Introduction

Ton Snellaert and I slowly weaved our way through the crowded avenues of Delhi, India, in an old ambulance. Three men, each in an advanced stage of terminal illness, lay next to us. The reek of their unwashed rags filled the air, a constant reminder that they had been left on the street to die. Ten years previously, Ton and I had arrived in Delhi to organize a new humanitarian ministry among the poor. A former drug addict who had lived on the streets of Amsterdam, Ton wanted to help those in the desperate need he had once known. After helping him initiate this project, I returned to the inner-city ministry in Minneapolis where I served. Ton then began seeking out the destitute dying under bridges, in parks, and on street corners. These lost sheep were easily found; they were everywhere. He picked them up, washed them, gave them medical care, restored them to health when possible, and provided a community in which their shattered lives could slowly mend. Those that died were given dignity and a funeral, surrounded by a loving assembly of broken, healing souls. His growing family of crippled youth, heroin addicts, and disease-ridden patients formed a faith community unlike any other I have ever seen. Soon, this home of hope took the name Sewa Ashram, the "house of service." I had now returned to India to visit my old friend and to learn more about the grace that enables one former drug addict to restore hundreds of others.

That day in the ambulance, Ton asked me a question: "So, Nathan, what does studying theology at Princeton Seminary matter when people are dying all around us?" For the next two hours in heavy traffic, three dying men bore silent witness to a debate in a language they did not understand, a discussion about the value of academic training in a world of desperate need. Ton and I had served together in Europe, and we had seen horrific suffering and miracles of hope in our travels across India years before. Only such a friend could perform the incision, extract the thorn, and articulate the question I carried in my heart.

Ton's question also cuts to the heart of this book. Put another way, what connection is there between Christian doctrine and concrete social action? Or, reframing and focusing the question even further, what practical difference does Christ's crucifixion make for those who suffer in our world today?

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in relating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to experiences of suffering. This interest, though, has often led

to a rupture between those who relate the cross solely to sin and atonement and those who regard the cross as nothing more than a symbol of Christ's solidarity with victims of injustice. The first group emphasizes the eternal and spiritual aspect of the cross, while the second focuses on the temporal and material dimension. Yet, as Jürgen Moltmann and George Hunsinger each suggest, these emphases need not remain mutually exclusive.[1] This volume argues that Karl Barth's understanding of the cross as atonement for sin and as liberation from unjust suffering furthers the dialogue between these positions by encompassing the central concerns of each. In this way, Barth's theology implicitly directs those in the classically orthodox and liberationist camps to learn from each other and to augment weak areas in their own theologies with the other's strengths. Theologies of atonement and of liberation may, therefore, move closer together conceptually while discovering a broad basis for cooperative action. This broadened conversation between voices from vastly different contexts in turn reveals and rectifies blind spots in Barth's own vision. Indeed, we have much to learn from each other.

This introduction sets the stage for later chapters by examining the views of the cross put forward by Thomas F. Torrance and Jon Sobrino. Although the theological streams from which each arises remain broad and deep, filled with diverse voices and differing perspectives, I believe that Torrance and Sobrino serve as generally adequate representatives of atonement and liberation theologies. They thereby illustrate the division between these two streams as well as the need for a third option.

Throughout this volume, I argue that Barth makes two concurrent moves, one in formal structure and the other in theological content, that unite atonement for sin and liberation from suffering. First, Barth formally unites the Hegelian categories (externality, internality, particularity, universality) that G. W. F. Hegel separates and that Thomas F. Torrance and Jon Sobrino underdevelop (internality and universality in Torrance's case; externality and particularity in Sobrino's). Second, Barth's theological content interweaves eternal, spiritual reality and temporal, material existence both indirectly and directly. Indirectly, Barth connects the eternal, spiritual and the temporal, material dimensions by correlating the four Hegelian categories to each. Directly, Barth draws temporal, material implications from his account of eternal, spiritual reality. This second move, in both its indirect and direct modes, constitutes the dual dimensionality of Barth's theology of the cross.

1. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 128. George Hunsinger, "Social Witness in Generous Orthodoxy: The New Presbyterian 'Study Catechism'," *PSB* 21 (2000): 38, 55–57.

My argument unfolds in the following way: in chapter one, I examine the formal, architectonic differences between Barth, Torrance, and Sobrino using a critical framework drawn from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This framework consists of the four analytical categories mentioned above: externality, internality, particularity, and universality. I argue that Barth unites these categories, whereas in their soteriologies Torrance emphasizes externality and particularity and Sobrino stresses internality and universality. By doing so, Barth provides an option that is formally different from those offered by Torrance and Sobrino and that surpasses Hegel's view of the highest form of human consciousness according to Hegel's own dialectical progression.

While chapter one focuses primarily upon the forms or architectonic structures of contrasting theologies, chapter two examines both the form and content of an early discussion of atonement and liberation in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*: "The Mercy and Righteousness of God."[2] Chapters three, four, and five then trace the unity of atonement and liberation throughout Barth's doctrine of reconciliation[3] and deepen the conversation between Barth, Torrance, and Sobrino. In these three chapters, theological content receives primary attention, though always as content approached through the formal, structural considerations discussed in chapters one and two. Chapter three analyzes three key components of Barth's atonement theology: his christological presuppositions, his interrelated forensic and priestly portrayals of atonement, and his royal depiction of reconciliation. Chapter four examines the character of Christian prophetic vocation as witness determined by Christ's reconciling work. Finally, chapter five discusses the affliction and liberation granted to Christians in correspondence to Christ's cross.

Terminology

Spirit

In C.S. Lewis's novel *Perelandra*, we find a discussion between Professors Weston and Ransom regarding the term "spirit." Professor Weston claims to have attained an understanding of reality that transcends the "few outworn theological technicalities with which organized religion has unhappily allowed itself to get incrusted."[4] Weston goes on to declare, "God is a spirit," and then

2. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, trans. W. B. Johnston et al., ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 368–406.

3. *Church Dogmatics* IV.

4. C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), 91.

he defines "*Pure* spirit" as "the final vortex of self-thinking, self-originating activity."[5] For Weston, mythic images of God and the devil refer to the same life force that is propelling humanity forward. In contrast, Professor Ransom asserts, "I'm a Christian. And what we mean by the Holy Ghost is *not* a blind, inarticulate purposiveness."[6] A spirit for Ransom may be good or evil, may be aligned to or in conflict with God. Above all, Ransom believes that God's existence as Spirit may not be reduced to human social processes because it lies beyond humanity. The confusion between Weston and Ransom illustrates the importance of clearly defining terms such as "spirit" and "spiritual," especially for a book that interacts with Hegel.

My use of *spirit* (πνεῦμα) and *spiritual* (πνευματικός) finds its starting point in the biblical text rather than in continental philosophy. These terms carry multiple meanings in Scripture.[7] In the New Testament, for example, *spirit* (πνεῦμα) may refer to wind (John 3:8), breath (2 Thess. 2:8), the life-sustaining aspect of each person (Matt. 27:50; Luke 8:55), or beings that are either angelic or demonic (Heb. 1:14; Matt. 12:43). Some spirits are from God; others are not (1 John 4:1–3). *Spirit* in other passages refers to God (John 4:24) and at times indicates "that which differentiates God from everything that is not God."[8] This term also refers to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who fills followers of Jesus Christ (πνεῦμα ἅγιον; Mark 1:8; 1 Cor. 6:19). Emphasizing the meaning of *spirit* as something beyond empirically verifiable physicality as we know it, distinctions between πνεῦμα (spirit) and σάρξ (flesh) are found in various New Testament texts such as Matt. 26:41 and Mark 14:38 ("the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"), John 3:6 ("What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit"), John 6:63 ("It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life,"), and Gal. 5:17 ("For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other").[9] Following this conceptual range, I use the terms *spirit* (πνεῦμα) and *spiritual* (πνευματικός) to point beyond empirically verifiable physicality, to point away from humanity's self-referential sociality, and to indicate a reality

5. Ibid., 91–92, italics in original.

6. Ibid., 91, italics in original.

7. W. F. Arndt, W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 832–38.

8. Ibid., 834; see also 832–38.

9. Other related passages include 1 Cor. 2:13: "And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit."

determined by the self-existent God of Christian Scripture.[10] This usage differs significantly from the view of *Spirit* found in Hegel's "absolute knowing," as we will see in chapter one.

Material

My use of the term *material* draws upon Scripture's use of ἐπίγειος (earthly; James 3:15), χοϊκός (made of earth or dust; 1 Cor. 15:47), ἐκ τῆς γῆς (of the earth, often in contrast to heaven; John 3:31), σάρξ (flesh; Gal. 2:20), and σαρκικός (human, material, natural, worldly; Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11).[11] When I refer to the spiritual and material aspects of the cross, I am not constructing an elaborate metaphysical theory but simply indicating two dimensions of reality attested by Scripture. In doing so, I intend neither to sharpen the distinction between them to the point that a harsh dualism emerges, nor to collapse their distinction so that a confused monism results. Rather, by acknowledging these distinct dimensions as they appear in Scripture, I hope to demonstrate their intimate interrelation in Christ's reconciling work and in the Christian's life. I hope thereby to overcome the false monistic tendencies that emerge in theological discussions that focus exclusively on either the eternal or the sociopolitical implications of Christ's reconciling work and that inevitably lead to falsely polarized contrasts and comparisons. In the perspective I propose, eternal salvation enfolds sociopolitical reality. This union, however, does not eliminate distinction.

Temporal and Eternal

Likewise, my use of *temporal* (πρόσκαιρος; lasting only for a time or a season; Matt. 13:21; Mark 4:17; Heb. 11:25)[12] and *eternal* (ἀιώνιος; John 17:3)[13] does not imply an intricate theory of time but signifies the Scriptural distinction between the fleeting conditions of this world and that which endures beyond these conditions. Scripture uses "eternal" to describe God's existence (Rom. 16:25-27; Rev. 15:7), to refer to God's kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11), and to indicate the type of ζωή (life) granted to humanity in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:48), a life that transcends the boundaries of transient human existence as we now know it (Luke 16:9; 2 Cor. 5:1). As distinct from eternity, temporality (πρόσκαιρος) signifies transience, that which soon passes away.[14] Second Corinthians 4:17-18

10. Support for this usage of *spiritual* (πνευματικός) may be found in other passages, such as Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 2:13; 9:11.

11. Arndt, Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 196, 368–69, 914–16, 1086.

12. Ibid., 880–81.

13. Ibid., 33.

contrasts these concepts by distinguishing things that are *visible* and πρόσκαιρα (temporary) from things that are *invisible* and αἰώνια (eternal).[15]

Atonement, Sin, Liberation, Suffering, and the Sociopolitical

Lastly, *atonement* refers to making as one, or "at-one-ment."[16] The theological tradition uses this term to describe the overcoming of the relational rupture between God and humanity caused by sin. For this reason, I will use the terms *atonement* and *reconciliation* interchangeably. *Sin*, following the classical tradition, refers to actions and attitudes that violate God's will for humanity, thus damaging ourselves and others, as well as to the state of living in conflict with God.[17] *Liberation* entails emancipation from all forms of the oppressive limitation caused by sin. I will follow Sobrino's usage of *liberation* to refer predominantly to temporal, material deliverance from interpersonal injustice.[18] In chapter five, I will examine Barth's expansion of this term to include the eternal, spiritual dimension without abandoning the temporal, material aspect, and I will identify traces of an expanded definition in Sobrino's writings as well. Although I comment on additional forms of *suffering*, this project primarily addresses the humanly caused, unjust affliction of central concern to liberation theologians.[19] Finally, I use the term *sociopolitical* in a broad sense to indicate the interpersonal relations, communal processes, and social structures of human life.

14. This is not an exhaustive description of all instances of these terms or of their full conceptual range in Scripture.

15. "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal." Indeed, the physical *visibility* of the temporal and the physical *invisibility* of the eternal elucidate the difference between the "material" and the "spiritual" dimensions previously discussed.

16. Paul S. Fiddes, "Salvation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 178.

17. Ian McFarland, "The Fall and Sin," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 140–41.

18. Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Francis McDonagh and Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 6, 275, note 15.

19. Sobrino writes, "For liberation theology, the major form of suffering in today's world is historical suffering—suffering unjustly inflicted on some by others." Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 29.

Thomas F. Torrance's Theology of Atonement

In order to examine the contrast between atonement and liberation theologies, and the need for a new way forward, I will begin with the more traditional view. Thomas F. Torrance's atonement theology draws heavily upon the Old Testament sacrificial system, embeds Christ's cross within the larger movement of the incarnation, and yet inadequately relates the cross to either liberation from unjust suffering or to sociopolitical reality. I will draw upon Torrance's *The Mediation of Christ*[20] in order to examine each of these in turn.

The Cross and the Old Testament Sacrificial System

Torrance argues that we must interpret the cross according to its Scriptural context, specifically the Old Testament priestly practices surrounding the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). Leviticus 16 speaks of a twofold sense of sacrifice in which the priest kills one goat on the altar and sends another goat into the wilderness after first laying his hands upon its head and reciting the sins of the people. Christ in his death fulfills both roles "as the Lamb upon whom all our iniquities and guilt are laid, sacrificed once for all on the altar of the Cross, but cast out of his own people like an unclean thing, bearing the penalty of their guilt."[21] Christ's role as the sacrificial lamb is both "representative and substitutionary."[22] Through his assumption of our sinful human flesh, and therefore "out of the ontological depths of our actual human being,"[23] Christ represents humans before God by becoming "our human response to God."[24] Christ's sacrifice is at the same time substitutionary, for he acts "in our place"[25] by taking our sins upon himself in order to suffer our "penalty of . . . guilt" as the lamb sacrificed on the altar and to "bear away" this sin as the goat banished into the wilderness.[26] Christ performs this sacrifice "both as priest and as victim" in order to present people "to his Father as those whom he has redeemed, sanctified and perfected for ever in himself."[27] Substitutionary atonement therefore requires that we view the incarnation as essential, rather than instrumental, to reconciliation.[28]

20. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992).

21. Ibid., 36.

22. Ibid., 75–76.

23. Ibid., 80–81.

24. Ibid., 80.

25. Ibid., 81.

26. Ibid., 36. See also Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 75.

27. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 76.

The Cross and the Incarnation

Torrance emphasizes that Christ's atoning work is not limited to the crucifixion but rather spans the entirety of Christ's earthly life and ministry. The incarnation, therefore, grounds Christ's atoning work as the indispensable presupposition that unifies the whole.[29] Further, atonement is radically grounded within the being of God as a work that occurs *in* Christ, "within the very Reality of God himself."[30] Atonement occurs within God by virtue of Christ's divinity and confronts human sin by virtue of Christ's humanity. The grounding of atonement within God in Christ's person prevents the reduction of reconciliation to an exemplary act, as though Christ simply models a new, higher morality or a new way of relating to God. By becoming human, Jesus Christ as God takes on our fallen flesh in order to transform it and to unite humanity with God in himself. Jesus Christ's "Person and his Work are one."[31]

By uniting the being of God with sinful humanity, Christ's atoning incarnation transforms corrupted humanity, removes sin, bears God's judgment, and bestows God's righteousness. In this way, Christ's work of reconciliation accomplishes reconstitution, expiation, propitiation, and sanctification. Throughout his earthly life, Christ provides "our human response to God"[32] by transforming our sinful humanity in himself and by "ben[ding] back" our will into conformity with God's will.[33] Sinful humanity becomes obedient humanity in Jesus Christ. As he reconstitutes sinful humanity in himself, Jesus bears the totality of human sin, removes it from humanity, judges it, and suffers its judgment.[34] Humanity, then, is freed from both the burden of sin and from the judgment of God decreed against this sin. Indeed, the purpose of God's judgment is to effect the removal of that which obstructs humanity's relationship with God.[35]

Through his life, death, and resurrection, Christ sanctifies the sinful human nature he assumes and "in sanctifying it br[ings] the divine judgment to bear

28. Ibid., 81.

29. Ibid., 63; George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 150.

30. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 1st ed., 66.

31. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 63.

32. Ibid., 80.

33. Ibid., 79–80.

34. George Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God: Reflections on René Girard and Karl Barth (1998)," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 34; Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 40.

35. See Torrance, "Reconciliation" (unpublished manuscript), quoted in Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God," 33.

directly upon our human nature both in the holy life he live[s] and in the holy death he die[s]."[36] Christ's atoning work, therefore, entails a dual directionality comprised of both removal and bestowal. In one direction, Christ takes upon himself human sin, removes it from humanity, and subjects it to the judgment of God. In a simultaneous counter-movement, Christ offers to humanity the healing, sanctification, and redemption that he provides in himself. Torrance envisions this reconciliation as a form of *theosis* by which we are welcomed into God's "divine life and love through Jesus Christ" without becoming divine ourselves.[37] Humanity's *theosis*, like all aspects of atonement for Torrance, occurs within the person of Jesus Christ. As God enters into human flesh through the incarnation of the eternal Son in Christ, so in Christ humanity enters into the being of God.

The Cross and Human Suffering

To what degree does Torrance's understanding of atonement relate to human suffering or liberative possibilities? Although this concern remains peripheral in his account, he cannot avoid commenting on human suffering on several occasions in *The Mediation of Christ*. Yet, Torrance consistently assigns spiritual significance to Christ's entrance into the depths of human affliction without considering its materially liberative potential for those who suffer unjustly. In a particularly striking passage, Torrance recounts a conversation he had in Jerusalem in 1977 after touring the Holocaust museum with a number of officials from Israel's Ministry of Religion. After the tour, Torrance asked his Jewish friends how they related their attestations of God's presence during the Six Day War to God's apparent absence during the Holocaust. After a period of silence, they asked Torrance how he conceives this relation. He then pointed to a monument outside the museum inscribed with the words from Ezekiel that are recited during ceremonies of circumcision: "In your blood, live." For Torrance, these words indicate that the Jewish people interpret the Holocaust in terms of their covenant with God. Through this covenant, God is "afflicted with the affliction of his people" and "has not held himself back even from the enormity of the [H]olocaust."[38] He continued:

> Speaking as a Christian I would say that ultimately the only answer to your terrible predicament is the Cross of Jesus which tells us that God has not held himself aloof from us in our wicked, abominable

36. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 41.

37. Ibid., 64.

38. Ibid., 44.

> inhumanity, or from its violence and sin and guilt, but has come into the midst of its unappeasable hurt and agony and shame, and taken it all upon himself in order to forgive, and redeem and heal mankind at the very point where we human beings are at our worst, thus making our sins the bond by which in atoning sacrifice we are for ever tied to God.[39]

Undoubtedly, Torrance's words to his Jewish friends are correct as far as they relate to the Christian view of atonement, but it is telling that he does not add liberation from unjust suffering to the positive benefits (forgiveness, redemption, and healing) offered to humanity in Christ. His statements about God refusing to remain "aloof" and about God entering into humanity's "unappeasable hurt and agony and shame" affirm Christ's solidarity with suffering humanity, and yet his shift of emphasis from "the God who is afflicted with the affliction of his people" to the atonement for sin leaves the implications of this solidarity undeveloped. Later, Torrance implies that "fundamentalists" commit an error when they do not regard Christ's incarnation as in itself atoning but merely as instrumental to the work of atonement on the cross.[40] Yet he here makes a parallel mistake by regarding Christ's assumption of horrific suffering within his human experience as merely instrumental to the work of atonement without recognizing the essential significance that Christ's experience on the cross has for those who suffer unjustly today.

Torrance acknowledges that Christ transforms human affliction. Christ enters "the fearful depths of our darkness and dereliction" so that "we may cry with him, 'Our Father'."[41] His comments on Christ's cry of dereliction (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34) are worth quoting at length:

> That was a cry of utter God-forsakenness, the despairing cry of man in his dereliction which Jesus had made his own, taking it over from the twenty-second Psalm, thereby revealing that he had penetrated into the ultimate horror of great darkness, the abysmal chasm that separates sinful man from God.[42]

39. Ibid., 45.

40. This argument is implied in Torrance's critique of "fundamentalists" who have difficulty linking substitution to the humanity of Jesus Christ, ibid., 81. See also Joannes Guthridge, "The Christology of T. F. Torrance: Revelation and Reconciliation in Christ" (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1967), 9, 29.

41. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 79.

42. Ibid., 43.

Torrance then interprets Christ's cry of dereliction in light of the Lukan declaration of hope (Luke 23:46). Immediately following the above quotation, Torrance continues:

> But there in the depths where we are exposed to the final judgments of God, Jesus converted man's atheistical shout of abandonment and desolation into a prayer of commitment and trust, 'Father unto thy hands I commend my spirit.' The Son and the Father were one and not divided, each dwelling in the other, even in that 'hour and power of darkness' when Jesus was smitten of God and afflicted and pierced for our transgressions.[43]

By giving Luke the final word, Torrance acknowledges God's nearness to us even in what appears to be our deepest abandonment by God. Yet this is as far as Torrance ventures toward setting forth the relation of the cross to human suffering. He concludes the above paragraph by arguing that Jesus Christ enters into "the very hell of our godlessness and despair" in order to bring us into "his reconciling love" in which we may find "salvation and peace against all the onslaughts of the forces of evil."[44] The "salvation and peace" mentioned, though, seem to be part of the Christian's eternal benefits in Christ. Less clear is how Christ's cross relates to deliverance from present distress or to the cessation of strife at the interpersonal level.

The Cross and Sociopolitical Reality

In *The Mediation of Christ*, Torrance makes passing reference to "the socio-political patterns of human life."[45] Torrance believes that a fundamental conflict exists between Christ's atoning work and political activity. For this reason, Christ "renounce[s] the use of worldly power as a demonic temptation, and cho[oses] instead the way of the 'suffering servant' and the Cross."[46] Torrance, though, does not explain how political action conflicts with Christ's "reconciling and atoning mission" or how it constitutes "a demonic temptation." While Jesus clearly avoids conforming his mission to the messianic

43. Ibid.

44. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd ed., 43–44.

45. Ibid., 31.

46. Ibid., 30. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 277–78, 290; Thomas F. Torrance, "Service in Jesus Christ," in *Service in Christ: Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday*, ed. James I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker (London: Epworth, 1966), 11–12.

expectations of his day, Torrance seems to regard all forms of political activity, and any "use of worldly power," as incompatible with Christ's earthly mission. However, although Jesus did not lead a political rebellion against Rome, this does not mean that his ministry lacks a sociopolitical dimension. The sociopolitical nature of Christ's ministry does not fit the mold of the insurrectionist leader, and yet his preaching that the kingdom of God has drawn near challenges the domination of Rome as much as it challenges the violent, insurrectionist responses of certain Jews to the Empire.

Torrance argues that political reality occupies the surface of human life while spiritual reality exists at the core. Christ, therefore, sufficiently deals with the sociopolitical realm when he provides atonement for the sin that is at the heart of all societal ills: "The deadly root of man's inhumanity to man, the source of all human violence, is in the wickedness of the human heart, and it is there that it must be undone."[47] Confronting a surface problem fails to address its spiritual origin.[48] For Torrance, "the Cross has the effect of emptying the power-structures that the world loves so much, of their vaunted force"[49] because the atonement undercuts sociopolitical reality and deals with it on a deeper, spiritual basis rather than on its own terms or on its own level. Yet Torrance does not specify the relation between spiritual and sociopolitical reality, nor does he describe the contemporary outworking of Christ's eternal victory.

As Christ rejects political interpretations of messiahship, Torrance argues that Christians should reject contemporary forms of politicized theology that attempt "to make Jesus serve their own ends in the world, thereby 'crucifying' him all over again."[50] Political theology commits the error of using Christ instrumentally to achieve previously determined goals. "Jesus was crucified by the political theology of his own day, but is that not what people, even in the Church, continue to do when under a programme of putting Christian ideals into effect they politicise the role of Jesus in human society and in international relations today?"[51] Only by dealing with the root of all political ills, "the wickedness of the human heart,"[52] will proper order and balance be brought to human life.

47. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 31.

48. Ibid., 30–31. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 283.

49. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 31.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 277–78, 290.

52. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed., 31.

Jon Sobrino's Theology of Liberation

Jon Sobrino provides a vastly different perspective from the one outlined above, indeed one that is almost diametrically opposed.[53] By self-consciously allowing the sociopolitical context of El Salvador to shape the direction and aim of his thought, Sobrino employs a methodology "from below" that stands in stark contrast to Torrance's focus on Scripture and tradition. Sobrino reframes contemporary suffering in Latin America and places it within the Christian narrative by identifying the unjust affliction of the poor with the suffering of Christ on the cross. What emerges is a perspective that focuses upon Christ's liberative action[54] rather than upon the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ as the ground of Christ's reconciling work.[55] Sobrino, then, presents the cross primarily as a symbol of liberation from unjust suffering and of God's solidarity with the victims of history. In this section, I will discuss Sobrino's portrayal of Christ's cross in exclusively material and temporal terms, the strong connection he sees between Christ and those who suffer unjustly today, and his depiction of the "crucified people"[56] as the transmitters of historical salvation.[57]

The Cross and the Bearing of Sin

As part of his effort to provide an alternative to classical atonement theories,[58] Sobrino reinterprets the traditional claim that Christ's death removes sin.[59]

53. An earlier version of this section appears in Nathan Hieb, "Jon Sobrino's Theology of the Cross and the Meaning of Unjust Suffering," *Koinonia* XX (2008): 47–67.

54. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 67–70.

55. Sobrino does indeed speak of "incarnation," but central to this concept for him is solidarity with the suffering poor through entrance into the conditions of their suffering. For this reason, Sobrino regards Archbishop Oscar Romero's refusal to accept any protection not offered to the masses as an example of incarnation. See ibid., 245.

56. Sobrino follows Ellacuría in describing those who suffer unjustly in our world as "crucified people." Ibid., 254–55. Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 4; Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 3–4.

57. I focus on Sobrino's *Jesus the Liberator* because he describes this work as "a more systematic development, with additions and corrections," than his previous writing on the cross, Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 275, note 14.

58. For more on Sobrino's rejection of traditional atonement theories, see Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 219–32.

59. Of Sobrino's theology, Brondos writes, "Divine forgiveness is thus not the consequence of the cross; rather, the cross is an expression and consequence of God's love reaching out to forgive and accept others." David A. Brondos, *Fortress Introduction to Salvation and the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 163. Sobrino reinterprets Scripture passages referring to forensic and priestly imagery in liberationist terms. Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 97–98; Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 227–28.

Sobrino argues that Jesus' death did not expiate humanity's sin because he did not bear the sin of every person, nor did he bear every sin that has occurred throughout human history. Christ's bearing of sin is limited because "the masses" did not join in the persecution and death of Jesus. Rather, he was killed by the religious and political elites of his day who were threatened by his attack upon their religious and sociopolitical structures of domination.[60] Therefore, Jesus only bore the sin of the specific individuals who persecuted him, and he bore this sin not in a supernatural way but simply by suffering the harm directly inflicted upon him by their sinful actions.[61] In doing so, Jesus reveals a response to injustice that Sobrino regards as the key to overcoming oppression:

> [A]s to what should be done about sin, another fundamental question in the New Testament, the answer is clear, eradicate it, but with one essential condition: by bearing it. And rather than taking on the guilt of sin, bearing the sin of others means bearing the sin's historical effects: being ground down, crushed, put to death.[62]

According to Sobrino, Christ bore the sins of the people who directly caused his suffering and death. He bore these sins in the same way that we always bear the sins of others: by experiencing the pain and destruction caused by their sinful actions.[63] Such a move precludes the assertion that Christ bore the entirety of humanity's sin due to its immanent focus upon historical causal processes. In consistency with this move, Sobrino depicts sin in terms of victimization and limits the power of Christ's cross to the symbolic level as an inspirational example. The cross does not effect a reconciling change between humanity and God;[64] rather, it simply models God's love and the manner of life that this love inspires.[65]

60. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 200.

61. Sobrino writes, "What this crucified God reminds us of constantly is that there can be no liberation from sin without bearing of sin, that injustice cannot be eradicated unless it is borne." Ibid., 246. He also states that "violence cannot be redeemed unless it is borne in some way." Ibid., 217.

62. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 260.

63. Sturla J. Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 127, ed. Richard Friedli, Jan A. B. Jongeneel, Klaus Koschorke, Theo Sundermeier, and Werner Ustorf (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 156–57.

64. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 203–4, 230.

65. Ibid., 259–60. Sobrino argues, "Jesus went to his death with confidence and saw it as a final act of service, more in the manner of an effective example that would motivate others than as a mechanism of salvation for others." Ibid., 203–4.

Jesus' death also demonstrates the inevitable consequence of a life devoted in service to the liberation of others. Christ's death liberates by motivating others to display the same costly love by working for the sociopolitical liberation of those around them. In this way, Sobrino limits the effective range of Christ's influence to the temporal and material domain, as an example for others to follow, and avoids linking Christ's death to the eternal and spiritual dimension.

The Hermeneutics of Suffering and Injustice

For Sobrino, Christ's affliction and the suffering of the crucified people mutually illumine each other.[66] Because he regards Christ's death as the result of his manner of life,[67] Sobrino construes Christ's cross as a representative instance of a larger class of nearly identical instances rather than as a unique event unrepeatable in its significance or effect. He argues that throughout history, deaths like Christ's have been "a frequent occurrence"[68] rather than "a peculiar fate."[69] Drawing on Isaiah 53, Sobrino claims that the affliction of Yahweh's Servant is mirrored in the "hunger, sickness, slums, illiteracy, frustration through lack of education and employment, pain and suffering of all kinds" experienced by the crucified people in our world today.[70] Christ suffered as a result of his resistance to the forces of oppression and in defense of the victims of injustice.[71] Christ's life, therefore, prefigures the suffering of many present-day religious and political dissidents.[72] This commonality, though, does not evacuate Christ's crucifixion of significance. Rather, Christ's death carries exemplary relevance precisely because of this commonality. The similarity between Christ's suffering and that of the crucified people enables those who suffer today to see a deep bond between their lives and Christ's life and to recognize in this bond their unique relationship with God.

A dialectical process of interpretation, a "hermeneutical circle," then unfolds. Sobrino writes that "from the standpoint of the poor we think we come to know Christ better, and it is this better-known Christ, we think,

66. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 35.

67. Ibid., 209.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., 199.

70. Ibid., 256. Other similarities between the Suffering Servant and the crucified people include the experience of being despised and rejected, being forgotten in death, and being destroyed by injustice, ibid., 257.

71. Ibid., 200.

72. Ibid., 205–6, 209.

who points us to where the poor are."[73] The lives, sufferings, and deaths of the crucified people unlock the meaning of Christ's life, suffering, and death.[74] Through this unapologetically circular interpretive movement, the crucified people derive significance from the Christian narrative by first identifying connections between their suffering and Christ's affliction and then applying the significance of Christ's life and death to their own lives and deaths. The crucified people begin to understand that they constitute, in the words of Sturla Stålsett, "an actual, i.e. historical, manifestation of the crucified body of Christ."[75] Therefore, Stålsett continues, "anyone who looks for the manifestation of Christ in our time should look to this particular part of humanity, usually forgotten and disregarded."[76]

Life of a Crucified People

The circularity of this interpretive movement leads to Sobrino's further claim that the crucified people transmit salvation in the same way Christ did. Through lives of love, they extend Christ's effectiveness by replicating his ministry and continuing the trajectory and form of his work.[77] As they carry on the work of liberation, they too will experience persecution and martyrdom, which will in turn inspire others to engage in selfless, loving service in much the same way that Christ's suffering and death inspired them. This leads to a long chain of liberative action motivated by preceding exemplars that continually provides fresh exemplars for future generations. Sobrino argues:

> As often occurs in Latin America, in the presence of the martyrs, when human beings understand that there has been love, they understand it as good news, as something deeply humanizing. . . . They also understand it as an invitation to continue it. . . . *On*

73. Ibid., 35. Later in this passage he also states that "in the world of poverty the poor and Jesus of Nazareth converge and point to each other."

74. Ibid., 196.

75. Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 163.

76. Ibid. The crucified people not only resemble Christ for Sobrino but actually constitute "Christ's crucified body in history," which "allow[s] us to know the crucified Christ better." Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 254, 264.

77. Therefore, discipleship is central to Sobrino's Christology. See Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, *Jesus Christus und das gekreuzigte Volk: Christologie der Nachfolge und des Martyriums bei Jon Sobrino*, Concordia Reihe Monographien (Aachen: Augustinus Buchhandlung, 1995), 73–75, 83–90. Sobrino follows Tillich in regarding Jesus' significance as something bestowed upon him through his reception by others as the Messiah. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 26. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology II: Existence and The Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 98–101.

> *this principle*, Jesus' cross as the culmination of his whole life can be understood as bringing salvation. This saving efficacy is shown more in the form of an exemplary cause than of an efficient cause. But this does not mean that it is not effective: there stands Jesus, faithful and merciful to the end, inviting and inspiring human beings to reproduce in their turn the *homo verus*, true humanity.[78]

Not only do the contemporary martyrs of oppression effect salvation for others in the same way that Christ effects salvation—that is, through the revelation of true humanness displayed in lives of love[79]—but the experience of the martyrs, as we have seen, provides the hermeneutical perspective through which Christ's life and death are interpreted.[80] The direction of interpretation, according to this passage, moves from the present to the past, from contemporary Latin America to Jesus Christ. Only after Christ's suffering and death are interpreted according to the Latin American context does Christ's example provide a model of what "true humanity" is within this contemporary context and how a life of love may transmit liberation to others.

Christians emulate Christ's life of loving service by working for the salvific liberation of others, which entails removing injustice by bearing the suffering that injustice inflicts upon those who oppose it.[81] Christians follow Christ by bearing the sin of others in the same way that Christ bore sin,[82] by demonstrating solidarity with those who suffer unjustly, and by combating the causes of unjust suffering.[83] The solidarity of Christians with those who suffer must include efforts to liberate "the crucified" by seeking, "in a particular way, to bring them down from the cross."[84] Sobrino thereby inseparably links love for others and the liberation of the oppressed in his theology of the cross.[85]

78. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230, italics added.

79. Brondos states, "Just as, for Sobrino, Jesus' death is salvific primarily through what it *reveals* to human beings, so also the crucified people contribute to human salvation through what they reveal." Brondos, *Fortress Introduction to Salvation and the Cross*, 164, italics in original.

80. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 35, 195–96, 251.

81. Ibid., 246.

82. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 261–62. Stålsett writes, "Sobrino claims that the crucified people in fact save/liberate their crucifiers by carrying (the real consequences of) their sins, and thereby, we might say, carrying their sins *away*. They become – through a scandalous paradox, Sobrino admits – bearers of 'historical soteriology' *in and through* their innocent sufferings." Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 156–57, italics in original.

83. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244–46.

84. Ibid., 252.

85. Ibid., 228–30.

Two types of people bear the cross, according to Sobrino. First, Christ's cross models the life of love devoted to the sociopolitical liberation of others. Second, the cross represents victimization and God's "solidarity" with "the crucified."[86] Sobrino believes that Isaiah 53 depicts the Suffering Servant as representing both those who engage in liberative action ("the active Suffering Servant") and those who are the victims of oppression ("the passive Suffering Servant"). While he does not always differentiate these groups in his thought, Sobrino sets forth their distinction in the following way:

> [I]nternalized oppression generates (or may generate) awareness 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. . . . [W]e can also state that the oppressed are their own agents of liberation.[87]

As Christians emulate the crucified Christ by working to bring about the salvific liberation of others, they discover that the oppressed themselves, through their awareness of their own oppression and organization against it, become the unexpected agents of their own salvation. For this reason, Sobrino designates as "martyrs" both those who die as a result of their liberative work and those who are the historical victims of oppression.[88]

Redefining Salvation

In this costly, liberative action, Sobrino believes that those who carry on Christ's work in our present age offer multiple forms of salvation rather than the monistic salvation from sin envisioned by traditional soteriologies. He argues that traditional soteriological models artificially limit God's saving activity to atonement for sin and thereby fail to account for "the plural salvations brought by the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus." Salvation as liberation is a holistic concept that addresses human life in its entirety. Sobrino continues, "The danger is that within this all-embracing salvation [expressed by traditional atonement models] the plurality of salvations brought about by Jesus of Nazareth is not made explicit: salvation from any sort of oppression, inner and outer, spiritual and physical, personal and social."[89]

86. Ibid., 244–45, 251–52.
87. Ibid., 259–60.
88. Ibid., 269–71.

The plurality of salvations in Sobrino's thought arises necessarily from his belief that suffering humans achieve salvation for themselves and others. If Jesus Christ alone achieves salvation, then although it may impinge upon multiple aspects of the human condition and upon a plurality of social structures, salvation will possess a persistent, underlying unity because of its origin in the reconciling work of the one person, Jesus Christ. If, however, various people throughout history achieve salvation as liberation, even if mutually inspired by the example of Jesus, then these salvations will be manifested in a diversity of forms. In short, multiple agents effecting salvation necessarily entail a plurality of salvations.

Sobrino believes that the diverse forms of salvation transmitted by the crucified people are able to transform all of humanity, even those not victimized by oppression. For example, he argues that the crucified people, through their suffering, facilitate the conversion of others by bearing witness to the reality and victimizing power of sin and by issuing a call for repentance: "If the crucified people are not able to turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, nothing can."[90]

Sobrino also argues that the crucified people demonstrate moral values that witness to the power of their faith, such as "community . . . service . . . simplicity . . . creativity . . . openness to transcendence."[91] Before a watching world, the crucified people exhibit hope in their work for liberation, love through their willingness to sacrifice their lives in martyrdom, and gracious forgiveness toward their oppressors even in the midst of great affliction.[92] The activity of modeling a liberated life is extended from Christ to the crucified people. Sobrino argues that "like the lamb of God, [the crucified people] carry the sin of the world and by carrying it they offer light and salvation to all."[93]

Sobrino's depiction of salvation in temporal and material terms comes into sharpest focus at this point:

> [H]owever scandalous, if we do not accept the possibility that the crucified people bring salvation, it is pointless to repeat that the Servant and the crucified Christ bring salvation. If we do not make salvation historical in some way, it is pointless to repeat that the Servant and the crucified Christ bring real concrete salvation. Otherwise we would be reducing this to God's arbitrary will, which

89. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 222.

90. Ibid., 262.

91. Ibid., 263.

92. Ibid., 263–64.

93. Ibid., 264.

> would be completely invisible and only known by him and quite unverifiable.[94]

This inseparable link between Christ's salvific efficacy and the crucified people's salvific efficacy is the logical corollary of Sobrino's construal of salvation in temporal and material terms alone. Sobrino's dismissal of traditional atonement theories concerned with eternal salvation from sin results in the limitation of salvation to the boundaries of empirically discernable, historical processes. If salvation is limited to material existence, then the salvation offered by Christ is effective only within the boundaries of his earthly life and Christ's ability to inspire is limited to the natural transmission of his story within his historical sphere of influence. Christ's death and the deaths of the crucified people are then on an equal footing to the extent that they both exemplify loving service to God unto death as the manner of life most pleasing to God. As Christ's death effects salvation within Sobrino's model, so all instances of loving, sacrificial service contain the necessary preconditions for effecting salvation. Sobrino thereby maintains logical consistency with his soteriology as a whole when he inseparably links the salvific efficacy of Christ's life and death to the salvific efficacy of the lives and deaths of the crucified people:

> In this the crucified people certainly resemble the Suffering Servant. The crucified people bear the sins of their oppressors on their shoulders. . . . This load destroys them and they die like the Servant. . . . Nevertheless by really taking on the sin historically, the Servant can eradicate it. It becomes light and salvation and the scandalous paradox is resolved. The crucified people become the bearers of "historical soteriology."[95]

As the culmination of his soteriology, we may now understand Sobrino's view of God's presence with the crucified people. Victims invoke the presence of God because of the existential proximity of their experiences to that of Christ on the cross. Sobrino argues, "The victims of this world are the place where God is known, but sacramentally. They make God known because they make him present. As on Jesus' cross, in them 'the Godhead hides,' as Ignatius says in the meditations on the passion, but God is there."[96] As God was present during

94. Ibid., 262.
95. Ibid., 260–61.
96. Ibid., 251.

Christ's experience of the cross, so God is present to the crucified people as they suffer their own crucifixion.

The experience of suffering borne by crucified people is in itself what interjects the presence of God within their suffering. "They make Christ present first and foremost through the bare fact of being massively on the cross. But they also make him present because, like the lamb of God, they carry the sin of the world."[97] Consistency with his materialist portrayal of salvation set forth above, and with his belief that Jesus' messianic significance rests upon his historical reception as the Christ,[98] implies that the presence of God spoken of by Sobrino remains no more than a symbolic reference strictly limited to the physical conditions of Christ's life and the lives of the crucified, rather than a supernatural manifestation of God's being or activity.[99] Even so, Sobrino regards this presence of God as revelatory: "Knowledge of God always has a material setting, and the place where the crucified God is known is the crosses of this world."[100] As the eucharistic bread and wine are the sacraments of God's presence, the victims of the world are in themselves the sacramental presence of the crucified God. Through the world's victims, we know God. Our knowledge of God, therefore, derives from the experiences of the crucified people as much as our understanding of Christ's significance derives from their sufferings. Our knowledge of God and our interpretation of Christ's cross are each shaped by, and to a degree determined by, contemporary experiences of suffering. Sobrino poignantly states: "To stand at the foot of Jesus' cross and to stand at the foot of historical crosses is absolutely necessary if we want to know the crucified God."[101]

Toward a Renewed Theology of the Cross

Placing Thomas F. Torrance and Jon Sobrino in close proximity draws out the sharp contrast between their proposals. Each models a fairly common theological view of the cross. Like Torrance, many focus almost entirely upon the eternal effects of Christ's cross, such as the reconciliation of humanity

97. Ibid., 264.

98. Sobrino writes, "If, *per impossibile*, there was, in fact, no real faith in Christ in history, Christ would cease to be Christ." Ibid., 26. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 98–101.

99. This symbolic presence of God in the current suffering of crucified people perhaps may be construed in terms of the "symbolic causality" by which Christ's death is a salvific expression of God's love. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230.

100. Ibid., 251.

101. Ibid.

with God in Jesus Christ. Others, like Sobrino, react against what they regard as a transcendent, otherworldly perspective by focusing exclusively upon the historical dimensions of Christ's life and the way it relates to the existential challenges facing ordinary people today. Torrance focuses on that which is empirically unquantifiable, explicable only in terms of divine activity, and effective for all times and places. Sobrino focuses on that which is empirically verifiable, sociologically explainable, and effective for the particular times and places linked to Christ through ordinary, historical processes of transmission. While certain aspects of their proposals sharply contradict, such as Torrance's repudiation of the political significance of Christ's ministry[102] and Sobrino's rejection of traditional theories of atonement,[103] the question remains open as to whether one may construct a theological framework that addresses both atonement for sin and liberation from unjust suffering.

I walk away from Torrance and Sobrino with the sense that they differ because of unnecessary self-limitations rather than because of the basic incompatibility of their essential emphases (atonement and liberation). On one hand, Sobrino limits his methodology to the temporal and material aspects of the cross in such a way that he fails to address the eternal and spiritual dimensions of salvation, resulting in a reductionistic soteriology. On the other hand, Torrance employs his careful and thorough Christology in a self-limiting manner that fails to address its full soteriological implications, particularly in regard to the sociopolitical significance of reconciliation. Jon Sobrino and James Cone claim that an otherworldly emphasis in much of Western theology has at times led to a form of soteriological docetism.[104] Whether such a critique may be applied with precision to Torrance's thought is a question beyond the scope of this project. Yet we may conclude that Torrance at least insufficiently accounts for the full soteriological implications of his otherwise robust Christology.

102. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd ed., 30–31.

103. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 195–210.

104. Ibid., 36–40, 51. James Cone points to an "implied docetism" in much of Western theology that emphasizes the "Christ of faith" more than the "historical Jesus," thereby resulting in a Christology "removed from history" and a view of salvation that is "only peripherally related to this world." James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 106–8. Torrance regards Christ's humanity as an ontological category that the eternal Son must assume in order to bridge the separation between humanity and God. In contrast, Sobrino regards the humanity of Christ as a reference to Christ's historically and contextually bound life. In other words, for Torrance our commonality with Christ derives from the shared ontology of human nature, whereas for Sobrino our commonality with Christ derives from the similarity of contextual and historical factors that mark Christ's earthly life and our own.

Further, one wonders if Torrance's and Sobrino's similar claims of biblical validation arise from the fact that an account of the cross that is faithful to Scripture will contain components of each portrayal but within a fuller, richer perspective that leaves behind their clashing claims to mutual exclusivity. While their theologies remain incomplete, the strength of each illumines the other's weakness.

This volume attempts to retrieve a third option from the theology of Karl Barth and to overcome the dichotomy between the divergent views of the cross represented by Torrance and Sobrino. Such a model will bear the unmistakable marks of Chalcedonian Christology not only in its view of the relation between Jesus Christ's divinity and humanity but also in the relation it proposes between the transcendent and earthly dimensions of the crucifixion. What emerges from Barth's thought is the coinherence of the eternal and spiritual aspects of the cross with the temporal and material dimensions in a relation of unity and distinction.[105]

In the next chapter, I construct a critical framework in order to analyze the differences in formal structure between the theologies of Barth, Torrance, and Sobrino. Thereafter, I argue that Karl Barth's theology provides a model for how atonement and liberation may be brought together within a theology of the cross that addresses humans as both sinners in need of reconciliation with God and as sufferers in need of liberation from unjust affliction.

105. In an early essay, Barth writes, "The whole picture of the relationship between Spirit and matter, between heaven and earth, becomes completely different when we come to Jesus. For him there are not those two worlds, but the one reality of the kingdom of God. The opposite to God is not the earth, not matter, not the external, but evil. . . . And that is why redemption is not the separation of spirit from matter; it is not that man 'goes to heaven,' but rather that God's kingdom *comes to us* in matter and on earth. 'The Word became flesh' (John 1:14), and not the other way around! The heavenly Father's love and justice come to rule over all things external and earthly. His will is to be done '*on earth* as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10)." Karl Barth, "Jesus Christ and the Movement for Social Justice (1911)," in *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. George Hunsinger (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 27, italics in original.