the exercise of faith, i.e., to spirituality."

⁵⁴⁷Sobrino, "Die Theologische Herausforderung der 'Gekreuzigten Völker'" in Zeitschrift für Missions-Wissenschaft und Religions-Wissenschaft 82, 4 (1998): 286-292 and The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, 1-11.

primarily the life, preaching, and historical commitment of the Church itself for liberation. Sobrino notes: "Liberation theology is concentrated in Christology insofar as it reflects on Jesus himself as the way to liberation."⁵⁴⁸ Secondly, Sobrino recently asserted that eventually his fundamental method has primarily been "an intellectual journey enforced by the reality". This has two implications: 1) the primacy of the reality remains ultimate⁵⁴⁹ and 2) the reality is indeed so meaningful and important and, therefore, for Sobrino it is superior than a method to begin a critical reflection. In other words, ultimately at the beginning is not a decision to employ a particular method to approach the reality but rather the reality itself has forced him to think critically.⁵⁵⁰ Third, my study of the development of Sobrino's christological thoughts around the crucial events of martyrdom, as gradually developed in the chapters of this thesis, in some ways reflects this methodological dynamic and its evolution. For Sobrino, the maturing process of getting to know the reality of the poor and the victims of this world finally determines his

⁵⁴⁸Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 37. Sobrino adds: "I think that liberation theology as 'theology' is profoundly christological; and insofar as it is concerned with 'liberation,' its most all-embracing theological concept is 'the kingdom of God'"; Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition, 5, 9; also Bevans' discussion on the praxis model of contextual theology modelled by Gutiérrez in Stephen B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 69.

⁵⁴⁹Sobrino also has already indicated this point and wrote: "So rather than engaging in dialogue with other theologies, philosophies, or cultural movements, liberation theology has faced up to the basic Latin American reality of underdevelopment and oppression..." Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 33.

⁵⁵⁰See Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 165 and Sobrino's response in his letter to the author. Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", El Salvador, 30 June 1999.

christological "method".⁵⁵¹ Thus, his method is not first of all, a concept. Sobrino's christology demonstrates its novelty to the area of christology and its method.

In sum, this study has affirmed the existence of changes in the development of Sobrino's christology and shown that indeed Sobrino takes martyrdom as an historical consequence of and a possible criterion for evaluating approaches which understand the act of following Jesus Christ in terms of solidarity which seeks to "take the crucified peoples down from the cross". This means that an historical power of the anti-kingdom continues to put to death those who struggle for the coming of the Kingdom of God especially in solidarity with the poor as its main addressee. This has happened to Jesus who becomes our "proto-martyr". On the other hand, at this point it has to be added immediately Sobrino's new insight and emphasis on the element of grace in the reality as well as the goodness of God embodied in Jesus' life, death and resurrection as present powerfully in the victims of our world.

II. Critique

Sobrino's christology of mercy proclaims that Christ is the liberator for all but especially the poor and victims. At this point, Sobrino's christology challenges all christological reflections for their relevancy, credibility and intelligibility. This part will discuss some important and valuable criticisms which will enable us to test whether

⁵⁵¹ Sobrino affirms: "Therefore to do theology from amidst, for, and with the victims is to do theology while being borne by reality." Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 174.

Sobrino's christology itself is intelligible in terms of method and content as well as relevancy. In my collection of the criticisms of Sobrino's christology, there are two fundamental issues which authors such as John P. Meier, Maria Pilar Aquino, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Kenan B. Osborne and Gerald O'Collins consider. These are issues of method and content. These critical points will test Sobrino's christology: its reasonableness, justification and intelligibly. Finally, this part will also incorporate some other related criticisms on christological issues presented by contemporary theologians such as Leonardo Boff, Aloysius Pieris, C. S. Song, Paul F. Knitter, José Comblin and Robert Schreiter.

A. Main Criticisms on Method and Content of Sobrino's Christology

1. John P. Meier

In a meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in Toronto, June 15-18, 1988 John P. Meier presented a direct criticism regarding the use of the bible as a source for theology in Sobrino's christology. There are four questions or problems that have to be taken into serious consideration to have a solid biblical foundation for Sobrino's christology. Meier particularly directed his criticisms toward Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads and Jesus in Latin America.

a. Meier's Criticisms Against Sobrino's Christology

1) On its Major Starting Point: the Historical Jesus

Sobrino's theology/christology claims to be based on the historical Jesus.

According to Meier, there was no extended or critical discussion on the so-called "the historical Jesus". What does Sobrino mean by the "historical Jesus" and what are the criteria to discern the authentic material about it? According to Meier the strongest impression one could get from Sobrino's writings on the historical Jesus is that this historical Jesus "equals the full reality of the pre-Easter Jesus, with no awareness of all the difficulties that simplistic equation involves. At times, the historical Jesus seems to be Jesus insofar as he fits into Sobrino's program of liberation theology."⁵⁵² Therefore, Meier judged that Sobrino is "not all that far from the proof-text use of Scripture". Meier asserts:

Sobrino's whole presentation of liberation theology claims to be based on the historical Jesus; and that is where it is more seriously lacking. Nowhere in the book is there any extended, critical discussion of what the phrase "the historical Jesus" means or what criteria we are to use to discern authentic material. One almost gets the impression that the historical Jesus equals the full reality of the pre-Easter Jesus, with no awareness of all the difficulties that simplistic equation involves. At times, the historical Jesus seems to be Jesus insofar as he fits into Sobrino's program of liberation theology. For all the talk of a new approach, we are not all that far from the proof-text-use of Scripture in the old Catholic manuals of dogmatic theology.⁵⁵³

Meier further observed that the concept of the historical Jesus in Jesus in Latin

⁵⁵²John P. Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 3.

⁵⁵³Ibid.

America that was meant to be "a clarification" of some of his christological statements, remains unclear and "at times being equated with a christology that emphasizes the humanity of Jesus or Jesus' earthly career."⁵⁵⁴

Therefore Meier judged that Sobrino's christology is more a product of a dogmatic theological reflection than of a sound biblical study as intended by Sobrino's christological reflection. Meier adds

It is telling that Sobrino admits that this position is a problem from the standpoint of historical criticism, but an advantage from the standpoint of systematic reflection. And that, it appears, is all Sobrino is really interested in. In a sense Sobrino feels justified in proceeding this way because he is convinced that Latin American communities replicate in their experience the first Christian communities that produced the Gospels. This is simply naïveté once removed. The first Christian communities were by no means all the same in their experience or christology, and to recapture their historical situations is hardly less taxing than recapturing the historical Jesus.⁵⁵⁵

Meier continues and concludes that Sobrino "substitutes unsubstantiated generalizations

⁵⁵⁴Ibid., 4. Thomas Schubeck noted this criticism as a useful backdrop for looking critically at Sobrino's use of sources. He explains that for Meier, Sobrino "lacks evidence to support his contention that a basic historicity exists in the gospel narratives" and Meier asks "whether the total reality of Jesus of Nazareth can be known when it is no longer accessible to us by scholarly means." He also refers to another critic, Michael Cook to further his explanation and asserts: "Cook says that Sobrino wants to claim too much about the historical Jesus without giving sufficient evidence. For example, Sobrino sees Jesus, as narrated by the Gospel of Mark, undergoing a kind of conversion that develops along two stages. The first stage shows Jesus using his power, struggling against oppressive laws, debating his adversaries, and healing the sick. In the second stage, Jesus is on the receiving end. He suffers the consequences for stands taken: hostile resistance, persecution, and death. Sobrino interprets these as historical stages that reveal an actual transition in Jesus' understanding of the mission and a corresponding shift in his praxis. Cook asks whether the figure upon which Sobrino builds his theology is derived from a chronological biography of Jesus or only a restatement of Mark's Gospel." See Schubeck, Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models and Norms, 180 and also Michael L. Cook, "Jesus from the Other Side of History: Christology in Latin America" in Theological Studies 44 (June 1983): 273.

⁵⁵⁵Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 7.

for the hard work of Jesus-research. The basic problem is never really engaged, and one is left wondering how, if at all, the Bible has really been a source of theology for Sobrino--or for liberation theology in general."⁵⁵⁶

Meier noted that Sobrino indeed examined at least three criteria of historicity. They are first, the criterion of multiple attestation; second, discontinuity with the New Testament church; and third, the consistency of Jesus' death with what is narrated of his life. Sobrino basically valued highest the first criterion and considered the second and the third as indirect verifications of the first. However, this is another lack in Sobrino's methodological approach. Meier observed that Sobrino has not really employed those criteria properly and sufficiently so that his Latin American liberation project seems to be much more important than a historically based christology.

In this recent essay, Sobrino does at least examine a few criteria of historicity... Yet Sobrino never bothers to use these criteria in any detail. In this there appears a real tension between his awareness of the historical-critical problem and his desire to get on with his project of liberation theology. He states that it is more than likely that the Gospels are in part the fruit of the imagination of the NT communities. But he thinks that it is "rather unlikely" that the Gospels are such in their totality. Then, with a rhetorical wave of the hand, he continues: "at all events, Latin American christology holds a presupposition in favor of the basic historicity of the gospel narratives.... To anyone living and suffering history on the South American continent it seems altogether probable that 'Jesus was like that.'" In short, if it enjoys verisimilitude in the eyes of Latin Americans, it is judged historical.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷Ibid., 7. Responding specifically to Sobrino's article on the "Current Problems in Christology in Latin American Theology", Fernando Segovia asserts similarly that any mention of the historical Jesus should be treated "only with extreme reluctance and with great trepidation." He writes: "For someone who, for seven decades now, has stood in the shadow of Albert Schweitzer's Von Reimarus zu Wrede (1906); who is accustomed to speaking of the Markan Jesus, the Matthean Jesus, the Lukan Jesus, the Johannine Jesus, the Jesus of the Q tradition, but seldom discusses the

2) On the Sources

Meier makes some other observations which are worth-noting. Sobrino studied both in St. Louis and Frankfurt, yet Meier observes that his footnotes and bibliographies reflect his dependence largely on European rather than on U.S. authors; and the authors who are cited are not the most recent authors. He points out that "The wide range of recent exegetical literature used by Schillebeeckx in his Jesus is simply not there." In Meier's view, "Sobrino's work is very much a product of dogmatic and systematic theology, so much so that even when he is speaking about the historical Jesus, most of the writers he cites are German systematicians, especially Rahner, Pannenberg, and Moltmann."⁵⁵⁸ Meier adds:

Jesus of Nazareth; who rarely encounters in the scholarly journals of his field an article dealing with the historical Jesus; and, finally, who is used to arranging his texts according to elaborate form, redaction and literary methodologies; to such a person, any mention of the historical Jesus is treated only with extreme reluctance and with great trepidation. For someone raised in this methodological background, Fr. Sobrino's work is, I repeat, most unexpected." He continues: "As an exegete of the New Testament, I should like to offer at this point a *caveat*. Any reconstruction of the historical Jesus or of a particular Christian tradition cannot abandon or do without a rigorous application of the existing exegetical methodologies; otherwise, such an enquiry runs the danger of mixing different layers of tradition or of not including important elements or texts from the tradition."

Segovia explains: See Fernando Segovia, "A Response to Fr. Sobrino" in William J. Kelly, S.J. Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner, S.J. (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1980), 223-224. Reference is to Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede, trans. by W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

⁵⁵⁸Meier, "The Bible as a Source for Theology: [A Critique of the Use of Scripture by Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo]." The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 3. On the other hand Gerald O'Collins notes that there has been a decisive shift brought by the Second Vatican council and prepared by the 1943 encyclical By Pope Pius XII on scriptural studies, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Then, "From the early 1970s Kasper, Hans Küng, Schillebeeckx, Jon Sobrino and other Catholics have taken up into their Christologies the findings of biblical scholarship and included lengthy accounts of Jesus' ministry. In a sense this represents a return to a theme which Aquinas and some later theologians like Francesco de Suarez (1548-1617) handled and which largely disappeared in post-reformation Catholic textbooks of Christology: such 'mysteries' of Christ's life as his baptism, preaching, miracles, transfiguration and so forth. But the contemporary theologians, of course, make use of historical and exegetical techniques and findings which were

In fact, very few important exegetes are cited at length in *Christology at the Crossroads*, and those who are cited are not the most recent authors. It is symptomatic of the book that Rudolf Bultmann is the most quoted exegete, and often he is referred to more for his general hermeneutics and theology. There are also scattered references to Schnackenburg, Thüsing, Jeremias, Käsemann, and Cullmann, with a few pointers to Bornkamm and Herbert Braun. Notice, by the way, that almost all of these authors are German. The wide range of recent exegetical literature used by Schillebeeckx in his *Jesus* book simply is not there.⁵⁵⁹

3) On the Use of the Gospel.

According to Meier, Sobrino's theological theses, instead of historical criticism, have become the guiding rule for deciding what in the Gospel narratives is historical.

Meier acknowledges that Sobrino's two christological books did mark a step forward in Sobrino's thought. Yet, "Sobrino states simply: 'Latin American Christology understands the historical Jesus as the totality of Jesus' history...'. Referring specifically to Schillebeeckx, Meier added: 'Of course, that is precisely what the historical Jesus cannot be.' The reason is that 'Unlike the positivistic historicism of the 19th century, we must appreciate that what can be reconstructed historically (i.e., the historical Jesus) does not coincide with the full reality of the Jesus who lived in the first century. What really occurs in history is broader than the history recoverable by a historian.'⁵⁶⁰ Meier concludes that Schillebeeckx indicated his disapproval of the efforts to identify any or all historical reconstructions with the *real* Jesus while Sobrino did not. Schillebeeckx's methodology is

simply not available in earlier centuries." Gerald O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983), 23.

⁵⁵⁹Ibid. On pages 3-4, Meier adds his observation and says: "In his more recent book, *Jesus in Latin America*, Sobrino seeks to reply to criticisms of *Christology at the Crossroads*. Unfortunately, the concept of the historical Jesus continues to remain fuzzy, at times being equated with a christology that emphasizes the humanity of Jesus or Jesus' earthly career."

⁵⁶⁰Ibid., 5-6.

therefore, superior.⁵⁶¹ Meier explains:

The Gospels hardly give us the totality of Jesus' history and a quest for the historical Jesus must be highly selective amid the data the Gospels do provide. Hence the *real* Jesus, i.e., the total reality of Jesus of Nazareth as he lived in the first century, is no longer accessible to us by scholarly means. It is this basic insight which touches off a quest for the historical Jesus, and it is this basic insight that is lacking in Sobrino's approach.⁵⁶²

In Meier's view, Sobrino's explanations of some activities of the historical Jesus such as his trip to Jerusalem and the gathering before the arrest and crucifixion, is based on a questionable and vague materials of the Gospel. It is worse since Sobrino tends to mix them up and ends with a general reference of the so-called "common heritage" without being able to give any further details. This eventually only makes the explanation vague and therefore useless. Meier explains:

Sobrino notes that Latin American christology does not share the radical skepticism of some; rather, it shares "the common heritage of other current christologies (including the European)." Sobrino then proceeds to give a thumbnail sketch of such a common heritage--and the problem of appealing to such a supposed common heritage becomes evident. The picture is basically that of the Synoptic Jesus: e.g., there is simply one journey to Jerusalem toward the end of Jesus' life. Yet this is mixed up with a strange borrowing from John, namely the idea of a crisis toward the middle or end of Jesus public life--one element from John that is historically dubious.⁵⁶³

Meier concludes:

A good deal of this common heritage is distressingly vague: e.g., Jesus shared "some kind of meal with those close to him" before he was arrested; Jesus showed "certain attitudes toward the Jewish Law and the Temple." Sobrino is no doubt aware that if he gets any more specific than this, his presumed common heritage

⁵⁶¹Ibid., 6.

⁵⁶²Ibid.

⁵⁶³Ibid.

may evaporate; but without more specificity, these vague snippets are useless.⁵⁶⁴

4) On Jesus' preferential option for the poor and conflict against the power-holders

Preferential option for the poor is a major theme in many liberation movements and theologies. In Sobrino's study this concern is christologically based since Jesus himself according to the Gospel showed a special concern for them and took their side up to the end of his life, proclaiming the Good News of the presence of the Kingdom of God among them. Precisely at that point, Meier found another incorrect reading of the Gospel. There are three problematic areas in Sobrino's christology: 1) the poor, 2) the oppressed and sinners as Jesus' audience and 3) the power-holders and the reason of Jesus' crucifixion.

It is too simplistic to say that all of Jesus' audience was economically poor and it is too simplistic to say that Jesus offended only the rich and the powerful. For Meier, Sobrino tends to lump together various groups: the poor, the oppressed and the sinner as the object of Jesus preferential ministerial option. Also, Sobrino indicates strongly that solidarity with these groups of people caused opposition to Jesus and finally his execution. Referring to E.P. Sanders' *Jesus and Judaism*, Meier explains that "it is illegitimate to treat all of these groups as one" and "There is no proof that Jesus' concern for economically poor or uneducated people caused a major scandal or persecution, or was the major reason for his execution."⁵⁶⁵ According to Meier, tax collectors such as Zacchaeus (Lūke

⁵⁶⁴Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵Ibid., 4. Meier writes: "Even within this fuzzy context there are problems. Sobrino constantly emphasizes Jesus' partisanship and favoritism toward the poor, the oppressed, and the sinners. These various groups tend to be lumped together as the object of Jesus' favor, and solidarity with them is seen as the cause of opposition to Jesus and finally of his death. Yet E.P. Sanders, in his fine book *Jesus and Judaism*, points out that it is illegitimate to treat all these groups as one."

19:1-10) may have been wealthy and therefore Jesus' offer of forgiveness to him cannot be simply equated with his care for the economically deprived. Meier states:

There is no proof that Jesus' concern for economically poor or uneducated people caused a major scandal or persecution, or was the major reason for his execution. Matters may have been different with his free offer of forgiveness to public sinners who were considered to have broken with Judaism. Here Jesus may have offended *many* sincere and zealous Jews, and not just the rich or powerful. Since such people as tax collectors were not necessarily the poorest members of the community, and indeed some like Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10) may have been wealthy, Jesus scandalous free-wheeling offer of forgiveness to these economic oppressors cannot be simply equated with his care for the economically deprived... Thus, for all the socioeconomic trappings, Sobrino's treatment of the historical Jesus is socioeconomically naive.⁵⁶⁶

Sobrino draws our attention to his view that Jesus' ministry significantly made a preferential option for the poor and took the side of the poor, oppressed and marginalized. This finally brought him into frequent confrontations with the religious and social powerholders. Meier made a bold evaluation that Sobrino's biblical study is really too simplistic, naive and undefendable. Meier further explains his view against Sobrino's claim and points out that "What brought Jesus to the cross may have been no one aspect of his ministry, but rather the fact that his ministry offended so many groups--including pious Jews--in so many different ways that he had few influential supporters when the final clash came between himself and the rulers in Jerusalem over his attacks on the temple."⁵⁶⁷ Meier concludes critically that "Just as it is too simplistic to say that all of Jesus' audience was economically poor, so it is too simplistic to say that Jesus offended only the rich and the

⁵⁶⁶Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷Ibid. Meier adds that indeed E. P. Sanders also recognizes the importance of the temple question. Yet Sobrino according to him again, "fails to appreciate that such attacks probably alienated not just the Jerusalem priests but also a good many devout Jewish lay people."

powerful."⁵⁶⁸ Meier asserts that even with Sobrino's developed attempt in Jesus in Latin America, his discussion on the historical Jesus remains fuzzy.

Somehow Meier tone-downs his criticism by the saying that "...I admire their personal dedication and scholarly production. I see liberation theology as holding great promise for the renewal of both theology and church life, and I would like to aid it by fraternal correction, not hostile criticism."⁵⁶⁹ Meier rounds up his criticisms and says:

... After all, by the measuring rod of patristic and scholastic theology, liberation theology is still in its infancy and needs to grow in a sophisticated use of the sources of theological reflection--especially the Bible, and most especially that scholarly will-o'-the-wisp, the historical Jesus.

Along with the criteria of historicity that must be more carefully defined and employed, I think liberation theologians must rethink a larger christological question: Is it wise, when doing Christian theology, and more specifically christology, to focus so intensely, almost exclusively, on a protean Jesus of history? What is wrong with using, yea, reveling in, the full christology of each of the Gospel writers, whom we affirm in faith to be writing under divine inspiration?...

Perhaps the liberation theologians are all too quickly down the primrose path Hans Küng took, the path that naively equates the historical (*geschichtlich*) Jesus with the real (*wirklich*) Christ and then elevates *that* Jesus to the canon within the canon... It is by embracing, celebrating, and appropriating that complexity that I hope that liberation theologians will make the whole Bible--and the whole Bible's witness to the whole Christ--a true source for their theology.⁵⁷⁰

b. A response to Meier's Criticisms

So far I found that Meier's criticism is one of the most direct criticisms and observations on Sobrino's christology. In my view, Meier's criticism is basically legitimate and reasonable. Meier brought up important criticisms on Sobrino's method and content.

⁵⁶⁸Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹Ibid., 13.

⁵⁷⁰Ibid., 13-14.

From the perspective of a historical criticism, Sobrino's brief discussion of the so-called historical Jesus is surely incomparable to the scriptural study of Meier, materialized in his two volumes of A Marginal Jew which employed the historical method extensively. Surely at this point it is helpful to remember that they are different in their academic background: a biblical scholar and a systematic theologian. Meier himself openly shows his good understanding of Sobrino's broader situation, concern and struggle, and therefore prefers his criticism to be called a "fraternal correction". This means that Meier does not want to be bound in a cold academic criticism against Sobrino. Let us now evaluate the four points of Meier's criticisms.

The first concerns Sobrino's idea of the historical Jesus. I think Meier brings forward a solid criticism against Sobrino's short explanation on the historical Jesus. Sobrino takes the historical Jesus as his christological starting point and as hermeneutical principle and has drawn our attention to the importance of the historical Jesus for understanding Christ, emphasizing this more than the dogmatic formulation of the Council of Chalcedon. Sobrino has never presented a protracted description of what he means by the historical Jesus as evaluated by Meier, nor has he used historical methods properly as is seen in his own relatively limited references to biblical scholars. Because of this, Meier even charged him with proof-texting. Surely it is true that Sobrino is primarily presenting his christology systematically, yet it does not mean that he has to be minimizing his discussion on the historical Jesus as major starting point, or insufficiently using the criteria of historicity or uncritically selecting the extensive historical research on the scripture and exegetical literature done by various biblical scholars from all over the world. I think it

would be recommendable if Sobrino explains more his scriptural study on the historical Jesus especially using more recent materials from a more variety of biblical scholars, such as those from the U.S. or even from African and Asian countries.

This recommended explanation will simultaneously be responding to Meier's second criticism, the insufficient and narrowly selected sources used by Sobrino to explain the historical Jesus, and on the other hand, we can ask Meier: how much does the method of historical criticism hold a veto power over Christian discipleship and over the reality of the crucified people? It is important for scholars to be open to new alternative discoveries and to other perspectives or methods, since beyond one's own field and approach there is a wide spectrum of contributions from different sources and methods. Jon Nilson gave a good response to Meier's criticism for example by referring to the work of Maurice Blondel and David Tracy.

In an illuminating correspondence with Alfred Loisy, Maurice Blondel argued that "the accumulated of generations of Christians and my own intimate experience" were reliable sources of knowledge of Jesus in addition to historical methods. More recently, David Tracy has proposed that theologians today can and do believe in "the Resurrection on the basis of some personal religious experience of Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen one."⁵⁷¹

John P. Galvin in an article on Jesus Christ is also helpful. He writes "An important task of Christology is therefore to ascertain the relationship of Jesus' person and message and to elaborate its implications for understanding Jesus."⁵⁷² This corresponds positively to

⁵⁷¹Jon Nilson, "A Response to John P. Meier" in CTSA Proceedings 43 (1988): 17. References are to Richard J. Resch, Christology as a Methodological Problem: A Study of the Correspondence Between Maurice Blondel and Alfred Loisy, 1902-1903 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979), 175 and David Tracy, "To Trust or Suspect" in Commonweal 111 (1984): 533.

⁵⁷²John P. Galvin, "Jesus Christ" in Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, eds., Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives. Vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991),

Sobrino's basic christological questions: what can I know about Christ, how can I know and what do I do.

As regards Meier's third criticism, the previous point indicates the importance of reading the Gospel properly and adequately. Sobrino's concern and endeavor to unmask and criticize all christological sources that leave room for the possibility of manipulating the figure of Christ and therefore to cause alienation or particular oppression against the poor and marginalized, is legitimate and valid. Yet, it does not mean that he should not be obliged to argue from different scriptural sources and studies and present a more comprehensive picture of the historical Jesus, including critical notes on the different exegetical opinions without an exclusive claim that rejects other possibilities of a different interpretation of the historical Jesus. This is to say that basically Meier brought up a valid criticism. Additionally, from an exegetical perspective Sobrino's study will receive methodological credits, if it identifies the difference between an understanding of Jesus as a historical reconstruction and of the real Jesus which is according to Meier clearly no longer accessible to us by scholarly means. Sobrino himself has said that he is not a biblical scholar and that he would be using sources "insofar they are accessible, in a more or less general way, to historical and exegetical investigation", yet, I think it is also fair to expect that Sobrino indicates more explicitly that there is a methodological problem in the question of the historical Jesus.

It has been demonstrated that Sobrino's christological reflection is undoubtedly an effort to find the meaning of Jesus Christ amidst, with and for his people, the poor and the

victims. His continuing question is: is Jesus really good news for the poor and the victims today? how is the Gospel meaningful today? Sobrino argued that indeed Jesus is the Good News, the liberator and his maturing christology, illuminated by the crucified people, discovers that the poor has been a major theological locus to understand Jesus Christ more wholly. This is a strong point in Sobrino's christology as well as a new insight in christology, finding Christ crucified and resurrected among the victims, despite of the discussion on the historical Jesus or the lack of contemporary biblical sources. Sobrino's christology speaks to the people today and has been widely recognized as credible. However, Meier's point remains worth-considering. It is therefore, recommended that Sobrino demonstrate his use of the New Testament more carefully as well as be more critical in presenting what he called: the common heritage, or in using Johannine materials as indicated in Meier's criticism. On the other hand, Meier needs to rethink his evocation to embrace, celebrate and appropriate the complexity of scriptural study that will make the whole bible--and the whole bible's witness to the whole Christ--a true source for their theology, since in my understanding, this is exactly what Latin American theologians such as Sobrino have been trying to do, thereby affirming that Jesus is *Eu-aggelion*.

As regards Meier's fourth criticism, Sobrino's scriptural study that explains Jesus' preferential option for the poor and his conflict against the power-holders as well as the possible reasons involved, should neither narrow the understanding of the poor nor put them altogether under the category of the economically poor. Meier's criticism points out that Sobrino's explanation on the matter is narrowly presented and therefore in danger of leaving out other important historical events and aspects in Jesus' life. Meier's charge of

Sobrino's incorrect reading of the Gospel is not without reason. A tendency to a narrow understanding the poor merely in the economic or material sense and to lump together the poor, oppressed and sinners in that sense is undefendable exegetically.

On the other hand, Sobrino has demonstrated his strength and credibility through his christology of mercy amidst the victims. His personal experience of living and struggling with the poor of whom many had been killed slowly or violently as well as brutally massacred including "their defenders" some of whom Sobrino knew personally, make him choose the side of the poor also in his intellectual work. It is therefore true and understandable that Sobrino has focused his Christological endeavor on them. Yet, critically speaking, from a wider audience's point of view, it becomes one-sided and clearly needs to be extended. Secondly, Sobrino's presentation on the historical Jesus as one who holds a preferential option for the poor and therefore makes enemies among the power-holders, should not leave out other exegetical discoveries as indicated by Meier. Therefore, it is recommended that Sobrino include nuances on this matter and take into account a wider audience's experience, struggle and perspective. On the other hand, in my view, biblical scholars do not have to be without "interest" either socially or pastorally before the reality of our world today. This means that their scholarly labor can also be dedicated to explaining the Good News for the poor, marginalized and oppressed.

2. Feminist's Questions: María Pilar Aquino and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite

Some feminists such as María Pilar Aquino and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite view that the liberation of the poor and victims cannot be separated from the liberation of

women since they are very closely related.⁵⁷³ Elsa Tamez brought up the issue of women's absence amidst the development of liberation theological movements in 1980s.⁵⁷⁴ María Pilar Aquino points out to the fundamental lack of "the absence of reflection on the historical and spiritual experiences of women and their efforts to transform the systems destroying their lives and their human integrity."⁵⁷⁵

a. María Pilar Aquino

Let us take a close look particularly at Aquino's response to Sobrino's reflection on "the victims" in Latin America. She is presenting a feminist christological criticism which is also explicitly liberationist.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³María Pilar Aquino, Our Cry for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America. (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 21, Mary Judith Ress, "Feminist Theologians Challenge Churches." In Hennelly, ed., Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, 385 and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Suffering: Different Faces and Reactions response to Jon Sobrino" in Paul F. Knitter, ed., Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective. The annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 1988, Vol. 34 (New York: Lanham, 1991), 179-187 and Eileen M. Fagan, SC, An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue (San Francisco, London, Bethesda: Catholic Scholars Press, 1998), 220-223.

⁵⁷⁴Elsa Tamez, Against Machismo: Interviews by Elsa Tamez, trans. and ed., John Eagleson (Illinois: Meyer-Stone, 1987), 145-148.

⁵⁷⁵Aquino, Our Cry for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America, 64.

⁵⁷⁶I perceive that a liberationist's criticism such as that of Aquino to be more valuable than some feminist's criticism that locate the problem merely on the tension between the genders or that question basically on how a male figure (such as Jesus of Nazareth) can be a savior for women. The "...feminist christology which is explicitly liberationist locates the problem not in gender *per se*, but in the ideological construal of gender, i.e., in androcentrism, patriarchy, and more generally dominating power. This allows feminist liberation christology to retrieve prophetic themes from the historical Jesus." See Roger Haight, Jesus Symbol of God, 377n.20 which refers to feminist christological reflection of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology (New York: Continuum, 1994).

1) Aquino's Criticisms regarding Sobrino's Idea on Victims and the Hierarchy of Evils

a) On the Victims

Aquino, responding to Sobrino's reflection on the victims,⁵⁷⁷ observes that in fact the majority of the victims are women and children and this also means that the majority of those women and children come from those racially and culturally oppressed and that their daily life is marked by violence. Aquino writes:

...the most pervasive reality, and therefore the most scandalous and most in need of salvation is violence against women. As stated in final report on the II Latin American Women Theologians' Meeting of December 1993 entitled "Between Indignation and Hope," this reality of suffering and violence is the most harmful because it is the most concealed, the most ignored, and the most present in the daily lives of most Latin American women. This reality confirms unequivocally the principle that Sobrino offers in his paper today: "The greater the scandal, the greater the cover up; and thus from the magnitude of the cover up we can figure the magnitude of the scandal." Another principle may be added to this one: from the magnitude of the problem, we establish the magnitude of tasks for Christian theology. Theological language can be deceptive if it does not address the evil of violence against women and children, or if it ignores our hopes and our actions of survival, resistance, and transformation.⁵⁷⁸

For Aquino this factual violence cannot be seen merely in terms of individual incidents or simply an individual experience but systematic as well as global.⁵⁷⁹ And "...with the exception of Latin American feminist theologians--both women and men--, this is the

⁵⁷⁷See Sobrino's article: "Evil and Hope: A Reflection From Amidst the Victims" Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 50 (1995): 71-84.

⁵⁷⁸María Pilar Aquino, "Evil and Hope: A Response to Jon Sobrino" in Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 50 (1995): 89.

⁵⁷⁹Aquino, "El Mal y La Esperanza: Respuesta a Jon Sobrino" in Christus LXI-695 (July-August 1996): 24.

theological arena most ignored by Latin American liberation theologians."⁵⁸⁰

Aquino, therefore, argues that it is important to specify and name the characters of these "victims". She points out: "Therefore, along the same line of thought pursued by Ellacuría, in order to determine the characteristics of evil, how to eliminate it, and how to retrieve hope, it is necessary to have as the point of reference the actual physical, social, sexual, racial, and cultural characteristics of the victims."⁵⁸¹

b) On the Hierarchy of Evils

Aquino raises another criticism against what Sobrino called the hierarchy of evils ("jerarquía de los males"). Speaking on behalf of some Latin American women theologians, Aquino explains that Sobrino's concept of the hierarchy of evils can operate only within an analytical model that gives a priority to the economic factor as the most determining factor in social relations and therefore undermine the oppression against women.⁵⁸²

The vision offered by Sobrino concerning "the hierarchy of evils" is fully supported by other theologians in Latin America. However, as mentioned in our Final Report of 1993, most of Latin American feminist theologians believe that the concept of the "hierarchy of evils" can operate only within an analytical framework that establishes economic factors as the most significant of social relations. In this framework, the social actors can only express themselves in the dialectic rich-poor, exploiter-exploited. Here, the vision of reality is governed by the generic concept

⁵⁸⁰ Aquino, "Evil and Hope: A Response to Jon Sobrino" in Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 50 (1995): 88.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁸² "En América Latina no se puede ya sostener la *jerarquía de los males*, en la cual la opresión de la mujer es sólo un *mal menor* o un fenómeno circunstancial." See Aquino, Nuestro Clamor por la Vida: Teología Latinoamericana Desde la Perspectiva de la Mujer, 52.

of "impoverished people." From the point of view of Latin American feminist theologians, this analytical framework does not do justice to women and it does not do justice to reality itself, due to its limitations in examining the multiplicity of factors that impact women's lives.⁵⁸³

Aquino sees this as another blindness and obstacle for a structural transformation for the betterment of the majority of the victims; women and children, and therefore a flaw in liberation theology. She continues:

As a result, it does not permit the development of new strategies to modify actual oppressive structures of power. Hierarchical gender relations stand out among these as the first and most widespread power structure in every human society. This is one of the most important critiques of liberation theology raised by women. Moreover, liberation theology has not woven the critical categories of gender, with those of race and social class into the fabric of theological knowledge itself."⁵⁸⁴

Sobrino's analytical model therefore, has not done justice to the reality of women and did not address the multiple factors that have made a great impact on the life of women. For her, Sobrino's "hierarchy of evils" is not be able to approach the true reality. At this point, Aquino suggests what she calls: relational policentrism of evils that will better confront the actual neoliberal capitalism, its predatory character, its neo-colonizing tendencies, its sexist and idolatric discourse as well as any of patriarchal institutions that are supporting it.⁵⁸⁵

This condition of reality is what leads me to suggest that the concept "hierarchy of evils" should be replaced by the concept of "relational policentrism of evils." This concept would assist in better understanding the contribution of theology to

⁵⁸³ Aquino, "Evil and Hope: A Response to Jon Sobrino" in Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 50 (1995): 90 and Final Statement of the "Women Against Violence" in Dialogue: Voices-EATWOT 1 (June 1995): 214.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Aquino, "El Mal y La Esperanza: Respuesta a Jon Sobrino" in Christus LXI-695 (July-August 1996): 24.

alternatives for change in order to challenge effectively the current neoliberal capitalism, its predatory logic toward planetary life, its neocolonizing tendencies, its sexist and idolatrous discourse, as well as the patriarchal institutions that support it. As I have previously suggested, "In Latin America we cannot sustain a hierarchy of evils in which women's oppression is 'only' a minor evil or a circumstantial phenomenon," or even worse, as something only worth mention in a footnote.⁵⁸⁶

Aquino finally affirms a liberative task of theology as emphasized by Sobrino and this also means that at the bottom line, theology should not participate in the production and reproduction of inhumanity and oppression.

2) A Response to Aquino's Criticism

First, Aquino raises an issue against Sobrino especially on his idea of the victims. Similar to Meier, Aquino questions Sobrino's definition of the poor and the victims and his theological reflection that seems narrowing "the poor" to mainly an economic sense. Unlike Meier, Aquino indicates her concern for a wider audience, especially women and children. Aquino's point is that the existence of massive violence against women and children is obvious, yet generally most Latin American theologians are silent, and even Sobrino himself has never really addressed this reality sufficiently. According to Aquino it is a mistake if one thinks that oppression against women and children is a minor evil or a circumstantial phenomenon, as often indicated in a minimal study or presentation of that

⁵⁸⁶ Aquino, "Evil and Hope: A Response to Jon Sobrino" in Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 50 (1995): 91. Previously on page 86, Aquino noted that "One of the Sobrino's most important contributions to contemporary Christian theology is his affirmation of theological knowledge as a principle of liberation." Therefore it is understandable to take seriously and critically any theological knowledge that might cause otherwise.

reality. By only alluding to the case, Sobrino did not meet the point raised by Aquino.⁵⁸⁷ In my view, her claim is reasonable and true. It deserves a good response, particularly since Sobrino himself has emphasized the importance of being honest and responsible to reality. Therefore, I think a recognition in a form of a broader discussion on the women and child victims will enhance and clarify Sobrino's christology from amidst the victims, the crucified people and its *locus theologicus*. This highlight on the issue of the women is, first of all, to verify the claim that the majority of the victims of our world are women, women with dependent children and children. In this way the reality of the victims will be better understood and the theological locus redefined. Secondly, this highlight will develop what Sobrino had already done, indicating women victims by names such as: the four American missionaries for El Salvador: Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, as also Simone Weil and the Jesuit's co-workers: Elba Ramos and Celina Ramos.⁵⁸⁸

As regards her second criticism on the hierarchy of evils, Aquino shows the importance of specifying the characters of the victims as opposed to "generalization" and she argues that the concept of hierarchy of evils is incapable of challenging hierarchical gender relations since it operates "only within an analytical framework that establishes economic factors as the most significant of social relations" and is unable to examine fully

⁵⁸⁷ On page 10 of his *La Fe en Jesucristo*, Sobrino explains his reasons for not taking the starting point of the different contemporary issues separately in his reflection, such as: indigenous and Afroamerican cultures, gender and ecological issues or the challenge of an inter-religious dialogue.

⁵⁸⁸ Eileen Fagan admits that though Sobrino has not given sufficient treatment to the women issue, "... Sobrino has acknowledged the need for greater thematization of feminism... it must be noted that his sensitivity and honesty are very evident." See Eileen M. Fagan, SC, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue*, 221 and Sobrino's response to Keith Egan in *Horizons* 16 (Spring 1989): 142.

"the multiplicity of factors that impact women's lives." This is a fair criticism and also legitimate. Again, I think Sobrino's work would be enhanced if women are more highlighted in his writings without lessening the significance and focus of the discussion of the victims and the crucified people. Indeed, details of characteristics of the victims will also increase our understanding of who are the crucified people and the victims of our world today.

b. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite

Responding particularly to Sobrino's "Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as Intellectus Amoris"⁵⁸⁹, Thistlethwaite first gives her personal perspective. "The particular methodological perspective I bring to reading Sobrino's essay is that of feminism. But feminism, too, has its differences..." For Thistlethwaite this has two meanings. She continues: "1) a Hispanic woman's reading of his essay would be very different from my own; 2) theologies of patriarchy are adaptable to different contexts, including that of liberation theology."⁵⁹⁰ Thistlethwaite offers three critical remarks.

⁵⁸⁹See Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Suffering: Different Faces and Reactions. Response to Jon Sobrino" and Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as Intellectus Amoris". Both are in Paul F. Knitter, ed., Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective. The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 1988, Vol. 34 (New York: Lanhan, 1991), 179-187, 153-177.

⁵⁹⁰Thistlethwaite, "Suffering: Different Faces and Reactions. Response to Jon Sobrino" in Paul F. Knitter, ed., Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective. The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 1988, Vol. 34, 183.

1) Thistlethwaite's Criticisms on Context, Response to Suffering and

Linguistic Issues

a) Looking at Suffering from a Different Context

Thistlethwaite explains, in reference to Sobrino, that the reality of suffering is the connection point among all liberation theologians while recognizing the differing theologies of liberation. However, "Some of them have been blind to other forms of oppression within other contexts, even though these other contexts are connected with their own." She gives an example.

In earlier years... male Black liberation theologians ignored sexism until they heard from Black women; challenged by Black feminist liberation theologians, this theology has changed. For many years, also Latin American liberation theologians have ignored sexism, but they too are changing, having listened to the criticisms of women within these movements. And speaking as a White North American feminist, I can recognize that my movement has long ignored classism and racism and focused on sexism only from a white northern middle-class perspective. There is a great danger, therefore, in the usually implicit assumption that one's description of problems and possibilities is inclusive of all the other forms of oppression; this is not usually the case. When challenged, Black, Native American, and Hispanic women told us that we white women did not speak for them; in fact we didn't even speak for all white women."⁵⁹¹

Thistlethwaite therefore states that: "Almost all liberation theologians have ignored heterosexism and homophobia, and have failed to see sexual and domestic violence as significant forms of oppression."⁵⁹²

b) An Alternative Reaction Against Suffering

Thistlethwaite points out to a possible other reaction before the reality of suffering.

⁵⁹¹Ibid., 182.

⁵⁹²Ibid.

This also involves a reality endured by women. Therefore, it is critical of Sobrino's emphasis on compassion and mercy before the suffering people. She argues:

Sobrino's stress on compassion and mercy as the primary response to suffering might also be seen differently in light of what feminist theologians have said about self-denial as women's primary sin. What constitutes the Christian virtues--humility, compassion, mercy, selflessness--becomes sin for women insofar as they are taught by the dominant culture not to assert themselves. This is also the analysis that Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango make in their new book on Hispanic women's liberation theology. In my context--that is, in my situation as a North White feminist--my besetting sin is not hubris, not pride, but self-denial. Therefore my response to massive suffering, which is the general context for all theology, is not best understood as compassion or mercy but as *anger*.⁵⁹³

Thistlethwaite views this reaction theologically. She asserts: "I believe that God is coming, and I think She is furious at injustice."⁵⁹⁴ Thistlethwaite sees something different namely the importance of anger as a reaction before the massive suffering.

c) A Linguistic Remark

Thistlethwaite makes a critical remark from a linguistic perspective that the term "poor" in Spanish as used by Sobrino, is only expressed in a masculine form "los pobres". Therefore strictly speaking, the reality of suffering that involves women and children was not present at least linguistically.

In reading Sobrino's essay in its original Spanish, I was struck by the expression "*los pobres*." I checked my dictionary and found that there is no feminine form--only the masculine noun *los pobres*. Even though the feminization of poverty is a reality, there is in Spanish no feminine form for the poor. Millions of people throughout the world who are being murdered--who are starving to death--are women, particularly women with dependent children. But the suffering Spanish-

⁵⁹³Ibid., 184.

⁵⁹⁴Ibid.

speaking woman does not even have a word for her poverty.⁵⁹⁵

Thistlethwaite then suggest to find a new term to express linguistically at least the unexpressed and unsayable "And so I submit the term "*las pobras*." I just made it up.

That's what one has to do--make up new expressions."⁵⁹⁶

Thistlethwaite finally make a sharp remark for those who are understanding liberation theology that expresses her own understanding that:

Liberation theology does not tell you much if you enter it as a tourist. Learning the method of the theologies of liberation, understanding the commitment to doing theology contextually, communally, concretely, means asking yourself where in your social location is justice struggling to be born and how can you help. As Audre Lorde has written, "Survival is not an academic skill."⁵⁹⁷

2) A Response to Thistlethwaite

The first criticism of Thistlethwaite on the influence of one's context and perspective in one's writings is worth-noting. A different context implicates a different perspective. Thistlethwaite raises the issue that a North American way of looking at liberation theology may be different than a Latin American view. This also means that one's description of problems, possibilities as well as reality, such oppression, are usually bound to one's historical immediate context. Therefore, there are different kinds of

⁵⁹⁵Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶Ibid. Thistlethwaite here refers particularly to Herbert Marcuse and explains that "the success of a system depends on its ability to make alternatives unthinkable."

⁵⁹⁷Ibid., 185-186. Previously, on page 180, she writes: "...They are theologians who have accepted as their task the articulation of the pain of the world. I understand Jon Sobrino to be one of these organic intellectuals. They are not armchair intelligentsia. Formally trained in the best schools of theology, they have taken it as their job to articulate the struggle for liberation of particular communities--and thus to be personally committed to this struggle as they apply their skills to help lead and clarify it."

liberation theologies done from different contexts. This approach explains that Sobrino's christology is also bound to the Salvadoran context and Latin American in general.⁵⁹⁸ On the other hand, Thistlethwaite shows that through listening to the voice and criticism such as that of women one may be able to broaden one's perspective and open one's view to the problems of the oppression of women. This critical observation applies to all theologians. Even at this point, it is implied that critics such as Meier are also bound to a certain "context and perspective". This means that Meier's view, concern, commitment and interest are important, but not necessarily without alternatives, and his way of looking at liberation theology as a North American is foreseeably different.

Sobrino often said explicitly that he is doing his christology mainly in El Salvador or from and for a Latin American context. He does not want to talk generically about everything. Yet, his message for the poor goes beyond El Salvador or Latin America in general and is meant to be for the poor of our world today. In my opinion, Thistlethwaite's article makes a good critical remark that Sobrino's christological reflection is also bound to both a social and a personal context. Similar to Aquino, her evocation to listen to others especially to the suffering stories of women would be beneficial for further broadening Sobrino's view and theological sensitivity.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ A context is indeed not only limiting one's perspective but makes one's perspective real, historical and concrete. Sobrino himself explains that to focus on a part of the whole means primarily to enable him to reach out to the whole and not to ignore the rest. Meier's criticism and thought reflects a context where he lives and works. Compare to Sobrino's explanation on his partiality and option for the poor in his "The University's Christian Inspiration" Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuria and others, Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador, 162.

⁵⁹⁹ At this point, I think it is also necessary to realize that some cultures are not seeing individuals, men-women, children-parents as "separated" from each other. In Latin America and Asia for example, many people consider community and families at least as important as individuals. Therefore without undermining feminist criticism, I think it is inadequate if Thistlethwaite and even

Second, while Sobrino has been emphasizing compassion and mercy, Thistlethwaite raises the issue of anger as an equally legitimate reaction against the reality of suffering. She explains that common Christian values such as humility, compassion, mercy and self denial have been abused and misused by the dominant culture to oppress women and the marginalized. Therefore, anger becomes her alternative reaction to confront any oppression that causes suffering.

In my opinion, it is a legitimate suspicion. Somehow I do not think it is widely contradictory to Sobrino's message. In my reading of Sobrino at least there are two moments where anger is felt through his writings: first is when he was narrating the barbaric assassination of many friends especially those whom he knew personally as well as the massacre of many innocent people especially in "his neighborhood". Secondly there is anger when he was denouncing the anti-kingdom that manifests its cruel power unceasingly against the poor and the oppressed.⁶⁰⁰ This overwhelming situation is

Aquino raise feminist criticism without taking into account the existence of such different cultural perspective and experience. Here it may be interesting to analyze feminist's concern raised by Aloysius Pieris who dedicated one-third of his new book on the issue. Aloysius Pieris, S.J., Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-62 (Part I is entitled "Woman and Religion. Buddhist and Christian Appropriation of Feminist Criticism").

⁶⁰⁰In my view, Sobrino's paragraph about "political love" and on "sharing the suffering of humanity" understands "anger" in its best contexts. "...political love has certain characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of love. In the first place it requires a *metanoia* to see the truth of the world as it is, in the manifestations of death, which are visible, and its structural causes, which are hidden and take care to be hidden, to see in this generalized death the most important fact and the most serious problem of humanity, the greatest challenge to the meaning of history and humanity, so that we do not imprison the truth of things through injustice (Rom. 1:18). It requires *pity* for the unhealed but not unhealable suffering of the oppressed majority, Jesus' pity for the multitude. It requires an awareness of *responsibility* when asked the question, 'What have you done with your brother?' (Gen. 4:10) and co-responsibility for his condition and his destiny. This co-responsibility also allows persons to start recovering their dignity by sharing the suffering of humanity." Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 81.

worsened by the Church leadership, whether ecclesiastical or theological, who talk more about the spreading of the kingdom of God, the coming of the kingdom but give insufficient indication of the real presence of the anti-kingdom and do not talk strongly about resisting the anti-kingdom. Therefore without undermining Thistlethwaite's point, I think, Sobrino's point on compassion and mercy stands as a real challenge to all as they approach the reality more positively.

Third, on the linguistic criticism, in my opinion Thistlethwaite's observation basically reflects on her own linguistic use and experience as a North-American who speaks English. It is surely legitimate to raise such an issue, yet a knowledge of other cultures that express themselves in a particular language is very important. Changing the gender of the word: *los pobres* into *las pobres* is understandable as useful for expressing and securing a sense of inclusivity or equality, especially from an English-speaking North American feminist. Yet, it may not be a common problem or the most important issue to be addressed among the Spanish-speaking people.⁶⁰¹ On the other hand, feminist criticism on the pervasive presence of the oppression against women and children should remain highlighted.

⁶⁰¹ Additionally, my own experience as an Indonesian who is studying theology in an English-speaking environment at the GTU gives me an interesting linguistic challenge. For example, the issue of addressing God with an inclusive expression has never been a real problem since my language, bahasa Indonesia, uses a "neutral" pronoun for God etc. Here the challenge is to rethink what we are really saying when we are talking about God in our different languages.

3. Kenan B. Osborne

In his book The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation, Osborne discussed Sobrino's christology and brought up two important points including his criticisms. They are first, the issue of the poor and the marginalized as the main addressee of the Good News of the Reign of God and secondly, its role as theological locus in Sobrino's christology.

a. Critical Remarks on Sobrino's Understanding of the Poor and Theological Locus

Osborne, first, questions Sobrino's definition of the poor and the marginalized. It is understandable that Sobrino mainly brings forward the materially poor since he did his major work amidst the circumstances of Central America as explained earlier. The question are they the only group to be at the center stage of a christological reflection such as that of Sobrino? Secondly, according to Osborne, many other groups from within a more global point of view need to be included as well at this center stage. The question is, are these groups also integral parts of the discussion of the so-called *locus theologicus*, as explained by Sobrino who introduces the approach that the poor is a major theological locus.

Osborne points out to two other important points in the discussion about the kingdom of God in his search for a unified christology. First, he explains that

The complexity about the kingdom has been highlighted by the excellent work of L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, and especially of J. Sobrino in his latest volume, *Jesus the Liberator*. Both of these authors stress that the kingdom of God must involve a diminishment of evil, particularly evil social structures, which are found

both in the social-political arena and in the eccleciastical arena.⁶⁰²

He continues:

Second, the poor in the works of these and other liberation theologians are a very special *locus theologicus*. These theologians argue that one cannot begin to understand the meaning of the kingdom of God unless one listens to the poor. God speaks the message of this kingdom preferentially through them. In these writers we see more clearly than in Jeremias that the issue "the poor have the good news preached to them" is an essential part of the very meaning of kingdom.⁶⁰³

Osborne further explains Sobrino's understanding of the kingdom of God as compared to other present-day theologies of the kingdom. There are four important points about Sobrino's understanding. The first is that the kingdom of God is in the presence of and against the anti-kingdom. The second is that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor. The third is that the kingdom of God is historical and the fourth is that it is popular which means of the people and not primarily of the church authorities. "Only if and when the Church champions the people whom God has primarily addressed and chosen can the Church itself be seen as 'the people of God'."⁶⁰⁴

Precisely at this point, Osborne calls into question points of Sobrino's christology.

He writes:

In these ideas of Sobrino, there is much that calls into question the standard theological approach of many Roman Catholic theologies, many Eastern church theologies, and many Protestant theologies. Because of the circumstances of Central America in which Sobrino has done his major work, the materially poor, the politically and socially marginalized are brought to center stage. Were one to look more globally at the meaning of the poor and the marginalized, many other

⁶⁰²Osborne, The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation, 151.

⁶⁰³Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴Ibid., 152.

groups would certainly need to be seen at the center stage, this *locus theologicus*...⁶⁰⁵

Osborne suggests that from a more globalized point of view, not just in El Salvador or Latin America nor even in the so-called third world countries, will the oppressed and marginalized be only the economically poor as emphasized by Sobrino. Therefore, speaking indirectly to Sobrino yet directly on the wider audience of the message of the Gospel, Osborne proposes four other main groups to be considered seriously whenever one speaks about the marginalized or the oppressed. They are women, racial and cultural minorities, sexual minorities and members of other religions.

First, on women, Osborne mainly refers to all women and all kinds of structured marginalization involved. He asserts:

Until all women globally are respected for their equality, dignity, and freedom, the gospel message makes no sense. Unless those who are the leaders, both ecclesiastical and theological, of the various Christian churches cry out against women's lack of equality, dignity, and freedom, such leadership can be judged as misconceiving the call of the gospel.⁶⁰⁶

Secondly, on racial and cultural minorities, he explains that Christian churches and their christology have to be more inclusive and welcoming since the presence of the issues of racism and monoculturalism can still be detected. Osborne explains:

Christianity has been and remains basically a Euro-Anglo-American entity. Fundamentally, the theology, the liturgy, the symbol system, the spirituality, the institutional structures are Euro-Anglo-American. Centuries of colonialization linked with church mission have engraved this into almost every area of our world... The Euro-Anglo-American power position almost always dominated the

⁶⁰⁵Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶Ibid.

evangelizing efforts of both Protestant and Roman Catholic missions.⁶⁰⁷

Osborne observed that this is a continuing situation and this raises "the issues of racism and monoculturalism in churches, which on the basis of christology should have no tolerance at all of any racism and monoculturalism."⁶⁰⁸ Thirdly, on sexual minorities, Osborne begins by recognizing the uneasiness in Roman Catholic as well as in many Protestant churches toward current rethinking of sexuality particularly in the stance toward women, toward those who are married and divorced, toward culturally accepted polygamy, toward same-sex sexuality. Osborne believes that "... the message of Jesus was and remains an inclusive message. This is the basic thrust of the 'kingdom of God.'" He continues, "Humanly speaking, we generally as existential groups of Christians need at times to put up barriers, but whenever we do, the message of Jesus asks of us a basic question: Why? We need to justify every barrier."⁶⁰⁹ Fourthly, on members of other religions, Osborne explains that evangelization involves an encounter with other major and minor religions that include the majority of the world's population. His question is: "Does christology imply that only those who believe in Jesus will be saved? Or does a christology, with its focus on the kingdom of God, not the church of Jesus, imply that

⁶⁰⁷Ibid., 153. In evaluating Latin American Liberation Theology, for example, George Cummings in the line black theology observes that "Meanwhile, certain fundamental cultural and religious questions that characterized the Latin American situation were left unaddressed. Also, almost completely absent was any reference to the problem of racism; the primary contradiction to which black theologians sought to respond in the United States." George C. L. Cummings, A Common Journey: Black Theology (USA) and Latin American Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 88 also James H. Cone, Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979 (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 245.

⁶⁰⁸Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹Ibid., 154.

salvation is an inclusive, not an exclusive, issue?"⁶¹⁰

Finally Osborne concludes with an open theological statement of a possibility to discover other marginalized and oppressed groups from a different social-political and religious experience, which in the line of his thinking, they too eventually have to be considered as an integral part of the main addressee of the kingdom of God and therefore an important theological locus. Otherwise, christology, especially its focus on the kingdom of God, will be narrowly understood, ignoring other oppressed and marginalized groups. Osborne views that the message of Gospel is basically inclusive though undoubtedly taking side of the oppressed and marginalized.

Certainly others will think of groups beyond ones mentioned above and ask that they be included as well. Again, I do not wish to offer a final listing, but only say that the "marginalized," which liberation theologians of Central and South America tend to emphasize, need to be seen in a more globalized way. There is a very inclusive center of poor or marginalized that must be seen, heard, and followed as one of the gospel's major *loci theologici*. Only when this begins to take place will we make major steps toward a unified christology.⁶¹¹

b. A Response to Osborne's Criticisms

First, Osborne's critical remarks is directed to Sobrino's understanding of the poor

⁶¹⁰Ibid. Osborne further claims that "There is a very inclusive center of poor or marginalized that must be seen, heard, and followed as one of the gospel's major *loci theologici*." These marginalized groups of people has to be taken into account in a christology of liberation. On a different level, the issue of human-made "borders" has been called into question also theologically since "Ultimately, the border is not merely a conceptual or even an epistemological category, but a concrete historical reality which, as *locus theologicus*, can reveal the presence of God in our midst, among those persons who have been marginalized or, indeed, completely excluded by the borders erected to 'defend' power, wealth, and dominance." Roberto S. Goizueta and Maria Pilar Aquino, "Introduction" of Maria Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta, eds., Theology: Expanding the Borders. The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, Vol. 43 (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), xiii.

⁶¹¹Ibid., 154.

today and not so much on his understanding of the poor in the Gospel. From a more globalized point of view when one is addressing the poor and the marginalized, the economically poor are not the only group who has to be considered seriously. Osborne gives examples of four other groups women, racial and cultural minorities, sexual minorities and members of other religions. For him these groups of people should be brought to the center when the poor is discussed and therefore is also an important theological locus. Indeed Osborne himself indicates his continuous search of the meaning of the poor and the marginalized of our world today. To put it differently, Osborne affirms the largeness of the way Sobrino talks about the kingdom of God especially within his Latin American perspective. Yet, for Osborne, it also needs to be seen from a wider point of view, from a more globalized point of view.

As I have mentioned earlier, in my opinion, this critical remark is not only reasonable and legitimate but urgent as we are exposed more and more to the reality of those groups especially since they have gradually been able to express themselves and voice their suffering. Taking seriously Osborne's opinion will enhance the largeness of Sobrino's understanding of the poor of our world, the crucified people and of his theological locus. In other words, theologically and christologically speaking, the challenge is how to proclaim that the Good News is also for those people and that Jesus is truly the liberator of all.

Secondly, I would like to draw attention to the issue of members or other religions. Osborne challenges Christian understanding of the faith in Jesus Christ and raises a soteriological question: does a christology, with its focus on the kingdom of God, not

the church of Jesus, imply that salvation is an inclusive issue? From my own perspective, this question is immediately understandable as well as urgent because of a continuous experience of living neighbored by other major and minor non-Christian religions. To make it brief, it is indeed important to be able to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with respect to others' faith and different religious traditions, and without excluding them from our faith and Christian discourse. To include this concern into the discussion of the marginalized of today's world is, I think, an enrichment of Sobrino's focus on the poor, the victims as a major theological locus.

4. Gerald O'Collins

a. Criticisms on Sobrino's Starting Point and the Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus

1) On the Starting Point of Christology

Sobrino takes the historical Jesus as the starting point of his christology. O'Collins sees it even that in fact the historical Jesus becomes the center of his christology. O'Collins questions are: Does Sobrino convincingly justify the starting point (and center) of his Christology?

Referring to Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads, O'Collins points out that "Sobrino aims to present the 'traits of Jesus which are most securely guaranteed by exegesis, and which offer us a *most trustworthy image* of the historical Jesus. We want to see what *really* happened' (p. 14; italics mine)."⁶¹² While pointing to Sobrino's

⁶¹²Gerald O'Collins, SJ, What are They Saying About Jesus (Revised) (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 54.

methodological notes on the case, O'Collins argues that there are problematic issues in his biblical exegesis and hermeneutical analysis. He explains his analysis:

Sobrino warns that a *selective* use of data from Jesus' history cannot hope to reproduce properly this history (pp. 83f.). But there is also the question of the *interpretation* of the data. How does Sobrino know, for instance, that at his baptism "Jesus became aware of his mission and his sonship" (p. 96)? Jesus was certainly baptized, but we have no information about his self-awareness a week or, let us say six months before that. Likewise how does Sobrino know that on the cross Jesus "felt *completely* abandoned by the God, whose nearness he had felt and proclaimed" (p. 370; italics mine)? What hard evidence does Sobrino (and Moltmann whom he quotes) have for explaining the cry of abandonment (Mk 15, 34) to mean that Jesus experienced his death "as *hellish* abandonment by the very God whose loving nearness he had proclaimed" (p. 218; italics mine)? Elsewhere Sobrino mitigates this interpretation of Mark 15, 34 by calling it "a prayer of anguish" (p. 152) and recital of Psalm 22 (p. 156). Which interpretation of the cry of abandonment is then to be preferred?

O'Collins continues with his questions:

Put starkly and strongly, the key question eventually comes to this: Does Sobrino convincingly justify the starting point (and center) of his christology? He modestly admits that he cannot find--would not want to find--"some clear and indisputable Archimedean point for starting Christology" (p. 12). All the same, he sets out various reasons for his choice. Do these reasons work?"⁶¹³

O'Collins sums up his critical observation on Sobrino's starting point by returning to his methodological preference. For O'Collins, the paschal mystery or the resurrection is more adequate to be his christological starting point. He explains:

Although we should join Sobrino in insisting that the history of Jesus remains essential material for any adequate Christology (and any true Christian discipleship), nevertheless that is not the same as agreeing to construct "a Christology of the historical Jesus" (p. 83). For the reasons indicated, the paschal mystery should be the starting point and center of Christology.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³Ibid.

⁶¹⁴Ibid., 56.

2) On the Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus

O'Collins is repetitiously pointing out a common failure that "When contemporary theological works deal with the suffering and death of Jesus, they regularly fail to discuss how he made peace *through the shedding of his blood upon the cross*."⁶¹⁵ He shows that Sobrino in his Christology at the Crossroads only minimally touches that theme. For him, it is significant because that theme runs through the New Testament and therefore it can address much to the world of the victims such as in the case of the killing of Romero and many others. O'Collins states his concern and asserts: "I wonder whether Bible translators and theologians are losing something of great significance for redemption when they play down or even ignore the blood of Jesus shed for us on Good Friday."⁶¹⁶ He writes:

When contemporary theological works deal with the suffering and death of Jesus, they regularly fail to discuss how he made peace *through the shedding of his blood upon the cross*. An easy way of verifying this sweeping judgement is to review the chapter (or sections) devoted to Jesus' death in the Christologies of Kasper, Küng, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Schillebeeckx, Schoonenberg and others. Let me cite two examples. In the relevant chapter of his *Jesus the Man and the Myth*, James Mackey has one passing reference to the spilling of Jesus' blood (p. 74). Jon Sobrino in his *Christology at the Crossroads* also does no more than merely touch the theme (p. 189).⁶¹⁷

Interestingly, as I mentioned earlier, O'Collins has referred to the same criticism more than a decade ago. Apparently this is one of his underlying christological concerns and for him

⁶¹⁵O'Collins, Interpreting Jesus, 162 and Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology (Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 1996), 85.

⁶¹⁶O'Collins, Interpreting Jesus, 162-165 and his What are They Saying About Jesus (Revised), 51.

⁶¹⁷O'Collins, Interpreting Jesus, 162.

the issue remains unanswered by those contemporary theologians.⁶¹⁸

On the resurrection of Jesus, Gerald O'Collins observed that in liberation christology such as Sobrino's, there is very little reflection on Christ's resurrection. He observes that issues of justice and injustice have absorbed most of his attention while missing a major message of Jesus' resurrection: the full and final justice it promises to the poor and oppressed.

In our day, liberation theologies have little to say about Jesus' resurrection. It is not that Hugo Assmann, Leonardo Boff, OFM, Jon Sobrino, SJ, and others fail to mention the Easter mystery, but they inevitably underplay the full significance of the resurrection because they are often bent on developing Christologies in the light of Jesus' ministry and death. These Liberation theologies are deeply concerned with issues of justice and injustice. They would be greatly enriched if they reflected more on a major aspect of Jesus' resurrection: the full and final justice it promises to the poor and oppressed. Of course, that theme is not totally missing in the work of Father Sobrino and other liberation theologians. Nevertheless, they cannot develop it adequately, since in general they fail to focus very much on the resurrection.⁶¹⁹

O'Collins also offers a reason for this lack: "This neglect seems, in general, to have been motivated by the proper desire to avoid ideological and triumphalistic interpretations of the resurrection that 'mystify' human suffering. Whatever the reasons, liberation theologians are relatively silent about Jesus' rising from the dead."⁶²⁰ He continues:

⁶¹⁸O'Collins and Kendall, Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology, 85 and see also O'Collins' discussion on "Our Peace and Reconciliation" in his earlier publication, Interpreting Jesus.

⁶¹⁹O'Collins and Kendall, Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology, 109.

⁶²⁰O'Collins, "The Resurrection: The State of the Questions" in Davis, Kendall, O'Collins, eds., The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus, 26. O'Collins notes that Sobrino did set the context for understanding the resurrection. "Jon Sobrino and exponents of liberation theology have led the way here: the whole history of human suffering and human longing for justice provides an essential context for understanding and interpreting the resurrection." This note of course was released before Sobrino's latest publication on the faith in Jesus Christ that discusses extensively the resurrection of Jesus and its significance in the world of

After devoting two chapters to the theme in his *Christology at the Crossroads*, Jon Sobrino, for instance, gave the resurrection only one chapter in his *Jesus Christ in Latin America* and only a few pages in his *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. The crucified people Sobrino has spoken for and supported are among the means for revealing God and the divine plan of salvation; they constitute a major 'locus' for the crucified Christ's present in history. But the same Christ is risen from the dead as a living promise for all, and as *the* liberating and joyful response to the human hunger for justice and freedom. Hence in the epilogue to *Jesus the Liberator* (pp. 272-3), Sobrino promises to deal with the resurrection in a forthcoming volume, a work that he reportedly expects to finish in 1996.⁶²¹

Concerning Sobrino's emphasis on praxis as the way to better understand the resurrection, O'Collins states that Sobrino tends to absolutize what he called transforming praxis as an absolute alternative to understand Jesus' resurrection.

As it is, the claims for a transforming praxis as the *only* way of understanding and verifying the resurrection absolutizes the role of 'doing the truth.' It would mean that we can know reality only by changing it. Beyond doubt, transforming praxis offers one criterion for verifying claims, but it should not be turned into an exclusive test. The practical approach of Sobrino adds something to Rahner's philosophico-theological interpretation of the resurrection and Küng's apologetical defense, but transforming praxis cannot become an absolute alternative.⁶²²

In a relation to this statement, it is also worth noting, as O'Collins points out, that Sobrino

the victims.

⁶²¹Ibid., 26-27. While criticizing, O'Collins has given a critical account of Sobrino's approach on the resurrection in his *Christology at the Crossroads* and discussed it in comparison with other theologians such as Rahner, Küng, Moltmann, Pannenberg etc. See Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 94-98.

⁶²²O'Collins, *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, 97. Sobrino's statement that was referred particularly is taken from his *Christology at the Crossroads*, 255 that says: "The resurrection sets in motion a life of service designed to implement in reality the eschatological ideals of justice, peace and human solidarity. It is the earnest attempt to make those ideals *real* that enables us to comprehend what happened in Jesus' resurrection... it is possible to verify the truth of what happened in the resurrection only through a transforming praxis based on the ideals of the resurrection... The resurrection can be *understood* only through a praxis that seeks to transform the world. This means that our *approach to the resurrection is continually in process of formation*." For O'Collins this is an excessive claim.

may have downplayed or underestimated what happened historically starting from the resurrection. He writes:

Very much along the same lines as Moltmann, Sobrino plays down what Christ's resurrection has already changed and speaks only of "a possibility for" the world and its history. Like Moltmann, he tends to absolutize the lasting role of divine promise and human hope in shedding light on the world and its history. "Even after Jesus' resurrection," he writes, "history can *only* be grasped by way of hope".⁶²³

O'Collins further explains it with an example.

This talk about "all the accounts" stressing a mission and the appearances being "always bound up with a vocation to a mission" fails to do justice to the Emmaus story (Luke 24: 13-35), which--so far from *stressing* a mission--simply highlights the movement of the two disciples toward their recognition of the risen Lord "in the breaking of bread".⁶²⁴

Indicating his personal knowledge of Sobrino, he concludes: "I hope that Sobrino's Christology has been fairly presented and evaluated. To do otherwise would seem monstrous treatment of someone who has written for a suffering people and out of a situation of hideous oppression and injustice."⁶²⁵

b. A Response to O'Collins' Criticisms

O'Collins' writings on Sobrino and his christology demonstrates both his good knowledge of Sobrino himself as well as his writings. His presentation of Sobrino's thought, his broad reading, especially of Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads, and subsequently Jesus in Latin America as well as Jesus the Liberator.

⁶²³O'Collins, Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection, 96. He refers to Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, 251.

⁶²⁴Ibid.

⁶²⁵O'Collins, What are They Saying About Jesus (Revised), 56.

As regards O'Collins' first criticism, the important question he raised is how to reconstruct a trustworthy image of the historical Jesus which is exegetically solid and hermeneutically credible. Similar to Meier, O'Collins is aware of a potential exegetical problem in Sobrino's writings, in selecting data or scriptural sources to reconstruct that image. This problem has also been indicated by Sobrino himself. However, stronger than Meier, O'Collins questions specifically Sobrino's interpretation on the historical Jesus with examples of his problematic interpretations. Additionally, O'Collins mentions that Sobrino's effort resembles "...Küng's promise to provide at last a picture of *the real Jesus* and the problems which are involved in such a promise."⁶²⁶

Taking into account of O'Collins extensive work on christology, especially on the resurrection of Jesus and his numerous references to Sobrino, I think his critical observations on Sobrino's christology are well-studied and legitimate. Indeed, methodologically speaking, any reasonable question and criticism regarding the historical Jesus as Sobrino's starting point deserves serious consideration. O'Collins raises an important issue about Sobrino's hermeneutical principle. Let us approach this criticism with this question: what is the category of interpretation used by Sobrino that leads him to a certain interpretation of the historical Jesus? There are two points worth-considering to respond to O'Collins' question adequately.

First, for Sobrino returning to the historical Jesus is not for the sake of research nor for the sake of theology but for the sake of the credibility of the Good News of Jesus Christ before the suffering in Latin America. Second, the hermeneutical guideposts used

⁶²⁶Ibid., 54.

by Sobrino are basically his pastoral concern, the reality of the victims that shapes his theological milieu and his continuous question: how do we proclaim God and Jesus Christ as Good News particularly amidst the suffering poor and oppressed.⁶²⁷ Concurrently, Sobrino shows his awareness of the importance of updating his sources: theological and biblical and this is reflected in his recent publications. Accordingly, in my opinion, O'Collins's impression regarding the real Jesus that Sobrino reconstructs on the basis of scriptural studies is hard to justify since for Sobrino 1) to follow Jesus is more important than to seek an intellectual understanding about him, and 2) discipleship has been his major guiding principle to know Jesus.⁶²⁸ This indicates Sobrino's priority.

As regards O'Collins' second criticism, let me focus on his three main points: the issues of the blood of Jesus, praxis and the resurrection. First, O'Collins explains the theology of "the blood of Jesus" under the discussion on "peace and reconciliation" as expressions of the redemption which Jesus brought to the human condition. He is dissatisfied with a minimal treatment of this issue in Sobrino's writings, since O'Collins himself has been highlighting the issue in the theology of redemption. In my opinion, there

⁶²⁷Eileen Fagan affirms: "...at the heart of Sobrino's theology is the twofold belief: (1) in the experience of massive poverty and oppression, God is speaking to all people today, and (2) God's presence among the poor is confirmed by the witness of the Christian Scripture. From these two essential sources, historical reality and God's word in Scripture, Sobrino's theology has developed and responded to the suffering of our world. Eileen M. Fagan, An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue, 230.

⁶²⁸Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, xiii. Sobrino writes: How can we possibly know Jesus of Nazareth, whom the church recognized as the Son of God? It is not a matter of personal whim at all. We do not get to know him personally by reading the witnesses to his words and deeds, or hearing sermons, or taking solid courses. The only way to get to know Jesus is to follow after him in one's own real life; to try to identify oneself with his own historical concerns; and to try to fashion his kingdom in our midst... Following Jesus is the precondition for knowing Jesus." And later on page 2 he writes: "...my aim is to seek out a valid general frame of reference for a Christology suited to our situation, though my concrete analysis will take off mainly from the history of Jesus himself."

are important points worth-noting. Sobrino mentions the issue within a broader theme which is the death of Jesus. He is similarly arguing of the salvific moment related to the death of Jesus. Yet Sobrino immediately gives a critical remark, which I would like to underline: " ... it [The death of Jesus] is negative insofar as its exclusively soteriological interest in the cross draws our attention away from God himself and his relationship to the cross." Sobrino further explains: "It tells us *that* God loved us, but it does not say *how* God himself loved us and liberated us."⁶²⁹ In other words, the affirmation that Jesus' death brings salvation to human beings simultaneously takes in another significant reality that the cross of Jesus reveals some authentic though unsuspected image of God and how God loved us and liberated us. Together with this point, finally we need to recall Sobrino's concern to refer to the whole life of Jesus as God's salvific moment. To conclude, O'Collins' critical observation is worth-considering only by taking into account Sobrino's remarks.

Second, O'Collins' observation that Sobrino was overemphasizing the issues of justice and injustice in such away that he overlooked a major message of the resurrection which is for O'Collins, the full and final justice for the poor and oppressed is quite fair as it is viewed from his reading of Sobrino's writings up to Jesus the Liberator. I think O'Collins will have a different opinion after reading Sobrino's La Fe en Jesucristo that has a large section on the resurrection. In a similar way, this also applies to his criticism that Sobrino only briefly addressed the resurrection.

Third, O'Collins notes that Sobrino also overemphasized the role of praxis as the

⁶²⁹Ibid., 190.

"only" way to better understand the resurrection and therefore Sobrino downplayed what happened historically starting from the resurrection of Jesus. In my view, this observation is reasonable and deserves a proper response. I can say that generally speaking, Sobrino's statement on the importance of praxis is persuasive yet it needs to be qualified to convince an academic audience. Finally, in relation to this issue, the impression that Sobrino has underestimated what happened in history starting from the resurrection of Jesus as he emphasized praxis and discipleship is also reasonable and deserves a response. Indeed, Sobrino has never addressed this issue directly. On the other hand, in my observation, this does not mean that the issue is completely absent in Sobrino's christology. To give an example, especially in La Fe en Jesucristo Sobrino has profound discussions on following Jesus as the resurrected, paschal experiences in history, emphasis on Jesus as *Eu-aggelion*, on the sustaining hope of the victims etc. In my opinion, these issues reflect in many ways his theological concern to recognize and show God's loving presence in history, especially its privileged place among the crucified people today. At this point, Sobrino is convinced that discipleship and taking the side of the crucified people is a major way to approach the ineffable mystery of God who has resurrected Jesus. "For God himself is love, and he has manifested this love for us in history."⁶³⁰

B. Related Criticisms On Sobrino's Christology

1. An ecological question of Leonardo Boff

Leonardo Boff, one of the most important Latin American theologians who

⁶³⁰Ibid., 424.

developed a systematic christology of liberation soon to be followed by Sobrino, recently extended his liberating thought and concern by rethinking the questions of poverty and the striking reality of an ecological degradation. An ecological appreciation is seen as an integral part of Christian faith in Jesus the liberator. A liberating message should therefore, include an ecological concern in reclaiming the dignity of the earth and our sense of a common community as we share this one earth. Boff's point indicates an indirect question on Sobrino's christological reflection: first, how much is Sobrino aware of the issue in its urgency and secondly, did Sobrino address the issue in some way? Let us further explain Boff's concern in order to understand his point and its importance.

Boff first of all, reports the worsening condition of our living place, earth:

The earth as a whole is ill and must be treated and healed. The alarm went out in 1972 with well-known report of the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth*. The death machine is unrelenting. By 1990 ten species of living beings a day were disappearing. By the year 2000 the rate of disappearance will be one an hour, and by that time twenty percent of the life forms on the planet will have disappeared.⁶³¹

Boff brought an ecological concern to the liberating message of the theology of Latin America. Specifically, he embedded his reflection in his attempt to develop his christology of liberation. Boff explains decisively that the liberating message of Jesus Christ eventually will include both human beings and all beings in the universe and therefore it demands a theological and christological rethinking on Jesus' liberating person and message.

At the outset we must broaden our horizons beyond the Mediterranean, the region that witnessed the birth and activity of the historical Jesus. We must go beyond the Christian confessions, for they do not have a monopoly on the meaning of Christ, although they have a high value, for they are communities that preserve his memory and strive to pattern their lives in the light of Christ's person and message.

⁶³¹ Leonardo Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, trans. by Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 105.

We must transcend the anthropocentrism that is common in Christologies, for Christ has divinized and liberated not only human beings but all beings in the universe.⁶³²

This is a relevant question for Sobrino's christology especially since the issue is obviously urgent to be taken care for the betterment of human life. Somehow, Sobrino in his latest book La Fe en Jesucristo, shows his awareness of the issue, yet he gave only brief allusions to it.

2. On the Asian Image of Christ: Aloysius Pieris and C. S. Song

In his Jesus the Liberator, Sobrino reserves one chapter to discuss about "A new image and a new faith in Christ" which is called decisively, the liberator.⁶³³ At the same time Sobrino criticizes alienating images of Christ. In this search of a non-alienating image of Christ, I think it is beneficial to listen to some Asian theologians who have a similar concern and their christological views will therefore function as a challenge and indirect criticism.

On the image of Christ the liberator, Aloysius Pieris, one of the most outspoken Asian theologians of liberation, questions it indirectly from an Asian context. One side of the striking Asian reality, Pieris observed, is its continuing impenetrableness to

⁶³²Ibid., 174.

⁶³³Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 11-22. Sobrino comments on the importance to begin with a discussion on the image of Christ today: "I began my discussion with something really happening today in history, the new image of Christ and the faith in Christ, and this is not the usual procedure. Other christologies usually start with texts from the past about Christ, and when they consider the present they do so more to show the difficulties it presents for faith in Christ than to show its possibilities. I began in this way, however, because I think the reality of this image and this faith, with their emphasis on liberation and on the presence of Christ now in our history, is a sign of the times." (p. 22)

Christianity. Pieris notes that there has been a mere three percent converted after two millennia. He points out "Riding on the waves of colonialism, the Euro-ecclesiastical Christ swept to power in Latin America as he did a little latter among the non-Islamicized tribes of Africa and continues to do so in Oceania."⁶³⁴ Yet, he also believes that the unsuccessful "Christianization" of Asia was not necessarily because of Christ's colonial image. Accordingly, Pieris is in search of an image of Christ that has been able to approach the Asians. This means that a merely non-Western Christ of intellectuals would not necessarily be the appropriate one.

He further explains the four Asian images of Christ: The broken body of the Indian Christ, the Han-Ridden Body of the Korean Christ, the breast-feeding Christa of Asian womanhood and the Third-World Christ of Asia that captures subtle elements of Asian cultures.⁶³⁵ Yet, the question remains for him how a new understanding of Christ will be more sensitive to the "preponderantly 'non-Christian' character of Christ". At this point he returns to the sources of "the traditional belief that though all of Jesus is Christ, not all of Christ is Jesus (*Jesus est totus Christus, non totum Christi*).". The reason is, he continued, that "Jesus cannot grow to the full stature of Christ unless all his members (most of whom are non-Christians), together with the cosmos, struggle like him, even to death, in ushering in God's Reign on earth."⁶³⁶ Pieris vision of an Asian Christ and the reality of Asia is well

⁶³⁴Pieris, *Fire & Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity*, 65. Pieris explains further that "This was not necessarily or primarily due to Christ's colonial appearance; nor conversely, would an indigenized Christ have tricked the Asians to accept Christianity."

⁶³⁵Ibid., 69-74.

⁶³⁶Ibid., 75.

expressed in his comparative observation on the two kinds of Christian ministries that rediscover "the Christhood of Asia's placeless and religious (mostly non-Christians) poor...". First it is represented by Mother Teresa and countless other Christians whose "heroic charity is all the more Christian for being done without the public media advertising it at the expense of the poor. They work within church structures." Secondly he writes:

But the other species of ministry can succeed only in the basic human communities operating on the periphery of the official church. It is a mission which promises no consolation of the type that the first group enjoys. It is a massive plunge of faith into the project of human liberation and social transformation, based on the belief that the Asian Christ's placelessness in Asia is constitutive of the sin that infects both the civil and the religious society (including the church).⁶³⁷

Pieris concludes that those two ministries are complementary to one another and important to witness the coming of the reign of God and therefore, "The separation of these two ministries is an obstacle to the coming of God's reign."⁶³⁸ The question is how much then the image of Christ the liberator proclaimed by Sobrino will truly touch and liberate the people of Asia?

C. S. Song has also expressed a critical point on this matter. He discusses the crucifixion of Jesus also from an Asian perspective. His latest book, The Believing Heart, observes that in Asia the crucifixion of Jesus has gradually become an object of cult and an

⁶³⁷Ibid., 77. Pieris explains further that it is the reason why "...the Asian Christ does not plead for a place in this sinful system; for he is its victim-judge, not an accomplice. The Christian mission, as articulated in the basic human communities, demands a conversion of Asian societies to Christ's order. Baptism is not a convenient mechanism to expand the church at the expense of the Asian Christ. It consists of 'making disciples of nations' (Matt. 28:19) along the *via crucis* of greedless sharing so that the life of each nation will be radically reordered in terms of the demands made by the Asian Christ."

⁶³⁸Ibid.

exclusive Christian symbol that distinguishes or separates Christians from others. This means that Christians become strangers in their own land and thereby incapable to bring the Good news to their fellow Asians who are mostly living in cruel poverty and under oppressive power holders. He writes:

The problem does not consist in Jesus' crucifixion having been a bloody affair. It was a bloody affair. The problem arises when crucifixion becomes an object of religious contemplation and turns into a cult object for Christian worship and spirituality. Even the blood, which was all too real for the victim of that cruel and inhuman act and all too ghastly for those who witnessed it, becomes a part of the religious symbolism that ceases to express the extreme physical pain and agony of death.

In this way, the cross, ironically, loses the power that informs its symbolism and becomes a sign that distinguishes Christianity from other religions. Is this now what the cross on the rooftop of the Christian church has become? The cross as seen in Asian societies no longer conveys that sense of human cruelty and inhumanity to Christians, not to mention Buddhists. This indicates the sad state of Christianity in Asia and in the world. Christianity has become an innocuous religion, a community of Christians seeking salvation for their souls and personal well-being at the same time.⁶³⁹

3. A Critical Note on the Social Analysis used by Latin American Theologians

Negative judgements of using Marxist thought are often heard against liberation theologians. Yet in my observation, not all of these judgements have a solid basis and sufficient understanding of what liberation theology and its urgent concern really are. Let us briefly refer to Pope John Paul II and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Roman Catholic church which are very well-informed in terms of the Church life and its theological movements. Their main methodological criticism is related to the use of Marxist analysis by liberation theologians especially its concept of "class struggle"

⁶³⁹C. S. Song, The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 251-253.

amidst the situation of poverty, oppression and injustice.

Pope John Paul II is clearly anti-Marxist. He is convinced that class struggle will not be a solution to bring forth justice. Class struggle will trigger violence and bring the oppressed into the position of the oppressor and therefore create another situation of injustice. Thus, class struggle has to be rejected. On the other hand, peaceful reforms, which are the duty for all, has to be promoted to enhance justice and a common good.⁶⁴⁰ John Paul, however, believes that a socially just society is undeniably important. He asserts: "Only a socially just society, one that strives to be ever more just, has a reason to exist."⁶⁴¹ In general, John Paul points to the need of a critical approach to any ideological systems and to the apparent tendency of some liberation theologians to "reread" the Gospel.

After releasing its criticism against the theology of Gutiérrez, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith also launched its "Instruction" against "certain forms of liberation theology which use, in an insufficiently critical manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought."⁶⁴² This methodological criticism urged re-examination of any critical theory, particularly that of Marxist social analysis, since its concept of class struggle overrules Christian faith and morality. In part VIII: Subversion of the meaning of truth and violence, it is stated: "In particular, the very nature of ethics is radically called

⁶⁴⁰See Quentin L. Quade, ed., The Pope and Revolution: John Paul II Confronts Liberation Theology (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1982), 122-123, 134.

⁶⁴¹Ibid., 118.

⁶⁴²Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'" (Vatican City, August 6, 1984) in Hennelly, ed., Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, 394.

into question because of the borrowing of these theses from Marxism. In fact, it is the transcendent character of the distinction between good and evil, the principle of morality, which is implicitly denied in the perspective of the class struggle."⁶⁴³ As a result, the Congregation indicated that "The new hermeneutic inherent in the 'theologies of liberation' leads to an essentially political rereading of the Scripture."⁶⁴⁴

Arthur McGovern reports that "Ratzinger singles out Jon Sobrino for criticism. He sees Sobrino as reading the scripture against the background of Marxist hermeneutics and he cites several examples."⁶⁴⁵ At this point, it is worth-noting that this criticism was released in early 1984 when many misunderstandings occurred between the Congregation and Latin American liberation theologians and in the case of Sobrino, this period refers mainly to his early christological thoughts.⁶⁴⁶ Boff's observation on the case is important and applicable to Sobrino. Both authors note that liberation theologians have obviously

⁶⁴³Ibid., 404.

⁶⁴⁴Ibid., 407-408.

⁶⁴⁵McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment, 16 and 54 that refers to the address by Cardinal Ratzinger appeared originally in Giorni 30 (March 1984) and was published in Catholicism in Crisis (September 1984): 38-41ff. McGovern writes: "... in my reading of Sobrino I have not encountered such things as substituting fidelity to history for faith, or making any reference to party praxis; his works contain almost no references to Marx. But the absence of any page references (at least in the English version of Ratzinger's address) makes assessment difficult." Indeed, Ratzinger, reports McGovern, asserts that Sobrino "... speaks of the faith of Jesus as fidelity to the Father but then substitutes 'fidelity to history' for faith. He makes love consist in an option for the poor but liberation theology then interprets this in a Marxist sense of class struggle. He makes the kingdom of God fundamental in the preaching of Jesus, but this is understood 'in a party form and turned toward praxis.' He gives a 'fearful interpretation' of the death and resurrection of Jesus by making those who suffer and struggle for liberation exercise a lordship over history, which the Bible attributes to God alone."

⁶⁴⁶This the period when a part of his Christology at the Crossroads was questioned and several years later his Jesus in Latin America came out to answer those questions and offer clarifications.

dealt with the poor, the oppressed and seek for their liberation. Contact with the Marxist group on the practical and academic level was foreseeable. Secondly, they argue that "in liberation theology, Marxism is never treated as a subject on its own but always *from and in relation to the poor*." This means the poor is its prime concern. The question asked amidst the poor is: what can you tell us about the situation of poverty and ways to overcome it. Therefore, Boff's continue, "Here Marxists are submitted to the judgment of the poor and their cause, and not the other way around."⁶⁴⁷

Finally it has to be noted that in general, both the Pope and the Congregation, have gradually included both liberation theology's positive and negative elements, affirming a call for an action according to Christian values "...according to the truth and thus to work for the establishment of that 'civilization of love' of which Pope Paul VI spoke."⁶⁴⁸

4. A Note on Being Honest and Responsible to the Reality from Paul Knitter

Sobrinio's christology maintains its strength for its relentless endeavor to know the reality, and to be honest as well as responsible to it. At this point, Paul Knitter's criticism is worth-noting. Knitter brought up an interesting criticism against Sobrinio's continuing emphasis on being honest with and faithful to the reality, particularly as a special way to

⁶⁴⁷Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 27-28.

⁶⁴⁸Ibid., 492. Additionally, the Congregation's "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" (March 22, 1986) further explained and clarified their position: "Thus a theology of freedom and liberation, which faithfully echoes Mary's Magnificat preserved in the church's memory, is something needed by the times in which we are living. But it would be criminal to take the energies of popular piety and misdirect them toward a purely earthly plan of liberation, which would very soon be revealed as nothing more than an illusion and a cause of new forms of slavery. Those who in this way surrender to the ideologies of the world and to the alleged necessity of violence are no longer being faithful to hope, to hope's boldness and courage, as they are extolled in the hymn to the God of mercy, which the virgin teaches us."

come to a spiritual experience of God. This also obviously holds great importance in Sobrino's christology from the perspective of the victims. Knitter writes: "Jon Sobrino, again using Christian language which I suggest can be meaningful and translatable for other religious traditions, makes the same claim when he holds that the reality of God-experience is first found in an 'honesty with and fidelity to reality'; he means a commitment to acknowledging and resolving the realities of suffering and injustice."⁶⁴⁹

On this matter, a strong statement made by Sobrino and referred to particularly by Knitter is taken from his Spirituality of Liberation. Sobrino wrote:

Honesty with and fidelity to reality is more than a prerequisite for a spiritual experience of God. It is its very material as well. Apart from, and independent of, this honesty and fidelity, we neither grasp revelation nor respond to it... Apart from honesty with the real... one can no longer have an experience God, either from the side of the object (God, who no longer is revealed in reality) or from the side of the subject (the beclouded heart of the human being who does violence to reality).⁶⁵⁰

Knitter questions this statement from a perspective of the rich religious experiences expressed in the different non-Christian religions common to Asia. He cannot but judge that statement as too strong. Sobrino's radical approach to the reality, a real history as the major place of God's continuing self-manifestation today will eventually be excluding the other forms of religious experience from a different religious backgrounds.⁶⁵¹ Referring to

⁶⁴⁹Paul F. Knitter, One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 114-115.

⁶⁵⁰Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 21.

⁶⁵¹Sobrino writes that "... God's self-manifestation, today as all through the course of biblical revelation, is realized only in real history. Accordingly, honesty with and fidelity toward the real are not only prerequisites for a spirituality, they are the very foundations of that spirituality, and this is what is most basic about spirituality. They permit us to keep on hearing God in history, and they express the basic realization of our response to God's word." Ibid.

Sobrino's statement above, he comments conclusively that

These are strong statements, perhaps too strong. The emphasis on this-worldly, prophetic involvement seems to exclude other forms of religious experience. Remove their exclusive tones, however, and they still make a positive assertion that can, I trust, be taken seriously by persons of different religious traditions: By first "feeling" the presence and power of Something More in our efforts to overcome the "negative experiences of contrast," we know what we are talking about when we use our religious language.⁶⁵²

Knitter's view and Sobrino's converge at the core of the real which is the reality of the crucified people and a self-involvement to the struggle to overcome the reality of suffering and injustice. Referring particularly to the killing of Sobrino's companions and his personal reflection on it, Knitter writes "This experience of losing-gaining oneself, of becoming a no-self/true-self, is a commonly described quality of religious experience in most traditions. Sobrino says it can happen outside the monastery or temple and in the impoverished villages or ravaged rain forests, amid all cultures and religions."⁶⁵³

5. On the Changing Context: An Observation of José Comblin and

Robert J. Schreiter

Sobrino's christology has given the liberation approach of Latin America its doctrinal content and since its inception he has kept his christology focused and radicalized by the experience of the killing of his companions, proponents of the liberating

⁶⁵²Knitter, One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility, 115. He explains further using his interreligious vocabulary that "Here the experience is illuminating the language and the language is forming the experience; there is a nondual reciprocity between the two. Religious language such as 'truth' or 'love' or 'justice'--or 'Dharma' or 'Tao' or 'karuna'--takes on new or added meaning and power in both identifying and expanding what we have already felt in our struggles to pronounce our 'no' and remain faithful to our 'yes'."

⁶⁵³Ibid., 116 and Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, 108-114.

message of Jesus Christ. Let us, therefore, take a look at two recent observations from Robert Schreiter and José Comblin about the liberation theology amidst its changing context. Both theologians basically see that there have been drastic changes in the situation in Latin America and the rest of the world. New political , economic social circumstances as well as repressive ecclesiastical policies toward the liberation movements have raised many questions of relevance, applicability and content of any theology/ christology that take seriously its context which is the poor and oppressed as the factual context for liberation theology. Are liberation theologies still relevant if their social and ecclesial context has changed extensively?

Schreiter explains that the main socio-political changes are, first, the emergence of globalization with its key moments such as the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Schreiter notes that "The collapse of the socialist governments in Eastern Europe has undermined the credibility of at least one kind of socialism, and may have discredited socialism as a form of economy on a large scale altogether."⁶⁵⁴ Secondly, there has been a good example of a peaceful use of democratic elections rather than a direct struggle and armed conflict to end an oppressive political system such as the apartheid in South Africa. Thirdly, by the mid-1990s in Latin America at least the veneer of democracy has replaced oppressive military governments. One interesting phenomena in the life of the Latin American churches is that there has been new, unremitting repression of liberation theological movements by the Roman Catholic Church.⁶⁵⁵ Based on these changes,

⁶⁵⁴Robert J. Schreiter, The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 101.

⁶⁵⁵Ibid., 103-105.

Schreiter poses this question: "The loss of horizon of utopia begins to look as though it has been replaced by the glitter of the global hyperculture. Even worse, there seems to be no basis for solidarity at all. Where, then, might liberation theology turn?"⁶⁵⁶

José Comblin observes that indeed there have been new social and ecclesial circumstances and yet there has not been new insights from any liberation theologians as they are growing in age without significant signs of the coming of a new generation.

Comblin presents a stronger point saying:

Liberation theology is at a standstill, first of all, because Catholic theology and Christian theology in general are at a standstill; nothing new is coming out. What is most new about the churches, now at the end of the century, is that there is no interest in theology. What arouses interest is religious experience, and the new pietism as they are manifested in Pentecostal churches and in the Catholic charismatic movement... Latin American theology is also quiet. There are thousands of theology teachers in Latin America but what they produce is infinitesimal. The generation of the founders of liberation theology is now over fifty years old, a number are over sixty, and some even over seventy. When will the new generation come along? How can anyone know?⁶⁵⁷

This is a fair observation yet a serious question that will primarily function as an invitation to rethink seriously any liberation theological reflection that, Comblin believes, has been able to "give voice to the aspirations of what may be the majority of Christians in the world, struggling with poverty and oppression."⁶⁵⁸ and "...it has not been shaken by the events of the past decade".⁶⁵⁹ Secondly, this is also a determining analysis that

⁶⁵⁶Ibid., 105.

⁶⁵⁷Jose Comblin, Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology, trans. Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 203.

⁶⁵⁸Schreiter, The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local, 99.

⁶⁵⁹Comblin, Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology, 203. He writes: "Some have spoken of a crisis of liberation theology. A crisis occurs when new circumstances question an institution of a process and the latter clearly fails to respond to the

challenges not only liberation theologians but also all Christians and non-Christians in this changing reality. Comblin asserts that the pessimists will fear the worsening economical, social and ecological problems such as reflected strongly in the life of our modern big cities. The optimists views that large reform movements are underway toward the betterment of all. The realists predict the upcoming of a new populism if nothing changes within a decade or two from now. Comblin himself urges all to take responsibility to act at our best here and now, to respond to these new challenges. For him currently there is "No single, all-encompassing solution.." and apparently indeed "The times are not propitious for spectacular achievements", while being aware of those possibilities and challenges.⁶⁶⁰ Sobrino's christology accepts this responsibility especially when articulating his christological insights from the experience with the victims and this also involves a personal commitment and involvement for their defense that many times means risking his own life.

Conclusion

To conclude this critical part, I would like to make two notes. First, we have seen some limitations of Sobrino's christology. The critics from their own concerns and academic backgrounds as well as expertise pointed out the problems and weaknesses in the areas of method, content and Sobrino's christological terminologies. For me the five

expectations of the new times. That is the case of liberation theology; it has not been shaken by the events of the past decade. Some thought that the fall of socialism would lead to a breakdown in liberation theology, but socialism was never a basic component of it. All the major positions of liberation theology are still in place, regardless of the fate of socialist societies."

⁶⁶⁰Ibid., 217.

major critical evaluations by the authors mentioned above on Sobrino's christological method and content are basically important criticisms though some may seem over-emphasized such as those of Meier.⁶⁶¹ Among the related criticisms, those of Knitter seem too general. Sobrino has intentionally engaged in systematic christological reflection which is based on a number of different but mutually related sources, and these sources are not necessarily limited to the results of historical investigations.⁶⁶² He made himself clear that he shared the interest of liberation with the victims and holds the importance of discipleship as a truly Christian way of proceeding for the defense of the victims. Sobrino's theological/ christological statements on the historical Jesus and his analysis of the preferential ministry of Jesus may be limited. However, his presentation of Jesus the liberator and his interpretation of the Christian scripture has restored the relevance and credibility of the Good News of Jesus Christ and therefore the credibility of the Church,

⁶⁶¹For example, Jon Nilson gave a strong response to Meier's criticism as "provocative" and that historical methods and exegesis are truly important but limited in their scope. Arthur McGovern reminds us that Sobrino together with Juan Luis Segundo are hermeneutical theologians who try to draw our attention to dimensions of Jesus neglected greatly in traditional christologies and Meier's insistence on accuracy against any generalization is also applicable to his own christological presentations. See Nilson, "A Response to John P. Meier" in The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 15-18 and McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment, 80-82.

⁶⁶²See Nilson, "A Response to John P. Meier" in The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 43 (1988): 16. Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer also affirmed that historical and critical approach should not overrule other important reality such as the present community of believers who confess and live their faith in Jesus and therefore retain a formative role in a christological reflection. She wrote: "The question concerning the historicity of the figure of Jesus is of fundamental importance for christology, but this historicity is recognized within a historically situated community of believers. At the same time we recognize that christology does not develop only conceptually and speculatively. Therefore a merely positive historical and critical method does not account for all the complexity of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth and its meaning for Christian faith and theology." See Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, "Jesus Christ" in William R. Farmer and friends, eds., The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century, 258.

particularly in Latin America. This, most importantly, means that first, the voice of the poor and oppressed is heard again and secondly, the presence of Jesus Christ crucified among them is recognized powerfully.⁶⁶³

Secondly, it needs to be remembered that even in his latest christological book, La Fe en Jesucristo, Sobrino never claimed to have arrived at an absolute christological formulation. His christology had never pretended to be in a position which seeks to address all questions from a definitive theological perspective. On the other hand, Sobrino considered that this book would be just a modest contribution, adding a grain of sand.⁶⁶⁴ Furthermore, his definitive perspective of the poor and the victims which he highly regards as a major theological loci, has never claimed to be the only valid perspective against another possible and credible theological locus. Sobrino has been working on his christology throughout life. This also means life facing threats, including death threats, from those who work against the poor and against their defenders. More precisely, he together with other committed Christians and his fellow theologians such as Grande, Romero and Ellacuría, have been putting their life into finding God in the gracious life and struggle of the poor and the victims, while interpreting it theologically and christologically. In this sense, for me, Sobrino has presented a stronger christological claim based on his

⁶⁶³See also Fagan, An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue, 230. One of her conclusions asserts that "..., despite these limitations, Sobrino's interpretation of the Christian Scripture has restored a credibility to Christology, has retrieved from the tradition symbols long forgotten, and has allowed the voice of the poor and the oppressed to be heard again."

⁶⁶⁴Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo Desde las Víctimas, 22: "A todo ello, este libro quisiera ser un modesto aporte, poner un granito de arena."

personal and intellectual conversion amidst the victims rather than merely an academic claim with its logical reasoning.

III. Contributions

In the following pages, the main contributions of Sobrino's thoughts to christology as a systematic reflection on Jesus Christ, the community who believes in him and follows his way of life will be presented. First, I will make use of Donald Waltermire's conclusions of his study of the christology of Sobrino based on Sobrino's writings up to 1988 (a period previous to the killing of the six-Jesuits and their co-workers), though the preface of his book was written in 1992. This step will function as a point of comparison. I consider Waltermire's points on Sobrino's contributions as important since these points articulate well Sobrino's christology as analyzed and presented in the first part of thesis (particularly chapter two). Secondly, changes, new emphases and revisions based on Sobrino's new experiences and christological deepenings from the point of view of the victims will also be noted. Here I will allude particularly to Eileen Fagan's conclusions on Sobrino's contribution based on Sobrino's writings up to late 1997. This also will serve as another point of comparison to my own observations especially on Sobrino's most recent christological book, La Fe en Jesucristo, writings, interviews and personal response to this thesis (Sobrino's written response is documented on appendix 1 and 2).

A. Basic Contributions

Waltermire's points are based mainly on Sobrino's two main christological books: Christology at the Crossroads and Jesus in Latin America and some other relevant theological writings. These will be presented under classifications of method and content.

1. On Method

a. Sobrino "affirms the primacy of the historical Jesus" through the entire corpus of his christological writings since his first publication.⁶⁶⁵ While critically making use of the study of other theologians and biblical experts, Sobrino reads the Gospel with the eyes of faith amidst a Latin American reality. The presentation of the historical Jesus challenges a common emphasis on the divinity of Jesus Christ.

b. Sobrino's five hermeneutical guideposts are important methodological contributions. They are: "1) the theological milieu of the author; 2) the author's attitude toward the Enlightenment; 3) the kind of hermeneutics employed by an author; 4) the way the fundamental metaphysical quandary is posed; and 5) the density of an author's christological concentration."⁶⁶⁶ Waltermire notes that this methodological approach enables Sobrino to dialogue critically with other contemporary christologies in terms of content and purpose as well as method and the sources of christology.

⁶⁶⁵Donald E. Waltermire, The Liberation Christologies of Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino: Latin American Contributions to Contemporary Christology (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1994), 90.

⁶⁶⁶Ibid., 91.

2. On Content

a. Sobrino sees that "the humanity of Jesus is the primary point of contact between human beings and Jesus. Sobrino's contribution here is that Jesus defines what it means to be human rather than being fitted into an abstract, *a priori* definition of humanity."⁶⁶⁷ This meeting point in the humanity of Jesus challenges a common emphasis on the resurrection as the starting point of an encounter with Christ.

b. According to Sobrino, Jesus' whole life is a revelation. Waltermire pointed out that "this is a corrective to the traditional emphasis upon Jesus' death and resurrection as *the* revelation of God... This implies that the way one lives one's life is proof of one's acceptance of 'Jesus as Lord and Savior'"⁶⁶⁸

c. There are four significant points in Jesus' death. "First, the crucifixion allows humanity to participate in, without exhausting the mystery of, the eternal life of God. Second, the crucifixion means that suffering and death are experiences common to both humanity and God. Third, Jesus' death questions the way humanity perceives God's revelation in the world." And fourth, "Sobrino describes Jesus' death as a scandal vis-à-vis God's abandonment of Jesus on the cross... the scandal resides in God's passivity on the cross, in God's permitting Jesus to die, and not in God's actively sending Jesus to die."⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷Ibid., 89.

⁶⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹Ibid., 90. Waltermire notes that Sobrino and Boff agrees on three other basic understandings. First is that Jesus's death is a continuation of his life's mission to inaugurate God's kingdom. Second is that the crucifixion contains both religious and political dimensions. Third is that discipleship often leads to martyrdom.

d. Sobrino makes the "...distinction between doxological statements and historical statements." Sobrino goes back to the traditional understanding of faith in Jesus as a call to discipleship. This means, therefore, that "...doxological statements, such as 'God is love' and 'Jesus is the Son of God,' must be lived out and made credible within history. The basis of the way that is done today is none other than an orthopraxis which emulates the history of Jesus presented in the Gospels."⁶⁷⁰ Waltermire here rightly points to an underlying understanding that Jesus reveals the Son of God, the Father especially by his total obedience to God and his proclamation of God's kingdom with all his life.

In his revelation as the Son, Jesus concretized the process of filiation, that is, the way in which one becomes a child of God. This process not only involves the traditional belief in Jesus; it involves also living life as he lived it by offering oneself in service to God's kingdom. Sobrino is not ingenuous; he knows the 'cost of discipleship'. Situating God's love in a sinful world results in crucifixion of some sort; but if one wishes to be a Christian, a child of God, there is no other way.⁶⁷¹

e. "Sobrino's dynamic understanding of God's kingdom is another contribution."⁶⁷²

Sobrino does not only understand that Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, but simultaneously that God is acting in history and transforming it into a community of brothers and sisters. The essence of the God's kingdom therefore, is the grace of God's love for the betterment of people. From this point of view, sin is understood as related both to the vertical and horizontal natures of human beings.

f. Another important contribution refers to Sobrino's insight that "...Jesus defines

⁶⁷⁰Ibid.

⁶⁷¹Ibid.

⁶⁷²Ibid.

what divinity is rather than being defined by an abstract, *a priori* conception of divinity."⁶⁷³

Traditional attributes of God such as power and honor have to be reformulated into more historically relevant terms such as love and grace. Jesus' persecution and crucifixion are essential to God's nature. The cross reveals the final consequence of Jesus' action of love situated in "a sinful world". Therefore the resurrection becomes a true hope of God's triumph and that justice will overcome injustice.

B. Other Contributions: Changes, New Emphases and Revisions

The killing of the six-Jesuit and their co-workers is one of a few important culminating points that had given a tremendous impact in Sobrino's personal and intellectual commitment. Accordingly, Sobrino radicalized his point of view: from the perspective of the victims. This obliges us to see "differently" Waltermire's important points. Nonetheless, the contributinal points made by Waltermire remain basically correct. The changes, new emphases and radicalizations will be indicated in my observations below together with other contributions.

Here, it is important to note that Waltermire also has indicated that Sobrino knows the "cost of discipleship" and that situating God's love in a sinful world results in a crucifixion of some sort. Indeed, when the civil war began in early 1980, the violence and killings became worse and numerous. The many killings and massacres of the "crucified people" had triggered Sobrino's personal and intellectual conversion or in his own words "an awakening from the sleep of inhumanity". This is, therefore, the main way to value

⁶⁷³Ibid.

truly the depth and strength of those contributions and Sobrino's christological endeavor in general.

1. From an ecclesiological point of view, Eileen Fagan notes that another important contribution is "faithfulness to the martyrs".

One could not conclude without mentioning Sobrino's contribution to the martyrs of the Latin American Church. His faithfulness in keeping their memory alive in his writings and in his lectures is most important for the Latin American church because the martyrs keep before this church the burning issues: "What is the true church of Jesus?" and "What is God's will for Latin America?" God wills an evangelizing and prophetic church, one which announces the reign and denounces the antireign. Because these martyrs did both at the same time, they were condemned to death. Thus the martyrs showed what authentic evangelization means and what it cost. For Sobrino, to ignore the martyrs is to ignore the "signs of times" and to deny ourselves a hermeneutic principle by which to understand Jesus.⁶⁷⁴

After the many killings and massacres especially in the event of the assassination at UCA or, before, in the assassination of Romero, martyrdom had gradually become one of the most significant element of Sobrino's christology. Yet, there are other additional emphases that have to be mentioned in order to better understand the contributions from his new experiences and perspective elaborated in his most recent writing, La Fe en Jesucristo.

2. Sobrino's christology has decisively become a systematic attempt to dialogue with reality rather than a concept, a position based on his personal experience with the crucified people and those who had been assassinated for taking their side like Romero, Sobrino's interlocutor, and Ellacuría and his community with their co-workers. The poor is definitely not a concept but real people and victims. This is a new emphasis that should

⁶⁷⁴Fagan, An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue, 233.

benefit all theologies.

3. Addressing the historical reality of the crucified people is not only taking on the burdensome element of the reality as often embodied in persecution and martyrdom, but simultaneously allowing oneself to be picked up and carried on by the reality as ultimately revealing God's love and grace, and therefore illuminating and encouraging, especially those who struggle with and take the side of the crucified people. This is good news, an affirming insight as well as a challenge for those who work amidst, with and for the victims of our world and "in search" of the presence of God of life today.⁶⁷⁵

4. Accordingly, for Sobrino, theology is now both *intellectus amoris* and *intellectus gratiae*, a theory of a praxis of taking the crucified people down from the cross that starts from an experience of grace, hope and love shown in the life of the victims.

Sobrino explains:

This means that the victims are transformed into a theological locus, understanding the latter not primarily as a categorical *ubi* (academic department, seminary, university, curia, community), but as a substantial *quid*. And experience shows that, when theology is done on the basis of the reality of this locus, important truths of God's revelation, hitherto unknown or glossed over, are rediscovered and become central. The most crying example of this is the rediscovery that liberation is a central reality in revelation, as both Vatican Instructions of 1984 and 1986 came to recognize, but which had been unknown in theology for centuries, even in progressive theology.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁵Together with the emphasis on the salvation brought up by the crucified people, this new dimension of the reality of the crucified people which is "surprisingly" revealing God's grace, love, mercy and hope becomes a hallmark of Sobrino's christology of mercy that differs him significantly from Ignacio Ellacuría. Sobrino also indicates this point personally in Sobrino, "A Letter to the Author", El Salvador, 30 June 1999.

⁶⁷⁶Sobrino, "Theology From Amidst the Victims" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz, eds., The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann, 174. Sobrino gives another examples of theological rediscovery from the perspective of the victims. He continues: "And the same will have to said of many other themes, especially when they are focused dialectically:

That is a unique contribution of the christology of liberation. The evolution of Sobrino's christology portrays the development of his own self and intellectual commitment as a Christian theologian and a Jesuit, alongside the commitment to and understanding of the reality.

5. Another important contribution, articulated stronger in Sobrino's La Fe en Jesucristo, is the emphasis on Jesus as Good News and the "goodness" of the Gospel. The Christian message is positive and liberating. It is an invitation to follow Jesus who brought the Good News of God's kingdom for the poor and oppressed. Indeed, from the experience, following Jesus' footsteps entails conflict and persecution. Yet, it is only verifying one's faithfulness as a "child" to God the Father just as Jesus did.⁶⁷⁷ This poses a challenge on the common christological approaches that begin with dogmatic statements even, when implicitly they proclaim that Jesus is Good News. Sobrino's christology continues to question how Jesus is indeed Good News particularly amidst the world of the victims and martyrs. Here his approach is rather inductive than deductive.

6. Christian utopia is historical, a hope that justice will finally triumph over the injustice becomes solidly grounded both in the reality of the victims and the faith in the resurrection of Jesus as a Christian answer to an eternal human question of the justice to

reign of God and anti-reign, God and idols, greater God and lesser God, grace and sin, beatitudes and woes, martyrs, church of the poor, and so on." See also Jon Sobrino, "Liberation" in Farmer and others, eds., The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century, 281.

⁶⁷⁷Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo, 353-384 (On the title of Jesus as the "Word" which means the truth and the Good News), 385-401 (Jesus as the Good News, *eu-aggelion*). Ignacio Gonzalez-Faus in his review of Jon Sobrino's La Fe en Jesucristo notes that fundamentally Sobrino's christology argues and proclaims that Jesus is Good News. See "Las Víctimas como Lugar Teológico," RLT 46 (1999): 102-103.

the victims. Yet, Sobrino explains that this Christian utopia "...consists of the divinization (participation in the life of God) of all that is, in order that God may come to be all in all." And "This eschatological utopia is also historical because it takes shape throughout an ongoing history. It is dialectical because it develops, not out of a *tabula rasa*, but against powerful forces."⁶⁷⁸ Sobrino's point is strongly reprehending an ahistorical idea of Christian eschatology and utopia.

7. Finally, it is worth noting that, for myself, Sobrino's christology is personally resonant and intellectually telling. An important contribution, especially for the people and theologians in Indonesia, is that Sobrino made clear the need to remember the victims, such as the many people of East Timor, and the innumerable victims who died in violent armed-conflict, marginalization as well as of hunger. This sad reality re-voices questions such as: how can we do theology after Auschwitz but also of how can we do theology amidst those victims. If Auschwitz is a powerful moment to remember the essential relation between God and the victims, it is also the victims in East Timor. Since theology as *intellectus amoris* has been developed into *intellectus gratiae* amidst the victims, it is foreseeable for me to be inspired and to be encouraged in "doing" christology especially from the reality of the people in Indonesia.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁸Sobrino, "Liberation" in Farmer and others, eds., The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century, 280. Sobrino concludes: "It is from this stance that the Christian faith also announces its utopia as *liberation*, that is to say, as the overcoming of that which enslaves and works against divinization."

⁶⁷⁹Sobrino, La Fe en Jesucristo, 17-19

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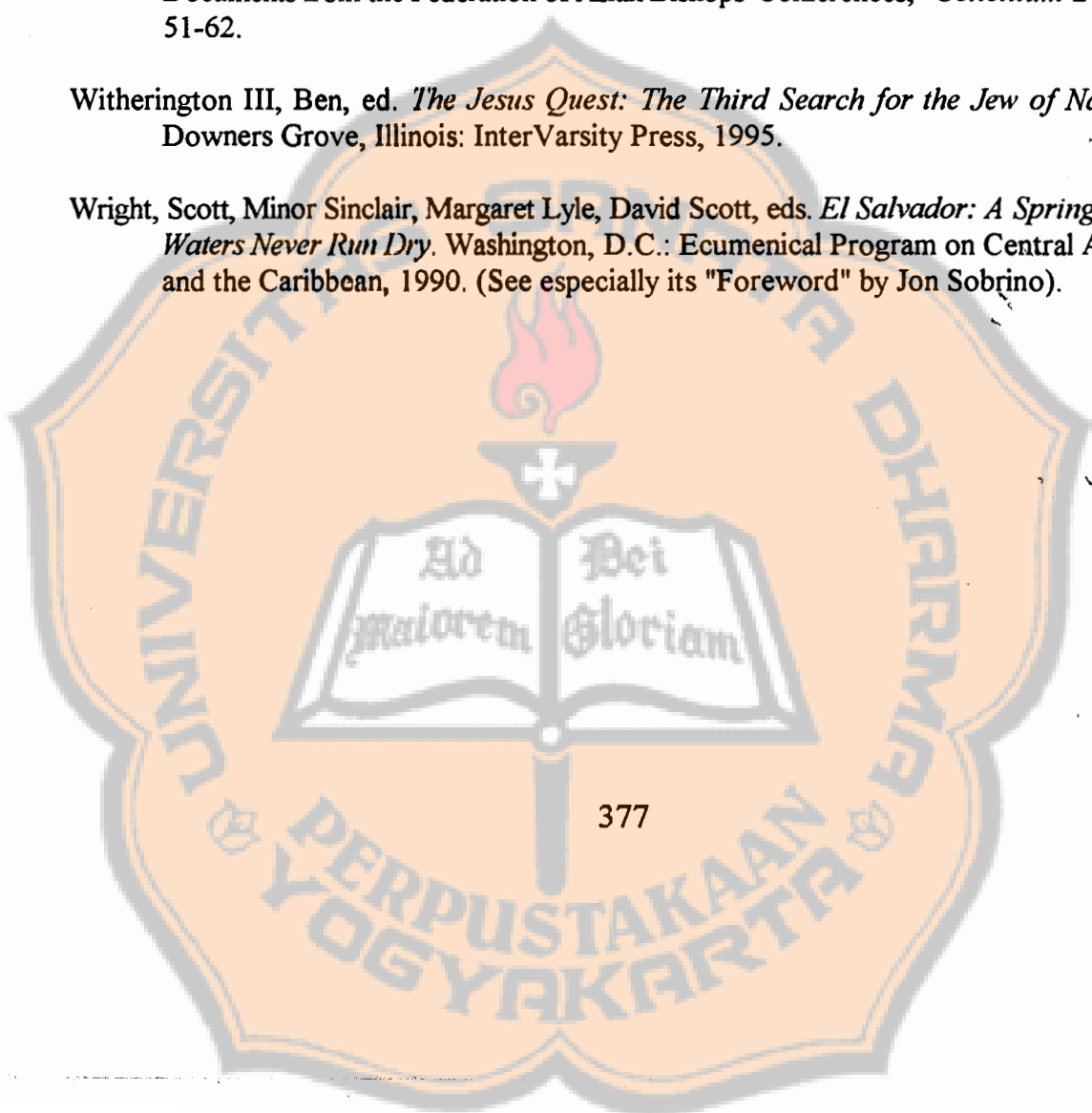
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San Salvador, 30 de junio de 1999

PARA: Hartono Budi
Berkeley, California FAX: 01-510-549 1114

DE: Jon Sobrino
UCA, San Salvador FAX: 503-273-1010

Querido Hartono:

Aquí te envío algunos comentarios sobre tu trabajo. No he podido leerlo muy minuciosamente, pero sí lo suficiente, y, sobre todo, las conclusiones al final de cada capítulo. A continuación te doy impresiones generales, sin detallar páginas concretas de tu trabajo. Quizás te ayuden a matizar algunos puntos.

1. En conjunto creo que reflejas bien mi pensamiento y destacas lo que puede ser más importante y novedoso. En ese sentido, la tesis está bien. Obviamente falta el último capítulo de críticas. Quizás fuese bueno comparar de vez en cuando lo que yo digo con lo que otros dicen, de esa manera quedaría más claro mi pensamiento teológico. De todas maneras eso sería un trabajo muy largo.

2. Mencionas varias veces "mi método". Yo entiendo que esa es una preocupación importante cuando se escribe una tesis. En mi caso, el método fundamental ha sido el caminar intelectual forzado por la misma realidad. En otras palabras, no es que yo haya decidido usar un método de acercarme a la realidad, sino que la realidad se me ha impuesto. Al menos así pienso yo. Dicho en otras palabras, antes que ponerlo en concepto creo que, sin buscarlo ni pretenderlo, me encontré "haciéndome cargo de la realidad", "encargándome de la realidad", "cargando con la realidad" y "dejándome cargar por la realidad".

En eso encontré un maestro en Ellacuría, quizás no tanto en el último punto. El impacto más concreto de la realidad ha sido "la crucifixión de los pueblos" y "la salvación que trae el pueblo crucificado". Lo segundo quizás es lo más novedoso de la teología que hemos tratado de hacer en El Salvador.

3. Ese impacto de la realidad en mi modo de pensar ha tenido un proceso, evidentemente, va desde el año 74 hasta el día de hoy. En el proceso ha habido "varios" momentos importantes: 1975-77 (martirio de Rutilio Grande y las masacres de esos años); 1977-1980 (la barbarie de asesinatos de sacerdotes y religiosas que culmina en Monseñor Romero y la represión brutal al pueblo); 1981-1989 (las masacres colectivas de El Sumpul y el Mozote, que culmina con los asesinatos de la UCA).

En mi vida real por lo tanto no sólo los mártires de la UCA han sido momentos culminantes sino que también ha habido otros. Mi pensamiento, consciente o inconscientemente, se ha dejado afectar por esos hechos. Pero, aunque obviamente, el

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martirio de los jesuitas causó un impacto psicológico especial, no ha sido el único momento decisivo. Quizás puedes matizar este punto en tu tesis.

Otra cosa es el pensamiento publicado en mis libros, que tiene un proceso específico. Yo creo que tú lo haces notar bien en el análisis de mis cuatro libros de cristología. Pero el proceso del pensamiento no ha sido "mecánico", por así decirlo: antes y después del asesinato de los jesuitas.

4. Sobre la relación con los teólogos europeos. En conjunto la explicas bien, pero quizás hay que matizar un poco más. La idea fundamental del Dios crucificado de Moltmann, ha sido una constante en mi cristología, aunque matizada y complementada por la idea del Dios crucificado de Ignacio Ellacuría. De la teología de Pannenberg no he hecho mucho uso, sino que más bien la he criticado, pero he usado su epistemología del conocimiento de Dios: llegar a hacer afirmaciones doxológicas a partir de las históricas. De Rahner sigo apreciando sobre todo su concepción del misterio de Dios y la sacramentalización de ese misterio en lo humano. En los dos últimos libros he usado mucho a González Faus, con quien comparto muchas de sus ideas.

De nuevo ese proceso de usar a los teólogos europeos y distanciarme de ellos en algunos puntos importantes no ha sido mecánico.

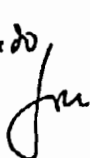
5. Sobre los mártires. Escribí sobre el martirio por primera vez en 1977 a petición de Monseñor Romero, e indudablemente mi concepción del martirio se ha ido desarrollando a lo largo de los años. Quizás en este aspecto el martirio más importante para mi teología fue el martirio de Monseñor Romero. En cualquier caso, creo que lo más novedoso ha sido: 1) Concebir el martirio como un rehacer la vida, praxis y cruz de Jesús. 2) Y concebirlo también como buena noticia, por lo que tiene de afinidad con el pueblo crucificado. En mi opinión, el martirio, y menos aún el martirio "jesuánico" ha estado presente en la teología sistemática.

6. En la segunda parte del libro "La fe en Jesucristo", hay también reflexiones sobre la cruz de Jesús al analizar los diferentes títulos: sumo sacerdote, mesías e Hijo de Dios. No sé si te interesaría integrarlo, aunque sea brevemente.

7. Para terminar, quiero recordar lo que dice González Faus en la recensión de "La fe en Jesucristo" (en RLT 46): mi cristología expresa en lo fundamental que Jesucristo es una buena noticia, un eu-aggeion. Esa impresión tengo yo, y creo que es importante hacerla notar porque ahí está en mi opinión lo más novedoso de una cristología de la misericordia, de la cruz y del martirio. En otras palabras, cruz y mártires no solo remiten a "pecado", sino también a "gracia". Eso me parece el aporte más importante de la "escuela salvadoreña" de teología (Ignacio Ellacuría, Monseñor Romero...). En la parte segunda de "La fe en Jesucristo" recalco la dimensión de buena noticia al analizar el título de "Palabra" y en capítulo final de esa segunda parte: Jesucristo como eu-aggeion.

...

Como ves, éstas son observaciones generales que quizás te ayuden a matizar algún punto, sobre todo no hacer exageradamente del martirio de los jesuitas el punto de inflexión de mi cristología. Como te decía al principio, creo que has trabajado muy bien y "me reconozco" en tu escrito. Te agradezco el interés que tienes por hacer teología desde el pueblo crucificado. Ojalá te ayude cuando regreses a tu pueblo.

Un cordial saludo,




An email from Fr. Jon Sobrino SJ (jsobrino@cmr.uca.edu.sv)
 To Hartono Budi (hartono@juno.com)
 Date: September 3, 1999, 10:14 AM

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Querido Hartono:

Hace una semana recibí tu última entrega y dentro de unas horas me voy a Madrid. He podido leer, aunque no con mucha detención, tu escrito y éstas son mis reflexiones.

1. Yo no conozco muchas reacciones a mis escritos, pero me parece que has agrupado bastante bien las críticas directas, y también las críticas indirectas.
2. Es difícil para mí juzgar las críticas que me hacen, pero yo diría lo siguiente:
 - 1) Es evidente mi limitación en análisis exegetico, especialmente en los dos primeros libros. Por otra parte creo que debiera quedar claro que el interés mío por el Jesús histórico, no es exegetico ni hermenéutico: sea cual fuere la realidad historica de Jesús, esa es el camino al Cristo.
 - 2) Es cierto que no abordo muchos temas actuales: cristología desde el feminismo, el Cristo cósmico, etc. Es una limitación. Pero mi presupuesto es que la teología se hace entre todos, unos se concentran más en unas cosas y otros en otras. A veces surgen genios sistemáticos y universales, pero lo normal es que no sea así. Algunas de las críticas a mis libros se les pudiera preguntar también por qué no abordan el tema de las víctimas de este mundo, la praxis del seguimiento, etc. En el numero 46 (enero-abril 1999) de la Revista Latinoamericana hay una recensión de José Ignacio González Faus sobre mi libro "La fe en Jesucristo. Ensayo desde las víctimas". En mi opinion capta muy bien lo que he pretendido hacer en mis dos últimos libros.
3. Pensando en la cristología de mis libros, creo que lo mas importante son algunos elementos que tú también recalcas:
 - 1) la relacion realidad y cristología; más en concreto víctimas y cristología.
 - 2) el seguimiento de Jesús como realidad que es también epistemológica.
 - 3) la dialéctica cruz/resurrección, desde las víctimas.
 - 4) la manifestación de Dios en ese Jesús, y no en otro.
 - 5) el hacer cristología desde la fe, es decir, la aceptación existencial, a través de y en contra de la historia, de que en el fondo de la realidad hay una buena noticia... En estas y en otras cosas he intentado aportar algo. Además, creo que estos enfoques no impiden el desarrollo de otros enfoques desde el género, lo cósmico, etc.

Pues eso es todo, Hartono. Comprenderás que podríamos hablar un largo rato sobre todas estas cosas, pero dentro de tres horas me voy al aeropuerto. Ojalá estos años de estudio te hayan hecho profundizar en la figura de Jesucristo y en su Dios. Y ojalá mis reflexiones te hayan ayudado algo. En cualquier caso, te deseo que hagas teología para tu pueblo de Indonesia, y que aprendas también de él.

Un abrazo y suerte en la defensa.

Jon

