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**CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP TODAY: A STUDY OF
THE ETHICS OF THE KINGDOM IN
THE THEOLOGIES OF STANLEY HAUERWAS AND JON SOBRINO**

A THESIS PRESENTED BY

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TO

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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, it seeks to contend and illustrate the hermeneutical role of discipleship in theological reflection. Secondly, it seeks to examine and analyze the meaning of discipleship in terms of the ethical, missiological and theological dimensions. These are carried out through the study of the ethics of the Kingdom in the theologies of Stanley Hauerwas and Jon Sobrino. Hauerwas and Sobrino can be considered as representatives of two "movements" or "traditions". In short, Hauerwas represents the anabaptist [for example, Mennonite] tradition [although I am aware of his Methodist background], while Sobrino represents the tradition of Latin American liberation theology. Obviously, their insights and conclusions differ considerably. However, this study does not define one as right and the other as wrong. Rather they are seen to be different but complementary aspects of Christian discipleship.

Chapter one of this thesis is concerned about the agent of the Kingdom in terms of spirituality and ecclesiology. For Hauerwas, Christian spirituality is primarily about the imitation of Christ in terms of character, vision and virtue, with particular emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount, while for Sobrino, Christian spirituality is principally about following the historical Jesus in terms of liberation, with particular reference to the jubilee proclamation. This basic difference in orientation unavoidably results in their different understanding of the church. For Hauerwas, the church is an alternative society which emphasizes its internal life, while for Sobrino, the church is the church of the poor which emphasizes its external expression. However, the differences between Hauerwas and Sobrino have to be understood complementarily and dialectically. That is to say, first, Hauerwas and Sobrino illustrate that the Christian life has to be understood in terms of both *vita humana* and *actus humanus*. Secondly, they display two different possible and faithful options for the church to be a confessing church. Despite their differences, they unanimously agree that in order to be the faithful agent of the Kingdom, Christians have to take discipleship seriously.

Chapter two of this thesis discusses the theological use of model. In short, model refers to the means helping us to understand a subject, but it is not the subject itself. Although both Hauerwas and Sobrino do not particularly refer to the notion of model, Hauerwas' use of narrative and Sobrino's use of justice are examples of the use of the notion of model. For Hauerwas, individual human lives and traditions cannot be separated from the notion of narrative because of the narrative quality of human experience. In theological use, the notion of narrative emphasizes the internal history of the Christian community and the cultural-linguistic model of the Christian religion. For Sobrino, the notion of justice is central because it is a response to his socio-historical situation and Jesus is the liberator. Sobrino contends that Jesus reveals the way to the Father as the Son; so Christians have to practise justice in the light of Jesus in order to be the children of God. Apparently, Hauerwas and Sobrino are talking of two different things, but they have the same underlying working hypothesis, which is discipleship. Moreover, the notions of narrative and justice can be respectively understood as examples of the narrative and metaphorical use of the theological use of model. They are complementary because, put analogically, if the narrative use is like a melody, the metaphorical use then is like a chord. Without either of them, the music cannot be played.

Chapter three of this thesis examines the practice of the Kingdom. It asserts the primacy of praxis in theological reflection, provided that praxis is not understood as equivalent to pragmatism. Hauerwas' pacifism reveals his understanding of praxis in the context of the cultural-linguistic tradition. That is to say, Christian pacifism is solely built on its christological foundation and primarily addressed to the Christian community. Its strength is not to reduce the religious identity of a community to the general religious dimension of common human experience, but its weakness tends not to emphasize the need to explicate the public dimension of its religious identity. Sobrino's evangelization illustrates his understanding of praxis in the context of the Marxist tradition. In this tradition, evangelization is primarily understood as the transformation

of the sinful world. Its strength gives practice a very strong societal orientation, and provides a hermeneutical privilege, criterion and standpoint, by which one can test the interpretation of the Christian tradition. Its weakness is overshadowed by its socio-political relevance. Nevertheless, Hauerwas' and Sobrino's accounts help us to realize that the distinctiveness of the Christian identity and its social relevance are inter-related. Ignoring either of them distorts the Christian convictions.

The final chapter of this thesis attempts to summarize and reflect the result of the preceding studies about discipleship in terms of the ethical, missiological and theological dimensions. The ethical dimension of discipleship is concerned about a messianic lifestyle. It is a life of conversion, worshipping, following Jesus, being an alternative community and leading a life which brings transvaluation. The missiological dimension of discipleship relates to the promises of Jesus to be present in the apostolate, the sacrament and fellowship of Christians, in the "least of the brethren", and in his parousia. Finally, the theological dimension of discipleship emphasizes that theology is primarily a practical theology in terms of the centrality of praxis and a theology of, for, and by, the people.

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INTRODUCTION

As a Chinese Christian who both inherits the treasure of Confucianism¹ and is schooled by the Christian story, I am puzzled by the depiction and the adequacy of the philosophical [or metaphysical] illustration of Christian convictions which concentrates particularly on objectivity and reasoning. It is not because there is anything wrong with the philosophical depiction, but because it may tend to overlook the fact that the Christian faith is primarily a way of life rather than a system of thought. Therefore, no matter how impressive the philosophical depiction may be, its explanation is still incomplete. Besides, this tendency is damaging our understanding of Christian beliefs because it further disintegrates the relationship between faith and life, theology and life. Since the Christian faith is basically a life option, then any enquiry about the truth of the Christian faith which isolates it from Christian living is incompetent. My emphasis here has no intention to reduce the Christian faith to either a form of moralism or a form of pragmatism. Rather if the Christian faith primarily relates to a way of life, then a concern of the moral life of the agent cannot be separated from the exploration of Christian convictions.² Thus,

¹ Generally speaking, Confucianism in its philosophical form is basically moral-oriented. The great teachers of Confucianism are deified by people, and Confucianism thus becomes a quasi-religion. If it is a religion, it is a moralising religion.

² Jacques Ellul strongly contends that the Christian faith cannot be considered as an equivalent to morality because the call to follow Jesus is not a list of what to do or not to do. Rather "Jesus shows us fully what it means to be a free person with no morality, but simply obeying the ever-new Word of God as it flashes forth." He concludes that "the behaviour to which we are summoned surpasses morality, all morality, which is shown to be an obstacle to encounter with God." However, we have to note that Ellul's rejection of the moralistic interpretation of the Christian life does not mean that he considers the concern of the moral life of the agent in the Christian faith unnecessary. Rather what he rejects is a kind of moralism which is constructed to substitute our own will of good and evil for God's. See his books, To Will and To Do (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), The Subversion of Christianity (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1991), pp.69-94. Keith Ward argues that the Christian faith is related to morality, but he says that "a Christian system of ethics does not simply add new duties [towards God] to an established list of duties; nor does it simply give a distinctive set of duties [like

the truth of the Christian faith is not adequately explained in terms of philosophical statements or doctrines, but also needs illustration of what it really means in terms of Christian living and practice. Christian living and practice here is called discipleship. An emphasis on the importance of the Christian living in the Christian faith suggests that discipleship is the point of departure of understanding Christian convictions, and theological reflection has one way or another to inspire our commitment to God. In other words, discipleship can be said to be both the means and the "end" of theological reflection. It is the "end", not in terms of regarding discipleship as an end in itself and of theological reflection, but in that, through this process, discipleship becomes the means to communicate God's graciousness. Therefore, when I am speaking about discipleship as an "end", I mean also that it is a means, and vice versa. I will come back to this point when I discuss the relationship between discipleship and the Kingdom of God. However, I realize that to consider discipleship as the point of departure for understanding the Christian faith is less convincing than to suggest that theological reflection has to promote discipleship, because it is quite different from the Greek philosophical way of thinking which Western theology inherits.³ But I consider that to take discipleship as the point of departure of theological reflection is theologically valid and significant. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that "only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."⁴ Bonhoeffer's paradox challenges a partial view to the effect that obedience is primarily the consequence of belief. Ironically he affirmed that

agape]. It provides a different way of conceiving the nature of morality, what the moral life is, what it is to be moral. For the Christian the moral life is an exploration into God." [See Ethics and Christianity, London: Allen & Unwin, 1970, p.274]

³ For instance, in terms of theory and praxis, Greek philosophy emphasizes the primacy of theory, and regards praxis as something derived from theory.

⁴ D.Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (London: SCM, 1966), p.54.

for faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience.⁵

Bonhoeffer's paradox reminds us that the Christian faith is not simply an application of a theory [belief] to practice [obedience], but suggests that practice [obedience] plays a determinate role in theory [belief]. In other words, discipleship is not only a result or a criterion of believing, but also leads us to believe. Therefore, discipleship is a hermeneutical entry point into Christian convictions. This emphasis does not suggest ortho-praxis versus orthodoxy because discipleship is the concrete meaning of orthodoxy. Nor does it suggest works versus grace because discipleship is not an offer that a person makes to Christ, but it is the call which creates the situation. An emphasis on discipleship as an entry point of theological reflection is to state the fact that we cannot know Jesus unless we follow him. I consider that, only if we take this emphasis seriously enough, can we then better understand and display our Christian faith, because there are some truths in the Christian faith which can only be discerned by those who are the disciples of Jesus. Eduard Schweizer, after almost four hundred pages of careful exegesis of the Gospel of Mark, also concludes that "discipleship is the only form in which faith can exist."⁶ Perhaps my remarks here seem to re-open the old controversy between orthodoxy and pietism within the Lutheran tradition in the 17th century.⁷ To a certain extent I cannot deny it because pietism continually exerts its influence in different stages of church history. But my concern is slightly different. I am not seeking simply to explain the importance of the personal devotional life in the Christian faith. My concern is rather

⁵ Ibid., p.54.

⁶ E.Schweizer, The Good News According to the St.Mark (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p.386.

⁷ Briefly speaking, pietism is related to the belief of that the Christian faith is much more vital than the disquisitions of scholastic theologians or the speculations of philosophers because it has personal implications. It calls for "praxis pietatis", that is, to see the Christian faith demonstrated in the life of each individual as well as in the life of the church. See Kurt Aland, A History of Christianity, Vol.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress,1986), pp.234-265.

to reflect what discipleship means today in relation to the Christian life, its socio-historical situation and the way of doing theology, with reference to Stanley Hauerwas and Jon Sobrino. Put differently, my attempt is to explore the ethical, missiological and theological dimension of discipleship.

Among contemporary theological approaches, no one can deny that Latin American liberation theology takes discipleship seriously in its reflection. Unfortunately, contemporary scholarship often concentrates on its methodology, hermeneutical theory and political involvement [a typical example of the result of the "intellectualization" of theology] and as a result, it fails to appreciate the essence of liberation theology; that is, discipleship. Although I realize that to discuss the methodology of liberation theology and the motivations of liberation theologians should not be confused, they are inseparable because liberation theology is not a result of intellectual awakening, but rather a result of discipleship. Without recognizing this, the partiality and the political involvement of liberation theology would not be properly understood and sympathetically criticized. Jon Sobrino says that liberation theology is not an awakening from a dogmatic slumber, but from the sleep of inhumanity. He writes:

I was born in 1938 in Spain's Basque region, where I grew up. In 1957 I came to El Salvador as a novice in the Society of Jesus, and since then I have lived in this country with two notable interruptions.... When I arrived in El Salvador in 1957 I witnessed appalling poverty, but even though I saw it with my eyes, I did not really see it.... My vision of my task as a priest was a traditional one: I would help the Salvadorans to replace their popular "superstitious" religiosity with a more sophisticated kind, and I would help the Latin American branches of the church [the European church] to grow. I was the typical "missionary", full of good will and Eurocentricity-blind to reality.... Through one of those strange miracles [i.e. Vatican II] which happen in history I came to realize that while I had both 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..... That realization is what I experimented upon after returning to El Salvador in 1974. And I began, I believe, to awaken from the sleep of inhumanity..... But from the beginning it became quite clear that truth, love, faith, the gospel of Jesus, God, the very best we have as people of faith and as human beings- these were somehow to be found among the poor and in the cause of justice.⁸

Among the liberation theologians, I have chosen Jon Sobrino in this study simply because I am touched by the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero on March 24, 1980 and of six Salvadorean Jesuits on November 13, 1989.⁹ Sobrino escaped from the latter murder because, at that time, he was giving a short course on christology in Thailand. Sobrino's working context shows us that discipleship entails martyrdom. This inspires me to understand profoundly why Bonhoeffer said that "when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."¹⁰ Martyrdom is the essence of discipleship.¹¹

However, Latin American liberation theology is only one attempt to illustrate how Christian convictions are understood through discipleship. Although it is a concrete experience, it is still partial because it is overshadowed by its socio-political concern. Thus, in order to have a better understanding of discipleship as the hermeneutical entry point into Christian beliefs, we have to consider any other possible, or even contrasting, model. For this purpose, I find the work of Stanley Hauerwas very appropriate and relevant to my study. He is an American Methodist

⁸ J.Sobrino, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity." In: The Christian Century, April 3, 1991, pp.364-370.

⁹ See Romero: Martyr for Liberation (London: CHIR, 1982), and J.Sobrino, Companions of Jesus (London: CHIR, 1990).

¹⁰ D.Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p.79.

¹¹ The Greek word of witness is "martyria". For Jesus and the early church, witness was not in their successful preaching to the masses, neither in the sometimes overwhelmingly positive reaction to their miracles, but in their suffering and death that Jesus and the church became the true missionary.

but influenced by the Mennonite tradition. In a sense, his theological background represents the Puritan tradition. Throughout his writings, we easily come across his emphasis upon the importance of character, virtue and vision in Christian living. For him, truth has to be understood in relation to truthfulness. Otherwise, it is abstract or an ideology. But his emphasis has nothing to do with moralism. Rather he says that

while learning new approaches, I am still exploring how Christian convictions require moral display for understanding what we might mean to claim them as true. I also continue to believe that the virtues can help display those convictions.... I continue to be surprised by how this agenda has led me to appreciate the integrity of Christian discourse- that is, that Christian beliefs do not need translation but should be demonstrated through Christian practices.¹²

Hauerwas' theology does represent an important stream in contemporary Christian ethics which may not easily find an audience, especially given his view of ecclesiology, but no one can deny his seriousness and the challenge of his line of thought.

I have to admit that it is not an easy task to study both Stanley Hauerwas and Jon Sobrino together because they are so different. For instance, Hauerwas' approach is more philosophical and abstract, while Sobrino's approach is more practical and concrete; Hauerwas' religious tradition is Protestant, while Sobrino's is Roman Catholic; Hauerwas' working context is in the United States, while Sobrino's is in Latin America. These differences are sufficient to make my study hard to pursue. Despite these differences, I still discern that there is a common central theme running through their theologies. That is to say, they agree that the Christian faith has to be demonstrated through Christian practice in terms of both living under and witnessing to God's Kingdom. This common concern makes my study possible and valid, albeit

¹² S.Hauerwas, "The Testament of Friends." In: The Christian Century, February 28, 1990.

difficult.

The purpose of studying both Hauerwas and Sobrino together is twofold. Firstly, I attempt to make a contribution to current theological discussion about the relationship between faith and life by engaging in conversation with two Christian "traditions" and "movements". And the mutually enlightening interplay generated involves the inseparable facets of content and process in the theological task. Secondly, this study attempts to re-affirm a call to greater faithfulness in the direction of the Kingdom of God and in the light of the contours and challenges of the present historical situation.

Nevertheless, to study both Hauerwas and Sobrino together is not to define one as right and the other as wrong, but is rather to enrich both our understanding of discipleship as the hermeneutical entry point into Christian convictions, and also show that theological reflection has one way or another to promote discipleship. Therefore, this study is not primarily a comparative study between them. Rather through dialogue, discussion and exchange, their differences become complementary aspects of the truth. However, the aim is not simply to find a middle way between them, but rather to accept their differences, learn to live in diversity yet in unity, with patience and understanding. Besides, to contend that Christian beliefs should be demonstrated through Christian practice is not suggesting a kind of pragmatism. Effectiveness can never be the criterion of the truth. Rather discipleship is God's initiative, and through discipleship, we come to know Christ.

In this study, I will concentrate on discussing and examining the ethic of the Kingdom of God in Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theology simply because the theme of the Kingdom of God is central to them, and Christians are called to live under, and

witness to, God's Kingdom. However, my attention is not to explore the biblical exegesis of the Kingdom of God, but rather to reflect the significance of the Kingdom for the Christian life. Thus, the biblical exegesis of the theme of the Kingdom of God is assumed rather than analyzed. Contemporary approaches to biblical scholarship unanimously agree upon the centrality of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching and ministry. Jesus did not preach himself, but the Kingdom of God. More importantly, his praxis reveals what the Kingdom of God is, for he himself is the Kingdom.¹³ Nevertheless, regarding the Kingdom itself, Jesus' teaching and praxis show us that it refers not to a separate realm over which God rules, nor to the specific regime of God's rule, but to the anticipated fact of and partially accomplished his intervention on behalf of his people. Thus, the Kingdom of God means God's kingship, rule, administration, sovereignty and lordship. In the Old Testament, this meaning of the Kingdom of God is obvious. For instance, the Pentateuch and the historical and prophetic writings consider YHWH as the leader of his people in Ex.15; YHWH as the real king who relativizes earthly monarchy and leadership in Judg.8:22, 1Sam.8:4; YHWH as the Lord and shepherd of the people in Isa.6:5, Zeph.3:15. The Reign of God perhaps is a better expression than the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God has become a technical term in theology and religious language and a symbol so intimately related to Jesus' message that we cannot avoid it. Therefore, in the light of the Old Testament, and with the caution

¹³ It is Luke who gives us the consistent evidence of the christological proclamation of the early church; however, it also seems clear that for Luke apostolic preaching was none other than the announcement of the Kingdom of God. To be a witness of Jesus is to be a witness to the Kingdom of God (Lk.24:48; Acts 1:8). "To announce Jesus" and "to announce the Kingdom" are synonyms. This is why Lesslie Newbigin says that "what is new is that in Jesus the Kingdom is present. This is why the first generation of Christian preachers used a different language from the language of Jesus: he spoke about the Kingdom, they spoke about Jesus. They were bound to make this shift of language if they were to be faithful to the facts..... the Kingdom was no longer a distant hope or a faceless concept, it had now a name and a face- the name and the face of the man from Nazareth. In the New Testament we are dealing not just with the proclamation of the Kingdom but also with the presence of the Kingdom." (The Open Secret, London: SPCK, 1978, p.41) This was exactly what Origen meant when he called Christ the *autobasilea*: Christ himself is the Kingdom.

of not reducing it to the geographical connotations, the Kingdom of God is still found serviceable.

Nevertheless, both in Jesus' day and in the history of the church, the Kingdom of God has been mistaken by Jews and Christians respectively. Generally, there are three trends of misinterpretation. Firstly, in Jesus' day, the Kingdom of God was misunderstood in terms of the restoration of the national political theocracy in Israel. We find this idea of a restoration of the Kingdom of David in the Jewish apocrypha [Psalms of Solomon 5:18; 17:21-32; IV Ezra 13:35]. Understandably, it is the interpretation which the Jewish resistance movements (such as the Zealots) gave to the idea at the time of Greek and Roman domination. The use of violence to establish this kingdom of God was not ruled out. On the other hand, in the history of the church, this "realized eschatology" takes the form of human achievements in building up the Kingdom on earth. An example of this is the social gospel movement represented by Walter Rauschenbush. He considered that "the Kingdom of God is society organized according to the will of God."¹⁴

Secondly, in Jesus' day, the Kingdom of God was also misinterpreted as a transcendent eschatological and universal rule of God over all peoples. More or less in reaction to, or in frustration with the nationalist and political fighting for God's Kingdom, apocalyptic writers said that God himself would come on the day of the Lord. He would usher in a new paradise. This is the dominant thought pattern in the Qumran community. On the other hand, in the history of the church, this "future eschatology" appears more or less the same. We consistently come across that some churches in history which retreat and isolate themselves from society. They are only

¹⁴ W.Rauschenbush, The Theology of the Social Gospel (New York: Macmillan, 1922).

concerned with their own survival and salvation. In contemporary terms they are called sects.

Finally, in Jesus' day, the Kingdom of God was misrepresented as a hidden rule of God in human hearts. That was the view of the rabbis and Pharisees. This "malkut" YHWH became possible through faithful fulfilment of Torah and Halakah, law and tradition. Conversion, repentance and observance of the law made the rule of God in Israel possible again. They also hastened the universal lordship of God over all peoples who would accept belief in YHWH as the one God and thus took on themselves the yoke of the Kingdom of God [Matt.10:29f]. On the other hand, in the history of the church, this "individualistic eschatology" is found among those churches who believe that saving souls is the primary mission of the church. Their view is that the church does not need to participate in transforming the world, because the root of the problem of social injustice is personal sin. Therefore, personal conversion is the only way to experience the Kingdom on earth.

These three interpretations misunderstand the meaning of the Kingdom of God in different degrees. Basically, Hauerwas and Sobrino do not agree with any one of them. It is true that the New Testament talks of the Kingdom that is coming [Matt.7:10], and that is near [Mk.1:15], but it does not refer to a kingdom of God outside this world. On the contrary, in the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come" and "Thy will be done" stand side by side. Nevertheless, the Kingdom cannot be interpreted as a blueprint for social order or a result of human effort, because the Kingdom of God is always a gift of grace. The Kingdom is both God's initiative and human response to God's initiative involving a recognition of the sovereignty of the Kingdom over all lives. The Kingdom is always "already, not yet". Finally, as the Kingdom is addressed to both an individual and a community. Thus, going to either

of these extremes distorts the nature of the Kingdom.

With regard to the possible relationship between the Christian life and the Kingdom, Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that the Kingdom demands a serious consideration of discipleship, otherwise, the Kingdom becomes cheap grace. On the other hand, discipleship is the way to communicate the essence of the Kingdom because the Kingdom is concretized in the lives of its people. Here, the work by Bruce Chilton and J.I.H.McDonald can further clarify this point. In Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom¹⁵, they suggest an understanding of the Kingdom in terms of Jesus' parables because Jesus used parables to explain the mystery of the Kingdom. However, they draw our attention not to the content of parable, but rather to the use of parable. According to them, the telling of a parable is not simply to proclaim or explain a fact by means of discourse, but is rather intended to convey a point which is that those who hear the parables are invited to act on what they hear. In other words, the parable is not only to explain the truth, but also seeks to influence the hearer's attitude and behaviour. For instance, what happened to the prodigal is not only Jesus' story; the hearer is also invited to consider it as his/her own, and to act accordingly. Therefore, as conveyed in the parables, the Kingdom cannot be apprehended apart from action because a parable is told in expectation of the response of the hearers. Thus, the relationship between the Christian life and the Kingdom is that at one end there is the divine performance of the Kingdom, an inceptive reality which attracts hope. At the other end is human performance, an enacted response which itself elicits action. This is what we have called discipleship. However, Chilton and McDonald remind us that

discipleship is not the end of the Kingdom, whether it is viewed

¹⁵ Bruce Chilton and J.I.H.McDonald, Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom (London: SPCK, 1987), pp.1-47.

theologically or ethically; rather discipleship is the means by which the motifs and ethical themes of the Kingdom are communicated. For that reason, discipleship cannot be equated with the performance of the Kingdom. Disciples are certainly expected to perform it, in the two senses of conveying and enacting the Kingdom, but their function in preaching and healing, like Jesus' function, is to occasion the performance of the Kingdom among those to whom they are sent.¹⁶

Thus, their comment corresponds with my thesis; that is, discipleship is the hermeneutical entry point into the Christian faith.

Put differently and precisely, I consider that the correlation between the Kingdom of God and discipleship fundamentally relates to the missiological, ethical and theological dimensions. It has a missiological dimension because the Kingdom of God is about God's love for and his lordship over the world. Therefore, discipleship is nothing other than the proclaiming and acknowledging of God's lordship in order to inspire others to experience the love of God. It has an ethical dimension because the Kingdom of God signifies a new age, a new reality. Despite its eschatological nature, it is here and now, and challenges our contemporary life. Therefore, discipleship is nothing other than to live under the reign of God in terms of being conformed to the Kingdom's values so that the church can witness to the Kingdom. Finally, it has a theological dimension because it attempts to re-discover the meaning of the Kingdom of God [the central metaphor of the Christian faith] in terms of putting faith into practice rather than providing a philosophical explanation. These three dimensions penetrate into this study in different degrees at different stages. Nevertheless, these three dimensions are understood in the context of christology because Jesus is embodiment of the Kingdom and we are called to follow him. Without Christ, the Kingdom becomes nothing other than a secular political ideology, while without the Kingdom, Christ becomes nothing other than a private

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.42.

idol.

Although both Hauerwas and Sobrino primarily agree that the Christian life has to be oriented in the light of the Kingdom, they have different emphases. Sometimes their insights and conclusions differ considerably. In order to display their interpretations and assess their contributions, I will discuss the ethics of the Kingdom in four interrelated aspects. In chapter one, I will examine how the agent of the Kingdom is understood in terms of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's understanding of spirituality and ecclesiology. The former is the essence of the Christian life, while the latter suggests that although the Kingdom and the church are not identical, there is no separation of the Kingdom from the church because

it is the community which has begun to taste [even only in foretaste] the reality of the Kingdom which alone can provide the hermeneutic message..... Without the hermeneutic of such a living community, the message of the Kingdom can only become an ideology and a programme, it will not be a gospel.¹⁷

In chapter two, I will analyze the models of the Kingdom based on the discussion of the preceding chapter. "Model" here refers to the means helping us to understand a subject, but it is not the subject itself. My attention will concentrate on Hauerwas' model of narrative and Sobrino's model of justice. In chapter three, in the light of the explication of the preceding two chapters, I will discuss on the practice of the Kingdom in terms of the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion. Attention will be particularly given to Hauerwas' pacifism and Sobrino's evangelization. Finally, in chapter four, based on the preceding studies, I shall attempt to explore the meaning of the presence of the Kingdom in terms of how discipleship is understood and practised in the contemporary setting, on the one hand, and how discipleship challenges our way of doing theology, on the other.

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, Signs of the Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p.19.

CHAPTER ONE

THE AGENT OF THE KINGDOM

A. INTRODUCTION

The agent of the Kingdom is about the historical representation of the Kingdom of God: that is, to be God's historical agent in the ongoing work of salvation by being the continuation of Jesus' universal mission. The agent is not the Kingdom, but is its anticipation and its fragmentary realization. Biblically speaking, the historical representations of the Kingdom of God are an individual Christian and the church. They are not two different categories because an individual Christian finds his/her meaning of existence in the context of the church, and the church is a community of people who follow Christ. But at the same time, an individual Christian and the church are distinct because a Christian as an individual and the church as a corporate represent different levels of concern. Therefore, in the following, when I separately discuss the agent of the Kingdom in terms of an individual Christian and the church, I refer to their different levels of concern instead of their different purposes of existence.

The issue of the agent of the Kingdom relates to the matter of what the identity of the agent has to be in order to represent the Kingdom of God in history. I consider that this matter is primarily about discipleship because of Jesus' call to discipleship. Thus, on the level of an individual Christian, I will discuss the meaning of discipleship in terms of the concept of spirituality, and on the level of the church,

I will examine the meaning of discipleship in terms of the relationship between the church and the world. As said, these two levels are interrelated. If either one of them is ignored, the meaning of discipleship is incomplete because one way or another it interiorizes and socializes the Christian faith.

Spirituality is the essence of the Christian life because the Christian life is not just a group of ideas about how we might live, but about how we should live if we are to be faithful to God. Therefore, spirituality is concerned with the shaping and disciplining of our lives in accordance with the Kingdom's values. However, spirituality is often narrowly described as a state of being, frequently approached through "spiritual exercises" and acts of discipline that put people in touch with realities, or a Reality, not discernible in ordinary experience. As a result, this understanding compartmentalizes life into, [roughly], the sacred and the secular [the former being good and the latter evil]. An example of this is medieval mysticism. Thus, in order to rediscover the dynamic meaning of spirituality, we have to demythologize spirituality in two ways. Spirituality has to embrace both private and public character. Spirituality is not only concerned with the cultivation of the inner life of a person, but also this concern inevitably brings a person to be engaged in social practice. Christian Duquoc rightly remarks that

without the stress on the necessity of the private life and of the religious tolerance which was the condition for it, any attempt to reinterpret the meaning of the public character of the Christian faith would be doomed from the start. The aspect of private life, far from being an occasion of deviation or escapism, was in fact the necessary form of mediation for those theologies which now call themselves "political theologies" or "theologies of revolution".¹

Moreover, this understanding of spirituality is not confined only to the dimension of

¹ Christian Duquoc, "Spirituality: A Private or a Public Phenomenon?" In: Concillium, Vol.9, No.7 (London: Burns & Oates, 1971), p.16.

personal reflection, but also can be attained through social practice, namely, liberation. These two approaches can be seen as two ways of talking about the same thing, so that there is no necessity, or even possibility, of making a choice between them. Apart from this, the essence of spirituality is a concern of following Jesus because following Jesus is the way in which we learn to be faithful to God.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the concept of spirituality in Stanley Hauerwas' and Jon Sobrino's theology. Hauerwas and Sobrino represent two different emphases on and approaches to spirituality. In short, Hauerwas is more concerned with the private character of spirituality, while Sobrino is more concerned with the public character.² At the same time, their different emphases also relate to their different emphases on the practical meaning of following Jesus. For Hauerwas, following Jesus is primarily understood in the framework of the Sermon on the Mount, while for Sobrino, following Jesus is principally understood in the framework of Jesus' jubilee proclamation. These differences inevitably bring different orientations of their theological emphases.

In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss the church as the agent of the Kingdom. To consider the church as the agent of the Kingdom is to suggest that the Kingdom is not only the ultimate goal of the church, but also the Kingdom has been present at the church's origin, continuously motivating and animating its mission. It is the origin of the church because it has been anticipated in the history of Christ. It is the goal of the church because of the Christian hope for future consummation of the church's communion with Christ. On the other hand, to consider the church

² I admit that to a certain extent this distinction is problematic because a concern of private spirituality is not necessarily confined to private life, or a concern of public spirituality is not necessarily confined to public life. But for the sake of this study, this distinction is still useful, provided that this does not promote a dualism.

as the agent of the Kingdom signifies that the church is sent into the world. The church, the embodiment of the new being in a community, represents the Kingdom of God in history. Its representation defines how the church finds its profound meaning in its service for the world. In this part of the chapter, I will confine myself to the study about the relationship between the church and the world.

H.Richard Niebuhr's book Christ and Culture³ can be regarded as a classical text in dealing with the problem of the relationship between the church and the world. It is true that his typology should not be considered as perfect, but it cannot be denied that his typology helps to locate the basic issue of the relationship between the church and the world. In the light of Niebuhr's typology, Hauerwas' proposal of the church as alternative society can be negatively considered as a model of "Christ against culture", while Sobrino's proposal of the church of the poor can be negatively regarded as parallel to a model of "Christ in culture". Are these the correct understandings of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology? Can both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology also be seen as a model of "Christ- the transformer of culture"? Interestingly enough, both Hauerwas and Sobrino are criticized on grounds of sectarianism with different reasons.⁴ Even though Hauerwas and Sobrino have different emphases on the relationship between the church and the world, they endeavour to call the church back to be the true church of Christ; that is,

³ H.Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (London: Faber & Faber, 1952).

⁴ See Wilson D.Miscamble, "Sectarian Passivism?" In: Theology Today, XLIV, 1987, pp.69-77; and James Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation." In: Proceeding of the Catholic Theological Society, Vol.40, 1985, pp.83-94. Regarding Sobrino, put more precisely, he has not been condemned by the Vatican. However, if we see Sobrino to be in line with liberation theology as a whole, then his ecclesiology has to face the same fate and criticism as L.Boff. In September 1984, the Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology are signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, Perfect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was published. In this document, liberation theology was criticized. A direct consequence is that the ecclesial base communities in Latin America are suppressed. See W.E.Hewitt, Base Christian Communities and Social Changes in Brazil (University of Nebraska, 1991), pp.91-105.

being faithful to its calling in terms of bearing God's mission to the world. In what ways then, we are wondering, should a genuinely Christian community distinguish itself from the surrounding culture? In what ways should it identify with that world and share its life? Put briefly, what precisely does it mean to be "in" or "within" culture and loyal to the cause of Christ? These are all my concerns in the second part of this chapter.

B. AN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN AS AN AGENT

1. HAUERWAS' APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY

a. *Character, Vision and Virtue*

Study of character and virtue does not play a significant role in contemporary research in Christian ethics¹. This decline of interest can be explained as follows. Firstly, there is a remarkable change of understanding of ethics since the enlightenment. This change is caused by the importance attached by the enlightenment to upholding human reasoning. The "quest for the historical Jesus" is an excellent illustration of the impact of this movement on Christian theology. Any ethics which emphasizes character and virtue may then no longer be able to meet the challenge of the enlightenment because such an emphasis is considered subjective. Therefore, ethicists look for the so-called "standard account of morality" which stresses "value free", objectively and universally accessible. This shift continuously dominates contemporary Christian ethical thought. Secondly, since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a strong protest among Christians themselves against the privatization of the Christian faith. This protest demands the church to take up its social responsibility in order to fulfil its calling. Walter Rauschenbusch's "Social Gospel Movement" in the 1920s, Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian Realism", the World Christian Council's slogan of "the Church for Others", and contemporary political theologies are the typical outcomes of this protest. Consequently, a personal ethic is less favoured and sometimes even despised. Thirdly, there is a confusion between a study of character and virtue, and a return to moralism. In addition to the recent

¹ Basically, most of the theologians do regard a study of character and virtue as part of the discipline of Christian ethics, but they seldom include this in their works. Typical examples are Ronald H. Preston, The Future of Christian Ethics (London: SCM, 1987) and J. Philip Wogaman, A Christian Method of Moral Judgment (London: SCM, 1976). However, an exceptional case is the work done by Ian C.M. Fairweather and James I.H. McDonald, The Quest for Christian Ethics (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984).

renewal of fundamentalist theology, a study of character is often associated with the fundamentalist approach to ethics which emphasizes the moral behaviour of the converted. This makes a study of character less attractive and promising. Finally, sociologically speaking, the rise of "individualism" in contemporary society also makes no space for the study of character. Individualism is not only a matter of whether a person puts the good of the community above his/her own wishes and inclinations or not, but also, theologically, it pushes the Christian faith into the private domain. In other words, the Christian faith is treated as both private and individual. Any address to a level of such "intimacy" would be considered as a violation of one's individuality.²

Despite all these unfavourable conditions, theologians like Richard Niebuhr and James Gustafson still consider that a study of character (the self) is a promising way to approach Christian ethics.³ Among theologians, Hauerwas can be regarded as the spokesman of "an ethics of virtue or character" (if there is such a term). He intellectually displays the indispensability of the study of character in Christian ethics, and perspicaciously proposes a challenging approach to Christian ethics. Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue not only arouse ethical interest, but also are concerned with spirituality in the deepest sense because they point sharply to a person's innermost life, that is, *vita humana*. In this section, I will concentrate my study on Hauerwas' ideas of character, vision and virtue, and their significance.

Before embarking on the discussion of the concepts of character, vision and

² Also see Ian C.M.Fairweather and James I.H.McDonald, The Quest for Christian Ethics, pp.233-238. They discuss why the law model of Christian ethics is attractive and popular in Christian ethics.

³ See Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), and J.M.Gustafson, Christ and the Moral Life (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968).

virtue, there is a question which needs first to be clarified. That is to say, what are the inadequacies of the present ethical debates in which Hauerwas finds that an emphasis on character, vision and virtue is necessary and vital?

Fundamentally, the Christian life is one of being and doing. And Christian ethics then has to study both. A person needs to act from the right motive and to find the right content of actions in particular situations in terms of his/her fundamental beliefs and attitudes. Nevertheless, contemporary Christian ethics is more concerned with "what a person ought to do" rather than "what a person ought to be". The reasons for such an emphasis have already been explained above. Even the so-called new ethics, the Situation Ethics, suggested by Joseph Fletcher in the 1960s is also dominated by the concern of decision-making. Undoubtedly, an ethic which stresses decision-making is necessary and important simply because decision-making (choice) is part of the nature of being a human. Furthermore, an ethic concerned about "what a person ought to do" not only practically may solve the dilemma of a person's daily life, but also provides a simpler and clearer line for a person to take. However, according to Hauerwas⁴, the deficiency of the ethics of principle or obligation is that it treats ethics as equivalent to a matter of quandaries. It rules out the inseparable link between an act and an agent. Consequently, this ethics does nothing putting a person on the path towards being good because the morality of a person is assumed rather than analyzed. If ethics is concerned with both *vita humana* and *actus humanus*, then, for Hauerwas, an emphasis on character, vision and virtue is not an attempt to replace an ethic of obligation, but rather to see an ethics of obligation in an appropriate context. Hauerwas says that

neither the language of duty nor of virtue excludes the other on

⁴ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1977), pp.15-27 and The Peaceable Kingdom (London: SCM, 1982), pp.19-22.

principle, though often theoretical accounts fail to describe adequately the ways virtue and duty interrelate in our moral experience..... The recognition and performance of duty is made possible because we are virtuous, and a person of virtue is dutiful because not to be so is to be less than virtuous.⁵

Before turning to see in what ways an ethic of virtue may supplement the inadequacies of an ethic of obligation, we have first to discuss Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue.

Character is defined by Hauerwas as the "qualification or determination of our self-agency, formed by our having certain intentions rather than others."⁶ It suggests that a person is not only accountable for his/her specific actions, but also for what he/she has become and is becoming. Hauerwas makes a very detailed and precise distinction among "having a character-trait", "being a type or kind of character", "being a character" and "having character".⁷ The first three more or less refer to a distinctive manner of carrying out certain activities like virtues which do not necessarily point to a whole person, while having character is concerned with an orientation of and direction to life. It links up integrity, incorruptibility and consistency instead of some particular virtues like courage and prudence. A person who has it is not credited with any definite traits, but the claim is made that whatever traits he/she exhibits, there will be some sort of control and consistency in the manner in which he/she exhibits them. Thus, the relationship between the first three and having character is that the various virtues receive their particular form through the agent's character.

⁵ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.114.

⁶ S.Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1985), p.115.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.14-18.

The ethical significance of character is to suggest that a person's moral life is neither wholly determined by his/her social and cultural factors nor limited to non-reflective accommodation to the good, but rather he/she is actively and consciously responsible for his/her moral life. Therefore, having character requires cultivation. However, Hauerwas reminds us that acquiring character is not an end in itself because "the moral importance of the idea of character is not that good men think a great deal about acquiring and having character; rather it is that the concerns represented by the idea of character play an essential part in their being good men."⁸

Hauerwas' concept of character does create a new challenge to contemporary Christian ethical thoughts. However, to what extent does his suggestion come closer to the philosophical idea of "will"? Is character just like a new brand of the same wine of the concept of "will"? In order to discuss this, I refer to Kant's understanding of will. For him, will is nothing but practical reason, and this practical reason is the ability to act in accordance with laws. The essence of morality is a good will, and consistency with this. But when Kant comes to define virtue, this turns out to be "moral disposition in conflict". By this he means the disposition to act for the sake of duty when there is a conflict with one's inclinations. Humankind only has moral worth when people act simply on the principle that a course of action is the right thing to do. If they act as they should because they have an inclination so to act, while this in no way makes the act wrong, it means that the action has no moral worth.⁹ Apparently, Hauerwas' idea of character and Kant's idea of will are not the same. The former is talking about disposition, while the latter is talking about choice. However, the ideas of character and will do not necessarily exclude

⁸ S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue (Notre Dame: Fides, 1974), p.66.

⁹ Michael J.Langford, The Good and the True (London: SCM, 1985), pp.168-173.

one another because the idea of character has to include the general ability to will to do what is right, and the idea of will is something that arises in the very having and exercising of the virtues. Thus, the concept of character is to describe the goal which a person is to be, while the idea of will refers to the process of having character. This relationship will be clear when we discuss Hauerwas' other two concepts, namely, vision and virtue.

Indebted to Iris Murdoch¹⁰, Hauerwas considers that the moral life is not only about "thinking clearly and making rational choice, [but also] is a way of seeing the world."¹¹ That is to say, a person's actions are based on his/her vision of what is most real and valuable because his/her vision determines what features of the world he/she will notice and what features he/she will fail to notice. In other words, vision governs the choices that will confront him/her and those that will not.¹² Therefore, the ethical significance of vision is to generate a person's ability to see reality as it is. Is then vision to be understood as a synonym of world view? Thomas Luckmann, a sociologist, defines the world view as a historical reality that circumscribes a range of meaningful experiences for the individual. It determines a person's orientation in the world and exerts an influence upon the conduct of a person that is as profound as it is taken for granted and therefore, unnoticed.¹³ Obviously, this is not Hauerwas' understanding of vision because the world view is

¹⁰ I.Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality." In: Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. Ian Ramsey (London: SCM, 1966), pp.195-218, and S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, pp.30-47.

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, p.36.

¹² Hauerwas uses the Albert Speer's experience to illustrate that Speer, Hitler's architect and minister of armaments, was occupied by the advance of his own career as an architect, but failed to see the true significance of his work for Hitler. Detail see S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, pp.82-98.

¹³ T.Luckmann, The Invisible Religion (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), pp.51-55.

concerned with factors determining a person's vision, while vision is concerned with the ability to see the reality (but it cannot be denied that the concept of world view does provide us with a better knowledge of how a person's vision is formed). However, the notion of discernment displayed by James M. Gustafson may help us to clarify Hauerwas' view of vision.¹⁴ Discernment, according to Gustafson, "is simply to notice it, to see it, in another sense we reserve the word for a quality of perception, of discrimination, of observation and judgment."¹⁵ He goes on to say that discernment is, firstly, not mechanically applied to a scheme of analysis of whatever a person observes; secondly, not a deductive logic so that a person can move from the universal to the particular; thirdly, not a skill in accumulating the relevant information pertaining to a subject; and finally, not an emotive reaction to a subject. Rather it "is a reading of what actually is the case at hand."¹⁶ For Hauerwas, it is this other than rational aspect of selfhood that partially determines perspective, partially determines what is seen and accented, partially determines what is judged to be right and wrong, and thus what a person will do. However, a person's vision reflects what his/her character is. Vision and character are interrelated. Hauerwas considers that "we can only act in the world we see, a seeing partially determined by the kind of beings we have become through the stories we have learned and embodied in our life plan."¹⁷

Unlike Murdoch, Hauerwas does not believe that a right vision of life would be fully gained by human effort because we cannot see the world rightly unless we

¹⁴ J.M. Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life." In: Norm and Context in Christian Ethics, ed. Gene Outka (London: SCM, 1969), pp.17-36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁷ S. Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, p.69.

are changed, for as sinners we do not wish to see truthfully.¹⁸ In other words, "conversion" is the starting point of having a right vision. Besides, acquiring a right vision is not merely a matter of looking, but rather is to develop disciplined skills through imitation within a community, the church, that attempts to live faithfully to the story of God. I will explicate this when I talk about the church in next section.

Before moving on Hauerwas' final concept, virtue, it is important to note that in his later stage of writings (late 1970s onward) Hauerwas has gradually replaced the word vision by "narrative". This shift can be explained in this way. Vision itself is a concept to describe a reality how a person sees and interprets the world differently. But it does not have a capacity to explain how a person's vision is formed. Ironically, the concept of narrative can achieve this task. Such a shift does not suggest that the concept of vision no longer plays a significant role in Hauerwas' theology. Rather in the light of narrative, the concept of vision is better formulated and strengthened. This will be discussed in the chapter two of this thesis.

Hauerwas makes a very clear distinction between virtue and virtues. According to him, virtue is understood in the sense of character which is the stance of the self that co-ordinates or embodies the virtues in a manner that makes them virtues. On the other hand, virtues are

specific dispositions determined by the need to correct certain deficiencies, for the formation of the passions, as skills internal to activities or practices, or as necessary for the performances of certain roles or offices.¹⁹

In this short and precise definition, Hauerwas suggests that virtues, firstly, are trained

¹⁸ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, pp.29-30.

¹⁹ S.Hauerwas, "Virtue." In: A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed. J.Macquarrie (London: SCM, 1986), p.649.

skills of a person enabling him/her to act one way rather than other; secondly, virtues are trained interests and commitments for a way of life; and finally, virtues are habitual skill of behaviour that are under the control of the agent because they have been formed through the practical intelligence. Does Hauerwas' view of virtue suggest the unity of virtues (the diversity in unity) or an independent virtue as a result of the exercise of practical reason? For Hauerwas, virtues are primarily directed by a person's character. Although there will be differences among particular virtues, in fact the differences are not essential because all are reducible to the development of a person's character. Therefore, virtue should be understood collectively and mutually. Otherwise, it separates itself from the concept of character. Nevertheless, this understanding should not be set against the emphasis on the cultivation of one particular virtue like hope. One important point I would like to make is that in Hauerwas' later writings, we find that Hauerwas talks about virtues in more concrete terms, such as, hope, patience, friendship and peace. The reason is probably that he no longer needs to contend how an ethic of virtue is valid, but to illustrate what it involves.

In summary, virtue, vision and character are closely related. Virtue(s) affects vision, and contributes to character which in turn affects vision. But it is also the case that vision affects character. Vision in this way moulds the further history of the self and thus affects the further development of character. Finally, virtue(s) takes its concrete form under the direction of vision and character. No matter how and to what extent each affects the other, they are concerned with a person's growth into maturity because the moral life is not simply a matter of decision governed by publicly defensible principles and rules.

Now, it is time to evaluate in what ways an ethic of virtue or character can

supplement the inadequacies of an ethic of principle. Firstly, according to Hauerwas, an ethic of virtue considers the agent as a responsible person instead of a passive person in doing what is good. He/she acts not through conformity to some moral norm or norms imposed upon him/her from outside, but through inward assent to what he/she does, so that the whole person is involved. It is because the call to faith is a call to make free, responsible decisions instead of blind obedience. Thus, the foundation of Christian ethics is not a moral code based on the Sermon on the Mount or the Decalogue, but a response to what God has done and is doing for all humankind. In relation to this, H. Richard Niebuhr rightly said that

deontology tries to answer the moral query by asking, first of all: "What is the law and what is the first law of my life?" Responsibility, however, proceeds in every moment of decision and choice to inquire: "What is going on?" If we use value term, then the differences among the three approaches may be indicated by the terms, the good, the right and the fitting; for teleology is concerned always with the highest good to which it subordinates the right; consistent deontology is concerned with the right, no matter what may happen to our goods; but for the ethics of responsibility the fitting action, the one that fits into a total interaction as response and as anticipation of further response, is alone conducive to the good and alone is right.²⁰

Secondly, an ethic of virtue considers that if the agent is an actor, then his/her response is not a matter of always accepting the situation as it is and acting in it, but rather sometimes the situation can and has to be changed. This emphasis suggests that an event may evoke a response whereby on the one hand, the self is given a new direction, and on the other, a person may change the reality of the situation by interpreting it differently. This insight eliminates any tendency to reduce ethics simply to a matter of quandaries, for it involves a change of the agent and the situation. Finally and obviously, Hauerwas' ethic of virtue is concerned with the personal, but personal is not identical with the private. That is to say, an ethic of virtue does not necessarily promote any tendency of the privatization of the Christian

²⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p.20.

faith. Rather it considers that the person whom God addresses becomes a person in his/her relation with others and with God. However, Hauerwas' account deliberately leaves out the social dimension of an ethic of virtue which makes it difficult to find followers.²¹ What I mean is that if Hauerwas further develops the personal dimension of his account of an ethic of virtue, this enables us to talk about what hinders the growth of persons, what poisons human relations, and what fails to promote human and personal relationships. Then we shall talk about what social and political structures deny human freedom and inhibit our fulfilment as persons, what structures alienate us from our humanity and prevent the emergence of the new humanity.

John Macquarrie considers that "fundamentally spirituality has to do with becoming a person in the fullest sense."²² This fullness of a person is not understood in the sense of the glorification of human greatness; on the contrary, it is understood in the light of attaining a being more nearly conformed to the image of God. To a large extent, Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue are aiming at this. In the light of these concepts, the fullness of a person is to be a person of integrity; that is, unity between one's being and one's action. Also, the fullness of a person is characterized by his/her growing nature. This is what Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue intend to explain. Finally, the fullness of a person points to something and someone going beyond oneself. This fullness is not achieved by self-determination, but rather by self-renunciation; and not for the sake of self-glorification, but for the glory of God. This is the idea of the

²¹ For Hauerwas, the Christian faith is never a privatized faith which will be clear later in this thesis. It seems to me that he does not explore the social dimension of his ethic of virtue because he confines himself to the philosophical clarification.

²² J. Macquarrie, Paths in Spirituality (London: SCM, 1972), p.40.

imitation of Christ which I am going to develop in next section.

b. *The Imitation of Christ*

In his book, The Peaceable Kingdom, Hauerwas points out that his emphases on the concepts of character, vision and virtue are to establish a framework that can help us understand the moral significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.¹ That is to say, the moral significance of Jesus' life regards any separation of Jesus' person from his teaching as morally unwarranted because one's doing cannot be separated from one's being. Also, this emphasis considers that our character and vision are to be conformed to Jesus' life as well as Jesus' teaching. Hauerwas illustrates this relationship as follows:

there is a crucial difference between having our character formed to obey the law and in living accordance with God's work in Jesus Christ. We do not normally think of obeying the law as the central aspect of our character's formation, whereas we have seen that to be sanctified is to have one's most fundamental orientation determined by Jesus as Christ. One does not feel the compulsion or need to bring every aspect of our experience under the idea of obeying the law, for we know that there simply are large areas of our life in which such a concern is inappropriate or it may even be necessary, for a morally significant reason, to disobey the law. To "obey the law" is not normally thought of as a description of a "way of life". Yet to be formed in Christ, to be sanctified, is to be committed to bringing every element of our character into relation with this dominant orientation. This is our integrity, when everything that we believe, do or do not do, has been brought under the dominion of our primary loyalty to God.²

Therefore, in Christian terms, having character fundamentally relates to following Jesus. Nevertheless, for Hauerwas, following Jesus is not only concerned with its moral relevance to the agent, but is also the key to knowing who Jesus is.

Interestingly enough, Hauerwas understands following Jesus in terms of the imitation of Christ. Through an analogy of learning how to lay bricks, Hauerwas

¹ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom (London: SCM, 1983), p.72.

² S.Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, pp.222-223.

suggests that the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is a relationship between the master and apprentices.³ The apprentices need someone to follow, imitate and copy. Thus, Hauerwas says that

a person becomes just by imitating just persons. One way of teaching good habits is by watching good people, learning the moves, and imitating the way they related to the world.⁴

Nevertheless, when Hauerwas considers that following Jesus is a matter of the imitation of Christ, it does not mean copying Jesus' life point by point. Rather it means that we can only be virtuous by doing what virtuous people do in the manner that they do it. Therefore, in Hauerwas' usage, an emphasis on the imitation of Christ is not understood just in the minimal sense that Christians are to reproduce in themselves those values which Jesus realized, but in the stronger sense that it is only by reflection on the life of Jesus that they themselves are able to discern what the appropriate response to the moral demand is like. Moreover, the imitation of Christ is neither taking Christ to be essentially the teacher of a pious and good life, nor regarding the imitation of Christ as instruction in the way in which a pious and good life is to be attained. Rather, to have one's character determined by Christ is to have acquired an orientation that gives one direction in such a way that one is not dependent on the world's set pattern and values, but in accordance with the Kingdom's values. James Gustafson describes this as such:

³ See S.Hauerwas, After Christendom (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), chapter 4.

Hauerwas writes that "to learn to lay bricks, it is not sufficient for you to be told how to do it, but you must learn a multitude of skills that are co-ordinated into the activity of laying brick- that is why before you lay brick you must learn to mix the mortar, build scaffolds, joint and so on. Moreover, it is not enough to be told how to hold a trowel, how to spread mortar, or how to frog the mortar, but in order to lay brick you must hour after hour, day after day, lay brick..... All of this indicates that to lay brick you must be initiated into the craft of bricklaying by a master craftsman..... When the moral life is viewed through the analogy of the craft, we see why we need a teacher to actualize our potential..... I am not suggesting that we ought to think about becoming moral as an analogy to learning how to be a bricklayer, potter, or teacher. Rather I am suggesting that learning to lay brick constitutes contexts in which we receive our most decisive moral training."

⁴ S.Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), p.110.

Christ, as a norm brought to bear, does, can and ought to illuminate the options and deeply condition the choice of the Christian. The figure of Christ given in the New Testament with all of its descriptions and theological diversity and the teachings attributed to him provide Christians with a source of illumination and a criterion of judgment, for in him there is an integrity of trust in, and loyalty to, God, and words and deeds directed towards men.⁵

For Hauerwas, the word "imitation" is particularly important because by learning to imitate Jesus, Christians learn how to imitate God and be heirs of the Kingdom. What then is Jesus' life? Or who is Jesus? Before embarking on this subject, it is necessary to explicate Hauerwas' working hypotheses. Firstly, he considers that people cannot know Jesus without following Jesus. People follow Jesus before they know Jesus.⁶ Hauerwas continues to say that

there is no "real Jesus" except as he is known through the kind of life he demanded of his disciples..... The demands for "historical accuracy" is ahistorical insofar as the Gospels exhibit why the story of this man [Jesus] is inseparable from how that story teaches us to follow him. As the Gospels show, only because the disciples had first followed Jesus to Jerusalem were they able to understand the significance of the resurrection.⁷

An emphasis on following Jesus as the key to know who Jesus is does not intend to ignore the modern historical criticism on the Gospels, but rather accepts a fact that, as the writers of the Gospels were not trying to write an "objective history" of Jesus, what we need is to have an alternative hermeneutical principle- following Jesus- in order to establish Jesus' nature and significance. Secondly, Hauerwas considers that the story of Jesus is a social ethic rather than that Jesus has a social ethic.⁸ The

⁵ J.M.Gustafson, Christ and the Moral Life (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), pp.268-269.

⁶ S.Hauerwas & William H.Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.55.

⁷ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, pp.41-42.

⁸ Ibid., pp.36-44.

difference between them is that the former suggests that any adequate christology must be political in its beginning, not just in the end, while the latter intends to deduce the social ethical implication from christology because it distinguishes between the Jesus of history and the Christ of dogma. To see that Jesus is a social ethic is to consider that there is no moral point or message that is separable from the story of Jesus because Jesus himself is an ethic. These two hypotheses are obviously interrelated. Following Jesus means to see that Jesus' life is a social ethic, and to consider that Jesus as a social ethic demands his disciples to follow him.

Recent scholarship points out that Jesus' teaching was not first of all focussed on his own status, but on the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Thus, Jesus did not direct attention to himself, but through his teaching, healings and miracles tried to indicate the nature and immediacy of God's Kingdom. In other words, the Kingdom of God can be grasped only by recognizing how Jesus exemplified in his life the standards of that Kingdom. To follow Jesus then is not the end in itself, but rather it is to put one in the position of being part of the Kingdom.

For Hauerwas, the indivisible relationship between Jesus and the Kingdom signifies that the Kingdom of God is fulfilled in Jesus' life eschatologically. That is to say, the proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God, its presence, and its future coming is fundamentally a claim about how God rules and the establishment of that rule through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Hauerwas writes that

the Gospels portray Jesus not only offering the possibility of achieving what were heretofore thought to be impossible ethical ideals. He actually proclaims and embodies a way of life that God has made possible here and now.⁹

However, Hauerwas' interpretation of Jesus primarily focuses on Jesus' lifestyle of

⁹ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.83.

non-violence, "peaceableness" and forgiveness instead of his denunciation of injustice. For Hauerwas, this does not mean that the latter is unimportant, but rather God's Kingdom will not have peace through coercion. Besides, to understand Jesus' life as non-violence, "peaceableness" and forgiveness does not necessarily mean that Jesus promotes a passive and inward-looking lifestyle, unless our understanding of social ethics determines whether or how Jesus is understood. On the contrary, Jesus' openness to the "unclean" reveals that God's kingship and power consists not in coercion, but in God's willingness to forgive and have mercy on humans. It is true that Jesus' non-violence and "peaceableness" do not necessarily bring great social effectiveness. It even cost his life. Nevertheless, Jesus' death was not a mistake but was what was to be expected of a violent world which did not believe that this is God's world. Thus, for Jesus' disciples, to use violence with violence is not their option.¹⁰ The resurrection of Jesus affirms that the "Way" of Jesus is the "Way" of God. Thus, for Hauerwas, "the Sermon [on the Mount] is but the form of his [Jesus]' life, and his life, death and resurrection is the prism through which the Sermon is to be interpreted."¹¹ Therefore, for Christians, if Jesus' life is integral to the meaning, content and possibility of the Kingdom, then the possibility of living a life of forgiveness and peace with one's enemies is based on the confidence that the Kingdom has become a reality through the life and work of Jesus. Christians are not to accept the world with its hatred and resentments as a given, but to recognize that they live in a new age which makes possible a new way of life. This is the eschatological dimension of the meaning of the imitation of Christ. In other words, the imitation of Christ is not first of all an ethical issue, but is eschatologically oriented, that is, learning to be agents of God's new creation. Thus, the imitation of

¹⁰ See my later discussion on pacifism in chapter three.

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, "The Sermon on the Mount, Just War and the Quest for Peace. " In: Concilium, 1988, vol.195, p.38.

Christ is marked by the transformation of a person's life-orientation [character] and the recontextualization of his/her relationships [vision]. Jesus' call to discipleship recontextualizes persons into a new frame of meaning. It is not the provision of a new world but a new way of being in the old one, a transformation of the old world by giving it new meaning. In the consciousness of properly responding persons, the world is recontextualized in an overarching framework of relation to God. The world has remained objectively the same but is transformed in their subjectivities because it is no longer the same in the eyes of believers. They have a new vision of life. They are the eschatological people. Therefore, the Sermon on the Mount does not appear impossible to a people who have been called to a life of discipleship that requires them to contemplate their death in the light of the cross.

Here, I consider that the Sermon on the Mount is Hauerwas' point of departure to understand the life of Jesus and the meaning of the imitation of Christ. The relationship is that the Sermon is not first of all about what Christians are supposed to do rather than a picture of who God is, as revealed in the life of Jesus. Besides, the basis for the ethic of the Sermon is not what works, but rather the things are. Therefore, "cheek-turning" is not advocated as what works, but advocated because this is the way God is. Then, for instance, when Christians seek reconciliation with the neighbour, not because they will feel so much better afterward, but because reconciliation is what God is doing in the world in Christ.

Apart from this, I have also pointed out that the Sermon is eschatological in nature. For Hauerwas, the Sermon marks the boundary between Christians and the world. It is not because Christians are those who need to be different, but because the Sermon makes them different. However, Hauerwas emphasizes that the Sermon is not primarily addressed to individuals, but has to be understood in the context of

a community.¹² His argument is that all ethics arise out of a tradition that depicts the way the world works, what is real, what is worth having, worth believing. Tradition is a function and a product of a community. Therefore, according to Hauerwas, all ethics make sense only when embodied in sets of social practices that constitute a community. Such communities support a sense of right and wrong.¹³ In relation to the Sermon, the Sermon cannot be divorced from its ecclesial context. Otherwise, it turns the Sermon into a new law with endless legalistic variations. Rather in an ecclesial context, the Sermon does involve individual transformation, not as a subjective, inner, personal experience. Instead the work of a transformed people have adopted, disciplined and enabled us to be transformed. Thus, it is wrong to contend that the Sermon can only apply most directly to the individual or relations between two persons because it is not intended for individuals. It is concerned about the formation of a visible, practical, Christian community. Nevertheless, Hauerwas adds that

Christian community, life in the colony, is not primarily about togetherness. It is about the way of Jesus Christ with those whom he calls to himself. It is about disciplining our wants and needs in congruence with a true story, which gives us the resources to lead faithful lives. In living out the story together, togetherness happens, but only as a by-product of the main project of trying to be faithful to Jesus.¹⁴

Thus, there is nothing private in the demands of the Sermon. Rather it is very public, very political and very social in that Christians can witness to the world.

In summary, the imitation of Christ involves the total re-orientation of a person's vision, life and character. At the same time, the concepts of character,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ S.Hauerwas & William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.79.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.78.

vision and virtue need the idea of the imitation of Christ to put them on the right direction. Otherwise, these concepts are simply self-interest exercises in which nothing would have to be given up for the sake of the Gospel because the cause of the Gospel would be identified with the power of each individual believer to achieve heaven on his/her own resources, and therefore for him/her. Thus, the concepts of character, vision and virtue and the idea of the imitation of Christ are mutually supportive and informative. Hauerwas' effort can be best summarised in his following conviction:

For the Christian, morality is not chosen and then confirmed by the example of others; instead, we learn what the moral life entails by imitating another The problem lies not in knowing what we must do, but how we are to do it. And the how is learned by watching and following.¹⁵

¹⁵ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, pp.130-131.

C. *An Appraisal*

Basically, spirituality is not simply concerned with an emotional experience of God's mystery, but is concerned with the moral life of the agent in terms of how he/she is to be faithful to God. Put differently, spirituality is more associated with the idea of sanctification rather than mysticism. This understanding has no tendency to neglect the transcendental dimension of human life. Nor does it have any inclination to suggest that sanctification is a moderate or well-rounded development of all human capacities. Rather sanctification is to begin wholly outside ordinary human nature itself and from beyond a person's general experience of moments of self-realization. It can come only as a gift. Yet the Gospel is not only a gift but also a task to be undertaken and worked out in and through every aspect of a person's life. In short, the relationship between justification and sanctification is that justification is about the objective act of God for humankind, while sanctification is about the subjective effect that it has for the believer. Despite their relatedness, justification and sanctification cannot be confused because

justification is a necessary aspect of sanctification in order that "Christ for us" is kept at the center of the Christian life. This emphasis always erects a permanent barrier to any attempt to interpret the Christian life in a moralistic fashion. Sanctification must be equally emphasized, however, to prevent understanding Christ's work in a way that separates it from the effect it has on the believer. This is what prevents the Christian life from being reduced to an intellectual adherence to certain beliefs.... The justified Christian must be the Christian that produces good works.¹

Sanctification then is not a recommended ethical programme of good dispositions and actions but rather the effect of the conformation of the self to God's act. In other words, the Christian life is not primarily a task to be accomplished or an ideal to be achieved, but rather is a fact to be lived out- the fact of God's establishment of his

¹ S.Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, p.188.

rule in Jesus Christ. It is about the necessity of continued growth in the Christian life. Here, I find Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue, and his account of the imitation of Christ relevant because these concepts are intended to display what sanctification is and involves. In the following, I will illustrate and evaluate how these concepts help us to understand spirituality in terms of sanctification. Obviously, Hauerwas' interest in the moral significance of Christian convictions relates to his theological tradition, Methodism.²

Firstly, Hauerwas' concept of vision helps us to understand that sanctification is not simply understood as a contrast with the past, but rather more positively is understood as an attainment of a right vision. This is about the re-orientation of values. It means that the agent's way of seeing and interpreting the world is transformed or reoriented around his/her construing belief in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This can be considered as an ethical implication of justification by faith. For Hauerwas, the most basic element of the moral life is to have a right vision to see things properly because vision relates to the whole direction and orientation of a person's life. It chooses and interprets what he/she sees. Hauerwas uses the story of Albert Speer to illustrate the importance of vision in our moral life.³ In the 1930s, Speer accepted Hitler's invitation to be the Minister of Armaments, not because he found himself dedicated to Nazism, but because he considered that it was a career for an architect. That is to say, Hitler offered him hope, a vision, and a story of a country which would again ask its architects to raise up public buildings. What Hitler offered Speer is what every professional dreams of, the opportunity to make his wildest ambitions come true. Speer cared nothing for

² S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.xx.

³ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, pp.82-98. Also see Malcolm Little, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

politics. Even when he became Minister of Armaments, Speer continued to think of himself primarily as an architect. The reorganisation of German industry to serve the end of the war was a creative technological task with which he could readily identify. This new position was a natural extension of the skills learned from his architectural training. He never considered that this would bring disaster to human history. Neither would he be convinced that he was working for war. Speer's experience tells us how a person's vision may determine his/her interpretation of reality. Vision is not a neutral way of seeing or describing something, but rather it itself carries its own value and judgment. Therefore, what a person needs is a vision which can help him/her to see and face the reality as it is, and orientate his/her life in the right direction. If we apply this understanding to the context of Christian experience of sanctification, then sanctification is to recapitulate and transform the basic orientation of a person who has been against God: once a sinner, he/she is now committing himself/herself totally to the love of God. Sanctification then not only relates to a matter of behaviour, but also relates to a matter of value.

Secondly, Hauerwas' concept of virtue helps us to distinguish the relationship between justification and sanctification in terms of transformation and formation. By transformation, I mean that it is a total personal revolution. It begins with repentance and proceeds eventually to the desired dissolution of all that ordinary people ordinarily value in themselves or others. The result of this dissolution is the birth of the whole human being. It takes place in Christ, and nowhere else. It is what we call being "born again". It is faith that saves, trust in Christ's redeeming act that makes a Christian, and no human ethical achievements are relevant. Generally speaking, this is what justification by faith is about. By formation, I mean that it is a process to help people to understand themselves and each other and the world they share, to adjust themselves to both without either undue aggressiveness or frightened

conformity, and so to form satisfying and stable emotional and social relationships. In order to achieve this, one has to have virtues which are the result of discipline. This is what sanctification is concerned. Although transformation and formation have different concerns and emphases, they cannot be separated, because transformation cannot be completed without formation, and formation cannot be possible without being transformed. Transformation affirms the grace of God and rejects any tendency of self-righteousness, while formation affirms the preciousness of the grace of God which cannot be taken for granted. Regarding formation itself, Hauerwas' concept of virtue reminds us that sanctification has to be understood not only as a tendency but also as a capacity. That is to say, a transformed life is not only a life inclining to be good, but also it has the capacity to be good. This capacity is about moral competency which is learned, acquired and developed on the basis of performed skill. To acquire and maintain a competency is to exercise repeatedly a particular pattern of movement. In terms of virtue, this means that the agent must sometimes overcome slothful inertia in regard to his/her value orientation through his/her emotions. He/she must also often master the potentially disabling emotional conflicts he/she experiences with his/her own value orientation through his/her moral competencies. This is how virtue is formed and what it is about. Besides, to see sanctification as a formation is to consider that sanctification is both a present reality and an unfulfilled promise. For believers, sanctification is an ongoing, continuous process begun but never completed in this life.

Finally, Hauerwas' concept of character helps us to understand that sanctification is about the unification of the divided self. By the divided self, I mean a dissociated personality. It does not suggest that the dimension of the self in persons who have clinically definable mental illness in the strict medical use of this term. But rather these persons are caught between the poles of several dilemmas that pull

them in different directions. In terms of character, Hauerwas points out that this is inconsistent; such as, one time acting to gain money and the other time to be fair. Such inconsistency does not mean that one does not have character, but it does mean that there are inconsistent elements in the character one has; or that one's character is determined primarily in view of expedience and accommodation. For Hauerwas, sanctification has to link up something like integrity and consistency. Integrity and consistency are those qualities that allow the re-affirmation of the unity of the self across and through many different loyalties and actions. Therefore, sanctification is about a confrontation with a person's dissociated personality in order that he/she can have character. There are so many aspects of a person's dissociated personality that it is unrealistic to name them all. However, Jesus himself does highlight some areas of Christians' dissociatedness. The first dilemma of the divided self is a dilemma of loyalties, that is, God or Mammon, God or the world. The second dilemma is the dilemma of authority in terms of dominion or servanthood, restriction or freedom. However, these examples of dissociatedness are only the symptoms of being inconsistent.

In the above discussion, we find that sanctification is a continuous experience of the Christian life. It aims at bringing a person into the fulfilment of life promised by Jesus. Put differently, sanctification closely relates to discipleship because it takes God's grace seriously. In summary, sanctification refers to the re-orientation of the agent's value. It confirms the development and deployment of moral competencies and the agent's struggle to consent, with the assistance of grace. All of these have a common goal- to overcome habitual forms of evil. Sanctification is that gradual process whereby the agent strives by the grace of God to disentangle his/her moral life from the crippling power of sin.

However, I have to point out that Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue are rather individual-oriented. His deliberate overlooking of the social dimension of sanctification is because he is convinced that acquiring character is the primary task of Christians in a wider context- the church- in order to serve the world truthfully.⁴ But an emphasis on the personal dimension of sanctification affirms that even though an unjust social structure and system may have a tremendous impact on individuals, individuals can still be free agents to exercise and fulfil their freedom. Gregory Baum writes that

⁴ See my later discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

2. SOBRINO'S APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY

a. *Spirituality and Liberation*

Liberation theology in Latin America¹ is an outcome of a deep and serious theological reflection on the meaning of being Jesus' disciples in a context characterized by poverty, persecution and injustice. Liberation theology does not only spark off a new and radical approach to theological reflection, but also itself signifies an unshakeable stand beside the poor and a whole-hearted commitment to the struggle for justice which may cost one's life [e.g. the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980]. It is undeniable that the socio-economic background gives birth to liberation theology. However, in the deepest sense, it is spirituality which marks the beginning of liberation theology. Put another way, it is not the agenda of the world which decides what the form of theology should be like, but rather the Spirit of God inspires Christians to respond to the situation faithfully and creatively.² It is this spirituality which challenges Christians to see the reality as it is [from the perspective of the poor], and empowers them to be engaged in the process of liberation.

At the earliest stage of the development of liberation theology, G.Gutierrez has already stated clearly that liberation theology is not built solely on the reformulation of theological categories. These are not enough. He said that

we need a vital attitude, all embracing and synthesizing, informing the totality as well as every detail of our lives; we need a "spirituality".³

¹ In the following, I will simply use the term, liberation theology, to refer to the Latin American liberation theology.

² Saying this way, I am not suggesting that theological reflection can be totally independent from its social context. Rather it itself can be an independent variable which has its social significance as well.

³ G.Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis, 1973), p.203.

In fact, many liberation theologians have written a great deal about spirituality.⁴ Their concern for spirituality in liberation theology is not because spirituality is a means to make liberation complete, but rather because spirituality is the seed and essence of liberation. Furthermore, their concern for liberation in spirituality is not because liberation is a fashionable theme to define spirituality when everyone is talking about political theologies, but rather because liberation is the most relevant and concrete connotation of the meaning of spirituality. Sobrino explains their relation in this way:

Negatively stated: spirituality today in the absence of the practice of liberation is purely generic, evangelically impossible, and historically alienating. Liberation practice without spirit is generically good, but concretely threatened with degeneration, diminution, and sin. Positively stated: spirituality has need of the practice of liberation in order to have the proper channel and appropriate material for its evangelical and relevant self-realization in current history. Practice has need of spirit in order to maintain itself precisely as a liberation of the poor, while becoming, ever more creatively and powerfully, a liberation that is truly comprehensive.⁵

In other words, spirituality is basic to the religious life, but it can be enriched by the contribution of liberation. And liberation is basic to the religious life, but it can be enriched by the contribution of spirituality. In the following, my aim is to unpack this paradoxical relationship between spirituality and liberation in the light of the work of Jon Sobrino.

Fundamentally, Sobrino considers that spirituality and liberation are not two separate domains; on the contrary, one needs the other in order to illustrate the profound meaning of the Christian faith. According to Sobrino, spirituality can be

⁴ See G.Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p.212, and J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.184.

⁵ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation (New York: Orbis, 1990), p.29.

enriched by liberation in the following ways. Firstly, spirituality must be "theological"⁶ because the concern of theology must help individuals and groups to have an encounter with God, a personal encounter that cannot be replaced by doctrine or political involvement. However, this encounter is not primarily a transcendental experience, but is identical with the Christian way of life. This way of life is nothing other than to follow the crucified and risen Christ through his message transmitted by the church. Sobrino writes that

spiritual life simply means life with a certain spirit, life lived in a particular spirit- especially, in the case of Christian spiritual life, life lived in the spirit of Jesus.⁷

Spirituality, therefore, is not purely concerned with transcendence and having a good intention. Rather in the light of liberation, such an encounter should bring a person to discipleship [following Jesus], and this results in his/her engagement in liberation of life. Secondly, spirituality must be "historical". Sobrino considers that without historical and real life, there can be no such thing as spiritual life. "It is impossible to live with spirit unless that spirit becomes flesh."⁸ Here, liberation enriches spirituality in two ways. It states that the Gospel is heard and understood today in the light of certain emphases and exigencies that are based on the way in which salvation in history takes shape today. Christian commitment to liberation is the result of faith and love; but it is also the result of having translated and incarnated that faith and love in the concrete history that a person must live. On the other hand, liberation suggests that the historical actualization of faith is one of the reliable approaches to God and as contact with God. Therefore, spirituality should be understood in Leonardo Boff's expression, *contemplativus in liberatione*. Finally,

⁶ Sobrino distinguishes between "theological", *teologico*, and "theological", *teologal*. "Theological" refers to the study of theology; "theological" means related to God.

⁷ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

spirituality must be "communal". This emphasis rejects any tendency which confines spirituality to personal perfection. It should be a community journey and the response of God's people. Besides, a communal emphasis is not equivalent to the institutional church, but rather shifts the central concern of the human agent of that liberation from self to other. This is the church for others. John de Gruchy says that

the Christian life, while intensely personal, is always communal..... The privatization of piety is not part of the Christian tradition and it undermines the Christian life..... Christian spirituality is, therefore, the spirituality of Christian community. But it is not Christian community lived in isolation from the world.⁹

These three contributions of liberation are best described in terms of dialectic. The "theological" reminds us that an encounter with God is not simply an emotional experience, but rather is a way of life, that is, to follow Jesus. The "historical" warns us that spirituality is never abstract and otherworldly, but pushes a person to take his/her social responsibility seriously. The "communal" suggests that spirituality is not individualistic, but located in the midst of world's turmoil rather than in safe havens of disengagement. If spirituality is enriched by the contribution of liberation in these ways, then in what ways, in turn, is liberation enriched by the contribution of spirituality?

In relation to liberation, spirituality provides a person with a vision to discern "the signs of the time", and a skill to sustain him/her to follow Jesus. This discernment is not simply an objective reading and analysis of the reality, but implies a certain way of seeing, commitment and dispositions. Also, this discernment is not simply about seeing, but acting. According to Sobrino, this discernment comprises three phases: that is, honesty about the real, fidelity to the real, and willingness to be

⁹ John de Gruchy, Cry Justice (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), p.25.

swept along by the "more" of reality.¹⁰ Regarding the first phase, Sobrino explains that "honesty about the real" is concerned with having the right theological locus and a practice of love which results from this. Sobrino considers that

in Latin America we believe that we have this attitude, and that it is the poor who have enabled us to have it, both objectively because the truth of things is better known from below and from the periphery than from above and from the centre, and subjectively because the poor has the gift of turning the gaze of others towards their world, and dislodging their interest from themselves so that now they "tune in" to the interests of reality instead.¹¹

For Sobrino, the poor are the people who suffer under some kind of material and social oppression, and are most deprived of life at its most basic level. They are the peoples whose lives are denied.¹² To consider the poor as the theological locus is to realize that the justice of God is presented as the right to have pity on the most pitiable; and on the other hand, the future of the Kingdom of God begins among the people who suffer most from acts of violence and injustice- and that is the poor. The Gospel to the poor does not merely bring the Kingdom of God to the poor, but also discovers the Kingdom of the poor, which is God's Kingdom.¹³ Accordingly, the poor are not understood in the classical sense of a source for attaining the truth of

¹⁰ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, pp.14-20.

¹¹ Ibid, p.17.

¹² According to Sobrino, Jesus had two ways of speaking about the poor. They are: "the poor are sinners, publicans, prostitutes, the simple and the little, the least, those who practise the despised professions. They are the vilified, persons of low repute and esteem, the uncultured and ignorant.... The poor are therefore society's despised, those lesser than others, and for them the prevailing piety proclaims not hope, but condemnation. The poor are [also] those in need in the spirit of Isaiah 61:1. The poor are those who suffer need, the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the foreigners, the sick and imprisoned, those who weep, those weighted down by a burden. The poor are therefore those who suffer some type of real oppression." (Jesus in Latin America, pp.89-90) Besides, James D.G.Dunn says that there are three dimensions of poverty, namely, material, social and spiritual. These three dimensions also direct us how to respond to poverty. That is to say, firstly, it is a responsibility of the non-poor to provide for the poor; secondly, it includes a condemnation of oppression of the poor; and finally, it is the affirmation of God as the champion of the poor. (Jesus' call to Discipleship, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

¹³ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, p.89.

faith, but in the dynamic sense of a place where there is manifested in a special way the presence of the God of Jesus Christ. Apart from this, the theological locus of the poor demands Christians to show solidarity with the poor because the poor will be the eschatological judges of their practices [Mt.25:31-46]. Therefore, anyone who proclaims the Gospel to the poor belongs to the poor, and should become poor himself/herself, in community with them.¹⁴ Sobrino notes that among the poor, "the experience of God, and life according to the Spirit, is lived."¹⁵ Nevertheless, God's preferential option for the poor is not a denial of divine love for the whole of humanity. The poor are not assured a place in God's Kingdom because of the historical accident of their belonging to a given social class under particular socio-historical circumstances that made them disadvantaged and oppressed. Nor are the poor more virtuous in any morally and religiously significant way. God chooses the poor just because they are poor. God does justice to the poor solely because they are in need and calls upon God's people to do the same.

When we see the reality from the perspective of the poor, reality itself utters an unconditional "yes" and an unconditional "no".¹⁶ In the Latin American context, the "no" of reality is no to its own negation, absence, lack and annihilation of life, while the "yes" demanded by reality is yes to life. This unconditional "yes" and "no" becomes a commitment to the restoration of life. This commitment does not stop at the cognitive level, but demands the whole person to work for this. Accordingly, honesty about the real is not simply to acknowledge the nature of reality, but rather is concerned with undertaking a particular act in order to respond to the reality.

¹⁴ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.125ff.

¹⁵ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.49.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.16.

However, the practice of justice and love is motivated neither by political interest nor by sympathy, but by a deep conviction that "anti-life is anti-Christ"¹⁷ because Jesus Christ promises to bring a fullness of life to humankind. This conviction brings conversion. Conversion is a change of mind which sees the poor with God's eyes and deals with them as God does.¹⁸ Conversion does not stop at the change of attitude, but rather leads one into discipleship of Jesus. For Sobrino,

conversion consists in abandoning one's own place, however good this may be, and meeting God "there" where God wishes to be met.¹⁹

Gutierrez concretizes the meaning of conversion by saying that

our conversion to the Lord implies this conversion to the neighbour..... Conversion means a radical transformation of ourselves; it means thinking, feeling, and living as Christ- present in exploited and alienated man. To be converted is to commit oneself to the process of the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to commit oneself lucidly, realistically and concretely..... To be converted is to know and experience the fact that, contrary to the laws of physics, we can stand straight, according to the Gospel, only when our center of gravity is outside ourselves.²⁰

The second phase of discernment is "fidelity to the real". Put bluntly, fidelity to the real is to be consistent with the result of the honesty about the real, and to commit oneself to it.²¹ In a situation characterized by persecutions and frustrations, it is easy for the agent to lose his/her hope and give up his/her commitment. He/she needs a profound spirituality. Its importance is not simply to keep the liberation going, but rather is to strengthen the agent not to fail in what God calls him/her to

¹⁷ J.Sobrino, "The Witness of the Church in Latin America." p.165.

¹⁸ J.Sobrino, "The Witness of the Church in Latin America." In: The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities, ed. S.Torries (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), p.269.

¹⁹ J.Sobrino, Jesus, the Liberator, p.148.

²⁰ G.Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (New York: Orbis, 1973), pp.204-205.

²¹ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, pp.17-18.

be. This spirituality may take various manifestations in terms of virtues. . . And it is an all-embracing attitude, a force that bestows constancy and prevents a person being "tossed to and fro". It dominates a person's character and orientation. Sobrino himself does not provide a systematic discussion of what specific manifestation of spirituality would be like in relation to liberation. However, he does point out some important manifestations of spirituality. They include follows: a spirit of fortitude, a spirit of holiness, a spirit of mercy, a spirit of peace, a spirit of forgiveness, a spirit of gratuity, a spirit of impoverishment, a spirit of creativity, a spirit of solidarity, a spirit of joy, and a spirit of hope. Each manifestation of these is contextually bounded and mutually dependent. The sum of them is not equivalent to spirituality, but spirituality itself takes these concrete manifestations. Here I am not intending to discuss the whole list of the manifestations of spirituality, but I find that it is worthwhile to explore two of them, namely, a spirit of solidarity and of holiness because a spirit of solidarity is concerned about the profound meaning of being the church of the poor, and a spirit of holiness is the primary concern of spirituality.

A spirit of solidarity reminds the agent to consider deeply what kind of attitude a person should have in order to work with the poor. Sobrino comments that a spirit of solidarity is not mere humanitarian aid because

if solidarity were no more than material aid, it would not be anything more than a magnified kind of almsgiving where givers offer something they own without thereby feeling a deep-down personal commitment or without feeling any need to continue this aid. In authentic solidarity the first effort to give aid commits a person at a deeper level than that of mere giving and becomes an ongoing process, not a contribution.²²

This emphasis on solidarity is vital because it breaks down any sense of superiority.

²² J.Sobrino & Juan Hernandez Pico, Theology of Christian Solidarity (New York: Orbis, 1985), p.3.

Besides, a spirit of solidarity is to affirm that Christians are not called to offer charity to the poor. Rather they are called to risk finding ways of involvement with them in a common search for a wider human identity. It is not a question of their helping them but of finding ways of action which will liberate and change the identity of them all. Therefore, a spirit of solidarity is an empathy by means of which Christians do not relativize the people's pain and reduce it to a social cost. It is also a conviction that they are unprofitable sinners, so that they do the work of liberation with a grateful heart and as forgiven sinners. On the other hand, a spirit of solidarity comforts them that Christians do not go to God alone. They are saved as members of a people. Persecution does not necessarily destroy their commitment, but generates oneness among people and within churches. Sobrino writes that

persecution only manifests that spirit of solidarity in all its evidence. Persecution demands solidarity lest Christians falter, and persecution generates solidarity by instilling in Christians at a time of persecution a fixed attitude for all time thereafter: the knowledge that each of us lives our faith in reference to others, bestowing it on them and receiving it from them again.²³

Regarding a spirit of holiness, Sobrino defines holiness as the outstanding practice of faith, hope and love and the virtues generated by following Jesus.²⁴ This holiness is not confined to certain practices, places and profession, but rather is determined by a person's practice of Jesus' teaching. In Latin America, a spirit of holiness is urgently required in politics. It is not the politics itself that is holy, but holiness itself make politics holy. The relationship between politics and holiness can be understood dialectically. A spirit of holiness concretizes itself in the form of political love. According to Sobrino, the political love is concerned with honesty

²³ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.100.

²⁴ Ibid., p.80.

about the real and seeking a possibility of transforming the situation politically rather than individually.²⁵ On the other hand, a spirit of holiness is required in every political action in order not

to exchange the liberation of the poor for the triumph of what we have converted into our own personal or collective cause, the pain of the poor for the passion that politics generates, service for hegemony, truth for propaganda, humility for dominance, gratitude for moral superiority."²⁶

For Sobrino, the climax of a spirit of holiness is martyrdom. Therefore, a spirit of holiness is not an attempt at self-glorification and self-perfection, but is directed towards others.

Finally, the third phase of discernment is willingness to be swept along by the "more" of reality". Put theologically, this is about the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith. Although the reality seems to be fatal and hopeless, this is not the end of it. There is always a possibility that a new exodus, a new return from exile, a liberation from captivity, reappears again and again. This is the "more" of the reality. This is not a utopian optimism, but rather is profoundly rooted in the eschatological nature of the Kingdom. In order to see the "more" of reality, a person should have hope and love which are inspired by the Christian hope. This hope calls for an active impulse, not the passive hope of mere expectation. This hope is fulfilled by love which helps reality become what it seeks to be. Love is the practice of the hope. Authentic love tries to start with the concrete needs of the other and not with the duty of practising love. However, the gratuitousness of the gift of the Kingdom does not do away with effective action but rather calls for it all the more. But Gutierrez reminds us that

²⁵ Ibid., pp.81-83.

²⁶ Ibid., p.84.

in the presence of this God who acts gratuitously we must show society a reign that is not reducible to energy expended in the service of human development, but that has its source in an encounter with a personal God with whom intimacy is bestowed as a gift and who, once given to us, neither suppresses nor competes with the human effort to build a better world.²⁷

These three phases of discernment practically and concretely clarify how spirituality enriches liberation in different stages. However, these three phases cannot be considered as three independent phases because they interweave with one another. We cannot remain in any one of the phases without moving towards other phases. Furthermore, these three phases are not a blueprint of life, but are life itself. L.Boff describes the relationship between spirituality and liberation as follows: "Just as there can be no social revolution without a political mystique, so there can be no act of integral liberation without the provocation, inspiration, and encouragement of an ardent spirituality."²⁸

For Sobrino, spirituality and liberation are inter-related. Both of them are concerned with a matter of being honest to God and his creation. A commitment to liberation displays a radical but biblical approach to spirituality: that is, the historical actualization of faith. Encounter with God is no longer an internal affair, but takes place in a personal involvement in his/her particular social history. Seeing from the perspective of the poor, the practice of justice and love, and protecting the life of the poor are no longer purely political activities, but are consistent with the Spirit of God. A spirituality of liberation is to defend the life of the poor. This may necessarily entail an element of political struggle and conflict. However, Sobrino

²⁷ G.Gutierrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells (London: SCM, 1984), p.109.

²⁸ L.Boff, Faith on the Edge, p.65.

reminds us that "the political is not everything, neither in the liberation project itself nor in the means thereto."²⁹ Rather, liberation is a matter of having a profound spirituality which brings the agent to commit himself/herself to the poor [the privileged recipients of the Gospel]. This spirituality is not through personal effort, but it lies beyond a person's ability and reality. It is by the grace of God. But the grace of God becomes concrete in the invitation to follow Jesus. A withdrawal from this signifies a withdrawal from grace rather than from duty. Archbishop Oscar Romero puts it into a more dynamic way:

We are not political persons; we do not put our trust in merely human powers. We are, above all, Christians, and we know that if the Lord does not build our civilization all labour in vain who build it. We know that our power comes from prayer and from our turning towards God.³⁰

Accordingly, liberation is not simply a political concern, but rather an expression with a profound spirituality.

Besides, for Sobrino, the relationship between spirituality and liberation should be christocentric because Christ is not simply the mediator of God's redemptive address to humankind, but he actually is that address himself. For humankind, Christ therefore is God's address and the perfect human response to that address. Christocentric spirituality is not simply a concern of having a correct hermeneutical skill, but rather is a concern of discipleship. Sobrino writes that

we can gain access to the Christ of faith, the resurrected Lord, through some sort of direct intentional act: e.g., a profession of faith, a doxology, a prayer, or cultic worship. However, we cannot access to the historical Jesus that way, as the Gospels make clear. We gain access to him only through a specific kind of praxis, which the

²⁹ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.29.

³⁰ Oscar Romero, The Violence of Love (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p.223.

Gospels describe as the "following of Jesus" or "discipleship".³¹

With this I come to the next part of this study: that is, following the historical Jesus.

³¹ J.Sobrinho, Christology at the Crossroads (London: SCM,1987), p.275. Note: Sobrinho considers that the historical Jesus is the starting point of knowing the Christ of faith.

b. *Following The Historical Jesus*

Liberation theologians claim that liberation theology is not built solely on the exodus story, but rather is deeply rooted in christology. Although different liberation theologians have different emphases on the image of Christ¹, they share a common conviction which is that christology cannot be understood apart from a practice of discipleship. Sobrino even goes further to say that

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, help christology to penetrate the reality of Christ and understand the texts about him.²

This assertion does not have any tendency to reduce theology to ethics. Nor does it reduce truth to morality. Rather it has a christological status. Eduard Schweizer states that

only the disciple can know who Jesus really is. This is the meaning of Mark 8:27 ff. No formula merely taught, and learned and repeated by a disciple can adequately describe this. One cannot know who Jesus is until one shares his way with him. This is the meaning of the "Messianic Secret", this is the explanation of his reserve in connexion with the title of Christ, which is not wrong but which does not apply without qualification.³

Moreover, christological knowledge is formed and handed on not primarily in the form of concepts but in accounts of following Jesus. It has a narrative and practical bent. Therefore, discipleship is not only the starting point of understanding christology, but also is the "end" of the study of christology.

For Sobrino, following the historical Jesus is not to copy every detail of Jesus'

¹ See Jose Miguels Bonino, ed., *Faces of Jesus* (New York: Orbis, 1984), and David Batstone, *From Conquest to Struggle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

² J.Sobrino, *Jesus, The Liberator*, p.27.

³ Eduard Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1986), p.21

life. It is instead, to follow the ethical values which Jesus proclaims and the "spirit" which he represents instead of the result of his concretizing certain values. This emphasis differentiates it from the view of the *Imitatio Christi* presented by Thomas A Kempis. Following the historical Jesus is not mechanically understood as a blueprint for the Christian life which he/she can draw a detailed moral map for himself/herself and his/her society. Rather, Christ is the pattern in the sense that his life was the exhibition, expression and manifestation of his godliness, of God's disclosure through this man Jesus Christ. Following the historical Jesus is to partake in this movement. However, this clarification should neither merely be interpreted from a mystical dimension nor restricted to individual moral behaviour, but following the historical Jesus should always have political significance. It is because Jesus' life was not confined to religious matters, but embraced socio-political matters. For instance, his death was the result of his "political" activities instead of his "pure" religious activities. Thus, following the historical Jesus implies that the Christian's life orientation is formed and inspired by Christ which brings him/her to discern and fulfil God's will in his/her given historical context as Jesus did. Sobrino writes that

the following of Jesus does not consist simply in being and doing what Jesus was and did; it consists in experiencing the same process that he experienced. It means learning through historical experience the reality of a God who is always greater and cannot be manipulated, the ways of God in creating his Kingdom, the power and the impotence of love, the necessity of suffering, the hope that does not die.⁴

In the following, I do not intend to discuss how Sobrino interprets Jesus' life, not only because I will discuss it in chapter two, but also because to discuss this issue here will inevitably distract our concern from the indispensable of following Jesus [although I realize that we cannot follow the historical Jesus without knowing who the historical Jesus is]. The focus in this section then is on discussing why Sobrino

⁴ J.Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (London: SCM, 1984), p.305.

considers that discipleship is to follow the historical Jesus, and what following the historical Jesus means.

For Sobrino, the emphasis on the importance of the historical dimension of Jesus is based on a logical reflection that one arrives at the Christ of faith through the Jesus of history. Sobrino says that "if the *end* of Christology is to profess that Jesus is the Christ, its *starting point* is the affirmation that this Christ is the Jesus of history."⁵ However, such an emphasis is not in an attempt to provide a biography of Jesus or engage in an examination of the historicity of Jesus presented by theologians such as David Strauss and Albert Schweitzer.⁶ But rather it is for the sake of continuing Jesus' history in the present.⁷ Therefore, the aim of studying the historical Jesus is not to increase one's knowledge of Christ, but rather is to promote one's discipleship. This task is carried out by paying attention to the historicity of Jesus: that is, his person, proclamation, activity, attitudes and death. Sobrino writes that

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.... 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.⁸

⁵ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.xxi.

⁶ Sobrino states clearly that his interest in historical Jesus is not to make pretence of a biographical focus on Jesus; not to define the historical primarily as that which is open to the future, as the sole criterion for deciding what is really historical; not to return to the historical Jesus in order to solve the general question of the New Testament- the relation between Christ who is preached and the Christ who preaches; and not to respond to historical criticism. See J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, pp.64-65.

⁷ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.321ff.

⁸ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, p.66.

In other words, the historical Jesus relates to the praxis of Jesus, provided that his praxis is not superficially interpreted as a detailed plan for one to follow, but rather is "the way" to the Father.⁹

Nevertheless, the Gospels are the theology about Jesus instead of a history of Jesus. How can Sobrino claim to know the historical Jesus? Sobrino recognizes that the Gospels are the products of faith. He also realizes that the history of theology has shown the difficulty of finding "the historical Jesus in himself". However, he contends that it is impossible to produce a theology about Jesus without writing a history of Jesus. Therefore, to a certain extent, the Gospels allow us to discern the historical Jesus. In order to discover and historically ensure the praxis of Jesus, Sobrino employs Edward Schillebeeckx's criteria. "The appearance of one and the same theme on various levels of traditions" is the first criterion. The meaning of this point is self-evident. The second criterion, "what is specific to and distinctive of a theme by contrast with and even in opposition to theologies and practices that come after Jesus", is not obvious. In other words, reflection upon Jesus' words and deeds, even in a hostile or negative environment, actually serves to keep attention focused upon his praxis. "The consistency of Jesus' death with what is narrated of his life" is the final criterion and it is especially relevant to Latin American Christians. Thousands of Latin Americans have died attempting to follow Jesus' praxis. Therefore, he must have lived a life like the one presented in the Gospels.¹⁰ On the basis of the intent of Latin American Christology and the above criteria, the following aspects of Jesus' life are accepted as historical by Sobrino:

on the level of facts we have Jesus' baptism by John, the initial

⁹ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.105-106.

¹⁰ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, p.74. E.Schillebeeckx, An Experiment in Christology (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp.81-102.

success (and perhaps also some conflicts) of his preaching, the choosing and sending out of some followers to preach, increasing threats and persecution, and the passion and death on the cross. On the level of conduct, we have activity involving miracles and exorcisms, preaching in parables, critical attitudes to the law and the Temple, the call to conversion, discipleship and faith in God. On the level of words, there are two authentic words of Jesus, "Kingdom" and "Abba", and the sayings that justified his condemnation.¹¹

Stated in this way, apparently, Sobrino's picture of the historical Jesus does not differ significantly from other views found in contemporary christology. But in fact, they are different. Sobrino quotes Gonzalez Faus saying that

in Europe the historical Jesus is an object of investigation, whereas in Latin America he is a criterion of discipleship. In Europe study of the historical Jesus seeks to establish the possibilities and the reasonableness of the act of believing or not believing. In Latin America the appeal to the historical Jesus seeks to confront people with the dilemma of being converted or not.¹²

Before turning to discuss what following the historical Jesus means, one other aspect of the historical Jesus has to be clarified.

For Sobrino, the historical dimension of Jesus has to relate to its ecclesial and trinitarian relationship.¹³ In short, its ecclesial dimension suggests that, in analogy to the christologies in the New Testament, where Christ is thought of originally in terms of the situation and praxis of the first Christian communities, it is meant to reflect the life and praxis of the church communities in Latin America and overall to make possible and to give sense to this life and this praxis. Therefore, an ecclesial christology calls for rethinking the principle in the light of images from which it is abstracted and also the reinterpretation of the images themselves. The trinitarian dimension of Jesus is to stress that the Father is the ultimate horizon, the Son is the

¹¹ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.61.

¹² Ibid., p.50.

¹³ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.xx-xxv.

definitive example of how to correspond to the Father, and the life in the Spirit of Jesus is the specific form of being Christian. For Jesus, God and God's Kingdom are his ultimate reference points. With his activity of liberation Jesus puts himself at the service of the Kingdom and makes it present. Furthermore, christology is "pneumatological" in that Jesus and God are known only by living life in accordance with the Spirit of Jesus. Without this trinitarian foundation, Jesus' praxis is incomprehensible, the work of the Spirit is vague, and God becomes abstract and manipulable.

In order to know the historical Jesus, Sobrino considers that the most "historical" aspect of Jesus is his engagement with the spirit. By the meaning of Jesus' engagement, "this spirit was defined and so became real, through a practice, because it was within that practice, and not in his pure inwardness, that Jesus was empowered and challenged. On the other hand, this spirit was not merely the necessary accompaniment of Jesus' practice, but shaped it, gave it a direction and even empowered it to be historically effective."¹⁴ What then are the spirit of Jesus' praxis and Jesus' praxis? According to Sobrino, these are summed up in Jesus' jubilee proclamation:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent to me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
[Lk.4:18-19]

The spirit of Jesus is to preach the good news to the poor, and his spirit is nothing other than the will of God. His praxis is to concretize what this good news means. Jesus' praxis can be briefly summarized as follows:

in relation to demonic oppression, conquest;

¹⁴ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.52

in relation to misinterpretation of God's rule, sharp rebuke;
in relation to selfish complacency, warning;
in relation to sin and failure, forgiveness and assurance of love;
in relation to sickness, healing;
in relation to material need, provision of daily bread;
in relation to exclusion, welcoming inclusion;
in relation to desire for power, an example of humble and loving service;
in relation to death, life;
in relation to false peace, justice;
in relation to enmity, reconciliation.

These general characteristics- not an exhaustive list- are gathered from the stories and the sayings in the Gospels, which are themselves the praxis of Jesus. These characteristics show that Jesus' praxis is basically salvific and liberating.¹⁵ At the same time, Jesus' praxis also reveals the profound love of God. What then does Jesus' praxis involve?

Firstly, Jesus' praxis is a praxis of love. This praxis of love was first concretized in Jesus' "partial" incarnation in history.¹⁶ This partiality means that Jesus chose a particular spot in history. This spot is nothing other than the poor and the oppressed. Jesus had taken flesh not just in any world, but in the world of poor. He had defended not just any cause, but the cause of the poor. This "partial" incarnation of Jesus reveals the "biased" character of God's love. Is this "partial" incarnation of Jesus against the universal love of God? Jesus' mission was to reach all with God's loving solidarity and thereby create loving solidarity among all. But for this purpose, his special concern had to be the inclusion of those who were excluded from human solidarity. Those who excluded others from the solidarity of God's people could properly learn of God's solidarity with the people they excluded. Not only for the sake of the poor, but actually for the sake of the rich, Jesus

¹⁵ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.44.

¹⁶ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, p.135.

identified himself with the poor.

Secondly, Jesus' praxis not only intended to change persons, but also to change the world and its relationships. It was a praxis of socio-political love. Sobrino considers that "the efficacy of love must be applied to the configuration of the whole society; and the Gospels, furthermore, show that in fact and historically, Jesus gave this type of love the first place in his own praxis."¹⁷ Sobrino's comment tells us that the praxis of Jesus was not only a praxis of psychological and spiritual liberation, but also his praxis was a praxis of political liberation. To a certain extent, this is true. However, I am puzzled as to what extent Sobrino can conclude that Jesus gave the socio-political love the first place. The eschatological dimension has many facets. It has its spiritual and religious dimensions as well as political and economic dimensions. Therefore, the liberation which Jesus' praxis has to be concerned to bring an "all round liberation". If this is so, how can Sobrino justify his view that Jesus gave priority to the political transformation? It is undeniable that politics has a place in our discipleship of Jesus, but it is too far to conclude that this is the most important and urgent concern of Jesus' praxis.

Besides, I am very suspicious as to what extent the efficacy of love can solely be understood in terms of its impact on society. It is right that the love of Jesus is never confined to the inter-personal relationship, but it is wrong to use its impact on society as a major criterion of the efficacy of that love. For instance, the history of Jesus showed us that he did not successfully transform the whole system of society, but rather transformed the fate of many people who themselves became a transformative community of power. In summary, I agree with Sobrino in that Jesus'

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.136.

praxis had a socio-political dimension and significance, but I have reservations about his view that the socio-political dimension was the dominant interest of Jesus' praxis.

Finally, Jesus' praxis brought him into conflict with those who had power. This conflict was unavoidable because it was the result of Jesus' determination to proclaim and practise the truth- good news to the poor. He did not seek compromise, and the consequence of his preferential option for the poor led him into confrontation with those who wielded religious, economic and political powers. These conflicts eventually led him to be killed. Although Jesus was condemned for religious blasphemy, he was not put to death for this reason.¹⁸ He was actually executed as a political rebel because "he suffered the punishment imposed on political agitators (crucifixion) rather than the punishment dealt out to religious blasphemers (stoning)."¹⁹ Jesus died as a victim of a political system. "Jesus was crucified by the Romans not only for tactical reasons and reasons based on the standard policy of calm and order in Jerusalem, but essentially in the name of the gods of the Roman state, that guaranteed the Pax Romana."²⁰ Jesus did not seek death. It was imposed on him from without. He refused to strike a compromise in order to survive. Sobrino concludes that "the cross is not the result of some divine decision independent of history; it is the outcome of the basic option for incarnation in a given situation."²¹

¹⁸ It is true that Jesus was accused by the religious people. But we should bear in mind that in the Jewish tradition, religion is not purely "inward", but rather it embraces all dimensions of lives, including politics.

¹⁹ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.211. Details of the socio-political meaning of crucifixion can be found in Martin Hengel, Crucifixion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), Chapter 7.

²⁰ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, p.120.

²¹ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.214.

Jesus' praxis is his compassion in action. He not only liberates humankind from spiritual bondage, but also restores their humanity and dignity by breaking down all socio-political chains. This liberation is not only an experience of individuals, but also extends to society as a whole. Besides, a historical christology reveals that Jesus is the "way to" the Father and the historical version of the eternal Sonship of the Son. Through his history, with his faith and trust in the Father, with obedience to his mission, in his death and resurrection, Jesus reveals to us the way of the Son, the way one becomes Son of God.²² Thus, discipleship is nothing other than to follow the historical praxis of Jesus; that is, to proclaim the good news to the poor, to be in solidarity with the poor, and to practise justice. Sobrino says that

to put it negatively, outside discipleship we cannot have sufficient affinity with the object of faith to know what we are talking about when we confess Jesus as the Christ. Put positively, through the affinity produced by discipleship it can be meaningful to proclaim Jesus as Christ, as the revelation of true divinity and true humanity.²³

²² Ibid., pp.47-48.

²³ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.55.

C. *An Appraisal*

In a context characterized by poverty, suffering and killing, Sobrino attempts to re-discover the meaning of spirituality in order not to reduce liberation to a "pure" political undertaking or to confine spirituality to a "pure" personal-religious matter. For Sobrino, spirituality is nothing other than following the historical Jesus. Following the historical Jesus emphasizes that spirituality should be both dynamic and public which requires Christians to defend the life of the poor, because Jesus' praxis is a praxis of love. Sobrino's account of spirituality illustrates a public approach to and a public dimension of spirituality. Apparently, Sobrino's account does not have any concern about the mystical tradition. But it is a mistake simply to criticize Sobrino for replacing piety by social commitment, mysticism by politics, spirituality by practical political concerns, and prayer by social action, or for treating Christology as a means for liberation, because, if spirituality is about experiencing God in one's life, then for Sobrino the experience of God is guided by Jesus' God-experience. According to Sobrino, Jesus' total availability and obedience to the will of God, his fidelity to God in the midst of attacks from the idols of death, his incomparable trust in God, his own "dark night" in the temptations, in the Galilean crisis, in the garden, and on the cross show or imply a specific experience of God, a specific union with God.¹ This is the nucleus of Jesus' experience of God. Sobrino says that

whether or not this experience of Jesus with such a God should be called "mystical" does not seem to me to be important. What seems important is that every experience of God have this structure.²

Therefore, for Sobrino, a commitment to the process of liberation is one of the possible and reliable means to encounter God. In the following, I will discuss how

¹ Sobrino's account of the historical Jesus will be discussed in Chapter Two.

² J.Sobrino, "Review Symposium." In: *Horizons*, 1989, Vol.16, p.143.

Sobrinho's account of spirituality and following the historical Jesus can inspire our practice and reflection of the spiritual life.

Firstly, Sobrinho's account of spirituality emphasizes the non-duality of God and history, of spirit and praxis. Here Sobrinho shows his Catholic roots. Expanding and specifying the traditional Catholic affirmation of the interrelatedness of nature and grace and the essential sacramental mediation of the Spirit, Sobrinho affirms a "bipolarity" or a "differentiated unity" between the historical element (the reign of God, justice and service) and the transcendent element (God, faith and grace)- or between the experience of transforming this world and the experience of God. The relationship between the two elements is non-dual. They are neither two nor are they one. Though distinguished, they can never be separated. Here Sobrinho does not mince words: "There is no *spiritual* life without actual historical *life*. It is impossible to live *with spirit* unless the spirit *becomes flesh*."³ And yet he also holds an "irreducible duality" between the human and the divine, insofar as the relationship "starts with God" and is dependent on human response. Sobrinho is arguing that, although God/grace is prior ontologically, a commitment to transforming this world is prior epistemologically. We can know God's priority only by first committing ourselves to others. We do not experience God and then serve others; it is in the service of others that God becomes real and prior for us. Therefore, to live in this non-duality is not a matter of first praying and then working, or of first one having on contemplation and only then having something to pass on. Rather Sobrinho prefers "*in actione contemplativus*". His reasons are clear:

The moment of action is neither separated from, nor subordinate to, nor consequent upon the moment of contemplation..... action is the locus of contemplation..... Contemplation and action are not moments having distinct objects, as if contemplation were directed toward God

³ J.Sobrinho, Spirituality of Liberation, p.4.

and action were directed toward the world..... God and world alike are object both of contemplation and action.⁴

Therefore, for Sobrino, the spiritual life is not primarily about the distinction between sacred and profane, but rather about a recognition of God's sovereignty over the cosmos.

Secondly, Sobrino considers that, if spirituality is primarily about experiencing God, then only by doing justice can we experience God. To experience God relates to a matter of doing God's will rather than a matter of emotion. To do God's will is nothing other than to do justice because this is the way shown by Jesus. Regarding this matter, if Christian theology holds that God is to be discovered in the reality of history, then this means that Christians must be "honest with" and "faithful to" this reality. Such honesty and fidelity, however, are impossible unless one confronts the suffering and poverty and injustice that pervade contemporary reality. In confronting and struggling to overcome such injustice, therefore, one experiences and knows God. Sobrino draws conclusions that are bound to jostle Christians consciousness: apart from such liberating practice, "... apart from being honest to current history.... one can no longer have an experience of God." He continues to say that "in current history..... a practice without a core of liberative love will hardly occasion the formation of a person with spirit." Put differently, in confronting the reality of oppression and in feeling impelled to do something about it, one comes to a living, existential experience of the power of love, of truth, and of hope. It is an experience in which reality in depth is known to be personal- someone who issues a call to us and whose will we must follow and realize in this world. This is the personal God invading our hearts and demanding our hands. Therefore, for Sobrino, to experience God first relates to a matter of praxis, and then a matter of meditation.

⁴ Ibid., p.68.

Thirdly, Sobrino helps us to realize that the object of spirituality is the totality of the reign of God.⁵ Thus, spirituality is not primarily concerned with personal experience and perfection, but rather is concerned with both the building up the Kingdom of God and having a right locus of understanding the Kingdom. Regarding the former, to live in the spirit means to be in opposition to, and to denounce laws or economic practices or military policies that sustain oppression and poverty. This aspect has been previously discussed, and so I do not intend to add anything here. Regarding the latter, Sobrino suggests that the poor are the theological locus for experiencing God. It requires some form of identification with and learning from the poor and oppressed. Only in them and with them and through them can we truly know the living God. Sobrino holds that "the poor are not simply the beneficiaries of liberation. By the mere fact that they exist, for believers they are the historical locus of God, the place where God is found in history."⁶ In sharing in the faith and hope and struggle that informs the nothingness and the victimization of the poor, Sobrino believes that we feel, as perhaps nowhere else, the power and gratuity of God's presence. Although it is not necessarily for us to agree with Sobrino's interpretation completely, Sobrino is right that spirituality relates to the matter of having a right locus: that is, to learn to see from God's perspective.

Finally, if there is no duality between God and history, if knowing God is doing justice, if spirituality is about a right locus, then spirituality primarily relates to the matter of reading "the signs of the times". Reinhold Niebuhr wrote that

to discern the signs of the times means to interpret historical events and values. The interpretation of history includes all judgements we make of the purpose of our own actions and those of others; it includes the assessment of the virtue of our own and other interests, both

⁵ J.Sobrino, "Review Symposium." p.146.

⁶ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.24.

individual and collective; and finally, it includes our interpretation of the meaning of history itself.⁷

Thus, to discern the signs of the times is more than a matter of having a comprehensive and objective knowledge. Rather it is concerned with the innermost self of the agent, because, in the knowledge of nature, the mind of an agent is at the centre of the process of knowing, while in the knowledge of a historical event, the self with all its emotions and desires is at the center of the enterprise. Therefore, we can say that in order to discern the signs of the times, we have to have a profound spirituality. It trains and steers us to interpret history, and respond to it, in accordance with God's will. This is exactly what Sobrino means by spirituality. For Sobrino, the lack of discernment is not only because of a defect of the mind which is inadequate to calculate the course of history, but also because of a corruption of the heart, which introduces the confusion of selfish pride into the estimate of historical events. However, reading the signs of the times cannot confine itself to the level of reading. It has to lead to praxis. So often, it involves political participation.

For Sobrino, spirituality has both a historical dimension and a transcendental dimension. It is about both carrying out God's will and contemplating God. Put differently, it is concerned with that we should work for the coming of the Kingdom and to be patient to wait for its coming. However, to carry out God's will does not mean that we have a Christian political blueprint. Rather there is no dualism between the spiritual life and the historical life, between love of God and neighbour; nor can one be subordinated to the other. Spirituality is possible not only in silence and in contemplation, but also in prophetic struggle. These can merely be sustained by following the historical Jesus.

⁷ R.Niebuhr, Discerning the Signs of the Times (London: SCM, 1946), p.10

3. DISCUSSION

The above discussion of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's understanding of an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom in terms of spirituality appears that Hauerwas and Sobrino hold contrasting positions. That is to say, Hauerwas' concern and approach is rather "private-oriented", while Sobrino's concern and approach is rather "public-oriented". We may be tempted to see their position as a matter of "either-or". However, I consider that there is no need to define one as right and the other as wrong, because they are seen to be different but complementary aspects of the truth. Before saying anything on how they may complement one another, I consider that it is important to explicate their dissimilarities and similarities, if there are any of the latter.

Firstly, I consider that it is a mistake to over-emphasize their different approaches to the issue of an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom because it easily turns the issue into a theoretical discussion. This does not mean that it is unnecessary to distinguish one thing from another, but rather what we do should not overlook the fundamental essence of the issue; that is, faithfulness and discipleship. For both Hauerwas and Sobrino, spirituality is about learning faithfulness and discipleship. Hauerwas considers that this takes place in the formation of character, while Sobrino sees this as taking place in social praxis. Nevertheless, Sobrino never says that the formation of character is unimportant. If that were the case, he would not need to talk about spirituality. Ironically he considers its indispensability because social praxis is not simply about doing, but about doing with the right attitude, which cannot be attained apart from having character.¹ On the other hand, Hauerwas never says that Christian social praxis is

¹ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of spirituality and liberation.

negligible. Rather he considers that one's moral act cannot be separated from the agent himself/herself. Otherwise, it distorts the moral life.² Therefore, the difference between Hauerwas and Sobrino is not that they are opposed to one another ontologically because both of them endeavour to concretize what faithfulness and discipleship mean, but that they have different emphases which need one another to complement.

Secondly, what both Hauerwas and Sobrino would agree with is that the Christian life has to be christologically grounded. That is to say, through Jesus, in him and by him, we learn to be the agents of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, this common point does not bring a unanimous interpretation of christology between Hauerwas and Sobrino. On the contrary, Hauerwas' and Sobrino's interpretation are very diverse. For Hauerwas, Jesus' life is primarily understood in the light of the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, he emphasizes the distinctiveness and the possible impossibility of the Christian life. For Sobrino, Jesus' life is principally understood in the light of Jesus' jubilee proclamation. Therefore, the primacy of liberating and salvational activity of the Christian life is emphasized. The difference between Hauerwas' and Sobrino's emphasis becomes obvious in their different usage of terminology to describe discipleship. That is to say, for Hauerwas, it is the imitation of Christ, while for Sobrino, it is following the historical Jesus. Here, we may be tempted to see one as right and the other as wrong. However, it must never be forgotten that Jesus' story is a many-sided tale. We do not have just one story of Jesus, but four. To learn to tell and live the story truthfully does not mean that we must be able to reconstruct "what really happened" from the four. Rather it means that we must learn that understanding Jesus' life is inseparable from learning how to

² See my later discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

live our own. And there are various ways to do this, as is clear by the diversity of the Gospels.

Thirdly, interestingly enough, both Hauerwas and Sobrino use more or less the same categories but apply them differently to their own theological reflection. For instance, Hauerwas' concept of vision can be found to be parallel to Sobrino's understanding of the poor as the theological locus. Hauerwas' concept of virtue can be found parallel to Sobrino's emphases on a spirit of solidarity, holiness, forgiveness and others. Hauerwas' concept of character can be found to be parallel to Sobrino's following the historical Jesus. These similarities suggest that both Hauerwas and Sobrino are more alike than different. However, this does not mean that their concerns are the same. For Hauerwas, in the light of the concepts of vision, virtue and character, spirituality is primarily understood in terms of sustaining Christians to live differently, not in the world's values, but in the Kingdom's values. For Sobrino, in the light of his emphases on the poor as the theological locus and a spirit of solidarity and holiness, spirituality is principally understood in terms of sustaining Christians to manifest the Kingdom's values on earth by both denouncing injustice and proclaiming the good news. These different orientations cannot be simply labelled one as a sectarian option and one as a revolutionary option. Rather they are different ways to celebrate and recognize kingly rule of God in the here and now.

Now, I turn to discuss how these similarities and dissimilarities illuminate our understanding of the issue of an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom and its practice. Basically, the idea of an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom touches on two distinct but related areas: namely, the agent himself/herself and the agent's responsibility. Put another way, the concern of the agent himself/herself is a matter of *vita humana* [one's being] which pays attention to the importance of the

cultivation of his/her inner life in accordance with the Kingdom's values, while a concern of the agent's responsibility is a matter of *actus humanus* [one's doing] which tries to respond to how he/she can fulfil his/her calling in accordance with the life of the Kingdom. Therefore, the issue of an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom is concerned with two questions: what ought the agent to be and what ought he/she to do? To be and to do are to suggest that the agent need to act from the right motive and to find the right content of actions in particular situations in terms of his/her fundamental belief and attitudes. In the following, I intend to discuss these issues in the light of the preceding discussion of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's approach to spirituality.

Firstly, *vita humana* is concerned with the fulfilment of the potentialities of being human. This fulfilment is not simply for the sake of the glorification of humankind, but rather to see humankind in the image of God. For Hauerwas, this is a matter related to sanctification which is concerned with the agent's character, vision and virtue, while for Sobrino this a matter related to social praxis: that is to say, the agent's life would be changed and transformed in the process of his/her commitment to liberation. Here, Hauerwas and Sobrino propose two interesting approaches to the understanding of *vita humana*: that is, the relationship between sanctification and praxis. On the one hand, sanctification is no longer understood in contrast to justification, but rather as a partner of it, and praxis is not simply regarded as the "good work", but rather as the "fruit" of the Spirit. On the other hand, to be sanctified is to perform justice, and to do justice leads one to be sanctified. A strange but compelling logic is at work here. We cannot talk significantly about any one of them until we have talked about both sanctification and praxis; and yet by the time we have talked about both of them, it is sufficient to talk about any one of them, since we now perceive that it includes the other. Therefore, the fulfilment of

the potentialities of being human cannot be merely achieved by a cultivation of life in terms of inward-searching, but also through a practice of love. In other words, *vita humana* has to be concerned with both the private and public life of the agent.

Secondly, if *vita humana* is concerned with the fulfilment of the potentialities of being human, then we should not ignore the importance of *actus humanus* because in order to understand the agent morally, we cannot neglect his/her responsibility. In order to achieve this, *actus humanus* requires the agent to be involved in both the spiritual and the political liberation of a person. Both sides are equally important. Their importance lies in the fact that one cannot replace the other. They are independent but related. On the one hand, the spiritual liberation of a person tells us that liberation cannot be started from politics alone because a person cannot be dissolved in society, and politics is not everything. A society with justice and democracy does not necessarily bring a real liberation of a person because there is a deep and hidden reality of a person which cannot be understood politically. Put theologically, this is sin, which causes self-alienation. A transformation of society cannot remove this sin, while a conversion of a person's heart can. This conversion brings a new life to him/her which is neither guaranteed nor eliminated by the structures of society. It gives him/her hope and joy even at the times of suffering, and patience and love at the times of persecution. This is the primary concern of Hauerwas. Although he seldom refers to sin in his discussion of character, vision and virtue, in fact, his discussion is oriented to this direction. On the other hand, an emphasis on the spiritual liberation of a person is not sufficient because a person is inevitably in relationship and relationships involve communities. This points to the demand of the political liberation of a person. However, a belief in the importance of commitment to the political liberation of a person is not so naive to believe that the political liberation can solve all the problems. Nor does it intend to reduce the

Christian faith to social theory and criticism. Rather, put theologically, incarnation demands that history and politics have to be taken absolutely seriously, as seriously, indeed, as is required by the presence of God in history. This is the concern of Sobrino. For Sobrino, a commitment to the political liberation of a person is to remove those dehumanizing obstacles which prevent him/her having the opportunity to fulfil his/her potentialities of being human. Therefore, we may conclude that *actus humanus* has to entail two movements or elements, namely, the spiritual and political liberation of a person. From which aspect should then we begin? The answer is that it does not matter where we start, provided that we do not see one as independent of the other.

Our judgment of whether an individual Christian is a faithful agent of the Kingdom cannot be totally separated from what he/she does, nor can good actions be considered without reference to the person whose actions they are. Thus, Hauerwas' and Sobrino's approaches to spirituality complement one another, and display a comprehensive picture of what an individual Christian as an agent of the Kingdom is about. That is to say, the Kingdom of God not only demands of its people a life that is faithful to God in terms of sanctification and praxis, but also demands their truthful response to the Kingdom in terms of practising both political and spiritual liberation. This is why W.Pannenberg writes that

if the point in conversion is to be wholly and perfectly with God, then most of us must begin differently, i.e. by reforming our thought in order to overcome the secularist emancipation of everyday life from God. And we must keep in mind that such conversion cannot be achieved by the isolated individual but involves a transformation of society..... It is not just the moral strategy but the whole outlook of life that must change, and this can be achieved only by recasting our interpretation of the world and of our place in it in terms of the sovereignty of God and his Kingdom.³

³ W.Pannenberg, Christian Spirituality (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), pp.25-26.

C. THE CHURCH AS THE AGENT

1. HAUERWAS' ACCOUNT OF ECCLESIOLOGY

a. *The Church as Alternative Society*

Hauerwas reminds us that it is unthinkable to separate a person's life from his/her story [history and/or tradition]. His remark not only suggests a fact that a person is constructed by his/her story, but also the story provides his/her identity and ability to form his/her future.¹ Therefore, if we want to understand how Hauerwas understands what the church is, it is important to refer to his own story. In this context, in terms of story, I mean the Christian traditions which Hauerwas has inherited. They are the Methodist and Mennonite tradition. Hauerwas himself makes the claim that he writes as a deeply committed Wesleyan.² For him, the most significant essence of the Wesleyan tradition is the "sanctificationist" structure of the Christian faith. In the preceding section, we have already discussed how this plays an important role in Hauerwas' understanding of spirituality in terms of character, virtue and vision. However, Wesley's view of sanctification is not confined to an individual dimension, but extends its influence on his view of ecclesiology as well. That is to say, a central theme running through Wesley's writings is his encouragement of people to commit themselves to be a community capable of sustaining one another in the church's struggle against the world.³ Emphases on

¹ In an article "A Tale of Two Stories", Hauerwas explains how the importance of story in one's life is. He considers that "to a person to be free is to be capable of creating or choosing our identity. But all of us are more fundamentally formed by stories we did not create than we have chosen." He elaborates it in the context of being a Texan. For him, being a Texan is a Texan in his voice, manner and even in his soul. He continues to say that "a Texan is not a man who has the presumption he is without a story; he has a story that he accepts as it locates him on a land and within a people without whom he would not be at all." See *Christian Existence Today* (Durham, N.Carolina: Labyrinth, 1988), pp.25-46, and also my discussion of narrative in chapter two.

² S.Hauerwas and W.Willimon, "Why Resident Aliens Struck a Chord." In: *Missiology*, Vol.19, 1991, p.427.

³ See Stuart Andrews, *Methodism and Society* (London: Longman, 1970), pp.44f.

mutual support, mutual responsibility, church discipline and profound fellowship are the distinctive marks of Methodism. We will see later how this communal dimension of the Christian faith is important in Hauerwas' ecclesiology. But at the same time, I have to point out that Hauerwas does not say much about Wesley's concern of "social holiness"⁴ in his theology of, for example, justice. Ironically he writes an article "Why justice is a bad idea for Christians."⁵ How can his proposal of the church as alternative society ignore the practice of justice? In order not to distract our attention here, I will refer to this question in due course.

Apart from his Methodist tradition, Hauerwas also considers himself as a high church Mennonite.⁶ Here, I consider that there are four main emphases of the Mennonite's tradition which mostly influence Hauerwas' ecclesiology.⁷ First of all, the Mennonite theology is an "ecclesiocentric theology" which is a relative term to highlight its emphasis on the church life rather than as an exclusive term which considers all theological reflections should be subject to it. This theology advocates a strong sense of brotherhood/sisterhood and community. Scriven writes that

members of the community [anabaptist] were to look after the needs of one another. They were to see themselves not as lords of their possessions but as stewards and distributors. Beside concern with the physical well-being of the community, however, they were to show concern for its spiritual well-being.

⁴ Wesley believed that "the gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness." This conviction led to efforts to meet the needs and promote the welfare of those surround him. Furthermore, Wesley was also a loyal Tory in politics, never wavering in his support for the crown and for the established church and he instructed his ministers not to preach on politics, except when they might express support for the government. See J.Macquarrie ed., A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics, p.659.

⁵ See S.Hauerwas, After Christendom (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), pp.45-68.

⁶ S.Hauerwas, "The Testament of Friends," In: Christian Century, Feb. 28, 1990, p.214.

⁷ See Hans Georg Vom Berg ed., Mennonites and Reformed in Dialogue (Geneva: WARC, 1986), Robert Friedmann, The Theology of Anabaptism (Scottsdale: Herald, 1973), and Charles Scriven, The Transformation of Culture (Scottsdale: Herald, 1988).

Solidarity with Christ's body meant not only mutual aid but also mutual discipline and forgiveness.... The fundamental thing was mutual support in Christian life and witness.⁸

For the Mennonites, the real church is the local congregation. The church must be visible, the body of believers together. Secondly, regarding the relationship between the church and society, Friedmann, a Mennonite theologian, makes a remark that according to E.Troeltsch's distinction between absolute and the relative natural law in theology,

all the great church bodies in Christendom subscribe to the latter accepting compromises with the imperfections of this world and excusing themselves with Adam's Fall, when the absolute natural law was lost. Anabaptists, however, separated themselves from the world exactly by reason of these compromises.⁹

However, it is important to say that this position is not unanimous among Mennonites. Some are very actively involved in the discussion of great international issues like war, peace, justice and hunger. But for the Mennonites, the boundary between the church and the world is sharply maintained. Thirdly, the Mennonite tradition employs two methodologies in its understanding of the Bible, namely, the "epistemology of obedience" and "hermeneutical community".¹⁰ The former suggests that Christians best understand God's Word and will when they live in accordance with what they already know of his will, and the latter implies that a text is best understood within the context of the congregation. Finally, the Mennonite tradition emphasizes the primacy of discipleship. For the Mennonites, discipleship is associated with having a new life and actual obedience of Christ, actually following his example. Thus, moral reformation is a requirement of Christ's followers. In the following, when we discuss Hauerwas' ecclesiology, we will easily perceive how

⁸ C.Scriven, The Transformation of Culture (Scottdale: Herald, 1988), p.25.

⁹ R.Friedmann, The Theology of Anabaptism, p.118.

¹⁰ H.G.V.Berg ed., Mennonites and Reformed in Dialogue, p.16.

much his ecclesiology relates to the Mennonite tradition.

Before taking up the issue of Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology, it may be interesting to ask, firstly, whether Hauerwas is a Methodist by chance or whether he is a Mennonite by will [perhaps, the word, "chance", is rather strong. But I just want to highlight the contrast]; and secondly, whether the Methodist and the Mennonite tradition have more in common rather than different. If we employ Hauerwas' concept of story, we find that he does not choose to be a Methodist, but was raised within the Methodist church. Being a Methodist is not a role that he has chosen, but rather it is simply part and parcel of who he is. No matter how much he is influenced by, or how much he identifies himself with, the Mennonite tradition, the Methodist influence cannot be removed from his theology. This is very obvious in his writings. On the other hand, it is right to suggest that Hauerwas deliberately identifies himself with the Mennonite approach. He confesses,

"At that time I moved to the University of Notre Dame. There for the first time I encountered and began to take seriously the work of John Howard Yoder.... Surprisingly, Yoder's account of the Church fit almost exactly the kind of community I was beginning to think was required by an ethics of virtue."¹¹

This identification does not necessarily imply that Hauerwas gives up his Methodist tradition, because every Christian tradition has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is a tragedy when any Christian tradition refuses to be challenged and reformed through dialogue, but strictly keeps its denominational confession as absolute. Nevertheless, having a spirit of dialogue does not necessarily settle all the denominational differences. It, therefore, is not necessary to compromise two traditions. For Hauerwas, being a Methodist is his identity, but not the ultimate feature of his identity. To identify with the Mennonite tradition is not a rejection of

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.xxiv.

his denominational confession [Methodist], but rather this provides him with a vantage point to appreciate his tradition critically for the sake of being a truthful follower of Christ.

Concerning the relationship between the church and the world, among his ten theses of Christian social ethics, Hauerwas holds the belief that

the primary social task of the Church is to be itself- that is, a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence, trusting in God's promise of redemption;

the Church does not exist to provide an ethos for democracy or any other form of social organisation, but stands as a political alternative to every nation, witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ.¹²

These two theses outline a basic framework of Hauerwas' ecclesiology. However, we may be tempted to make a quick conclusion saying that Hauerwas is encouraging a form of sectarianism. In order to assess Hauerwas' proposal fairly, I consider that it is essential to explore and clarify more about Hauerwas' motivations and arguments behind these two theses.

Primarily, extreme care must be taken to distinguish Hauerwas' call for the church to be itself from any form of escapism. Hauerwas' proposal is not the result of fear of the world, but rather the result of "repentance". In other words, Hauerwas' call is a concern of faithfulness instead of self-righteousness, being responsible instead of irresponsible. The call to repentance is based on the fact that the churches are closely identified with the existing social order which eventually leads them into cultural captivity. Hauerwas finds that the churches consciously or unconsciously accommodate themselves to the social values. For instance, the churches adopt the

¹² S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, pp.9-11.

structures and values of the large corporation in their organisational patterns. The ordinary social values are reproduced rather than reversed in the churches, and they have substituted a captive civil religion for the clear proclamation of the Word of God. As a result, this makes the gospel credible to the modern world at the cost of giving up the dynamic of the gospel. Thus, the fundamental concern of Hauerwas' ecclesiology is "to get the church accommodated to the gospel rather than the gospel adapted to the status quo in the world."¹³ This is the essence of Hauerwas' proposal for the church to be itself.

In the American context, Hauerwas particularly refers to the problem that the churches accommodate themselves to the "American way of life": that is, liberal democracy.¹⁴ By liberalism, Hauerwas means that it is an

impulse deriving from the Enlightenment project to free all people from the chains of their historical particularity in the name of the freedom. As an epistemological position liberalism is the attempt to defend a foundationalism in order to free reason from being determined by any particularistic tradition. Politically liberalism makes the individual supreme unit of society, thus making the political task the securing of co-operation between arbitrary units of desire.¹⁵

It is necessary to attempt to explain Hauerwas' critique of liberalism. Firstly, in the so-called liberal democratic state, individual freedom is upheld and protected. But this is not something to be enthusiastic about it because, according to Hauerwas, the greatest loss the people feel in such society is the loss of self. This loss can be

¹³ S.Hauerwas & W.Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.28.

¹⁴ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, pp.12-13.

Bryant presents an interesting chapter describing how the different approaches to the understanding of millennium affect one's view of politics. Particularly, he discusses this in the context of America. For instance, he points out that the postmillennium may allow people to believe that the American life is somehow better, and American political institution somehow more appropriate to the way of God's will is done on earth. See M.Darrol Bryant, "America as God's Kingdom." In: Religion and Political Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp.51-94.

¹⁵ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.18.

understood in two ways. On the one hand, liberalism embraces the market as the dominant institution of society which involves a fundamental change in the concept of human nature. The traditional view of a human being was that of a being whose activity was an end in itself. With the rise of the market society the essence of rational purpose was taken to be the pursuit of possessions; we are what we own. Furthermore, it legitimizes the idea that the governing law of human nature is the "insatiable desire of every man for power to render the person and properties of others subservient to his pleasures."¹⁶ Eventually, co-operation and community are replaced by abundance and technology. More importantly, this system strips them of all personal uniqueness in order to make them productive members of the technological mass society. People tend to become their roles, and thus are alienated from their true selves. On the other hand, the liberal democratic society promises its citizens a society in which each citizen is free to create his/her own meaning, but it has nothing to say about what an individual does with his/her freedom; it is not an all-embracing ethic. Indeed, a major aim of the liberal is to leave the ethical problem for the individual to wrestle with. Freedom of the individual or perhaps the family becomes the ultimate goal in judging social arrangements. As a result, the liberal democratic society makes

us strangers to one another as we go about detaching ourselves from long term commitments, protecting our rights, thinking alone. Our society is a vast supermarket of desire in which each of us is encouraged to stand alone and go out and get what the world owes us.¹⁷

In comparison with the totalitarianism, Hauerwas finds that

the Russian lives in a social system that claims to achieve freedom by falsely investing all authority in the power of the Party; the American lives in a social system that tries to insure freedom by trying to insure

¹⁶ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.77.

that each individual can be his or her own tyrant.¹⁸

He reminds Christians that freedom is an abstraction that can easily direct their attention away from faithfully serving as the church in democratic social orders.

Secondly, there is a wide belief that people should use their democratic power in a responsible way to make the world a better place in which to live. In the interest of securing more equitable forms of justice possible in their society, Hauerwas makes the criticism that Christians have failed to challenge the moral presuppositions of their polity and society. That is to say, they simply accept the assumption that politics is about the distribution of desires, irrespective of the content of those desires, and any consideration of the development of virtuous people as a political issue seems an inexcusable intrusion into their personal liberty.¹⁹ The major defect of liberalism's assumption is that a just polity is possible without the people being just. In the name of justice, the churches try to create a society in which faith in a living God is rendered irrelevant or private. Activist Christians who talk about justice promote a notion of justice that envisions a society in which faith in God is rendered quite unnecessary, since everybody already believes in peace and justice even when everybody does not believe in God.²⁰ If so, what uniqueness can the church contribute to society? For Hauerwas, the greatest contribution to society of the church is to be the church. According to him, the making of community is a revolutionary act. It proposes to detach men and women from their dependence upon

¹⁸ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.125.

¹⁹ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.73.

²⁰ S.Hauerwas & W.Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.37. Also see H.M.Kuitert, Everything is Politics, but Politics is not Everything (London: SCM, 1986). In this book, Kuitert tries to argue that the Church should not be involved in politics. Although his whole framework is quite different from Hauerwas, he makes a similar point to Hauerwas. That is to say, the Church becomes secular because it just repeats what other people have said about justice and peace. It has nothing to contribute to the world.

the dominant institutions of the world system and creates an alternative corporate reality based upon different social values. Repentance and redirection are possible for people only when they are presented with an alternative.

Thirdly, due to the tremendous impact of Reinhold Niebuhr²¹, the contemporary churches have often assumed that they must naturally favour democratic societies because, firstly, there is the faith in the potential dignity of all human being as children of God, which is as much a part of Christian doctrine as the recognition of the universality of sin; secondly, it is clear that constitutional protection for the individual and for minorities are absolutely necessary to prevent tyranny; thirdly, there is no group that is disinterested enough to have power over others without the check that is provided by universal suffrage; and finally, such societies have institutionalized the freedom of religion through legal recognition of the freedom of conscience.²² However, for Hauerwas, these reasons do not automatically imply that the churches should support the liberal democracy wholeheartedly. On the contrary, he realizes that it is naive to believe that democracies are always for and by the people. In fact, democracies after all can be just as tyrannical in their claims on the loyalties of their citizens as totalitarian alternatives. Democratic societies and states, no less than totalitarian ones, reserve the right to command their citizens' conscience to take up arms and kill not only other human beings but other Christians in the name of relative moral goods. Hauerwas writes that

the very state to secure our rights is based on an irresolvable dilemma

²¹ R.Niebuhr writes that "man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (London: Nisbet, 1945), p.vi. Besides, Niebuhr's Christian realism has a tremendous impact on American Christian social ethics.

²² J.C.Bennett, Christian Ethics and Social Policy (New York: Scribner, 1946), p.83.

because it has to present itself in two *prima facie* incompatible ways. On the one hand, the democratic state modestly claims to be a mere means toward an end. On the other hand, the same state needs to convince its citizens that it can give them a meaningful identity because the state is the only means of achieving the common good..... And yet, to preserve themselves, all state, even democracies, must ask their citizens to die for them.²³

In this respect, democracy does not have much difference from totalitarianism. More importantly, the danger of democracy is that because the churches assume that democracies protect their freedom as Christians they may well miss the ways the democratic state remains a state that continues to wear the head of the beast. Therefore, Hauerwas concludes that it is impossible to undertake American democracy as the American church's primary social ethics when this democracy demands their citizens ultimate loyalty.

Hauerwas' suspicion of liberal democracy is not a form of scepticism. This was true especially of the 1950s and 1960s, when the Cold War became hot, and Christians in the West one-sidedly regarded democracy as equivalent to the Christian faith and regarded communism as devil. Although many theologians may not completely agree with Hauerwas' proposal [the primary task of the church is to be the church], many of them probably would share the concern of Hauerwas: that is, the idolatry of the liberal democracy and a tendency of returning to the constantinian era²⁴. For instance, John C. Bennett has already pointed out the danger of liberal democracy, saying that a society that is perfectly organized as a democracy, with honest elections and with full freedom for minorities to express themselves, may

²³ S.Hauerwas & W. Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.35.

²⁴ Constantinian era means the epoch of powerful Christendom, of the political and cultural power of Christianity, of Christian civilization. In its form, it was the epoch of concordats between state and church, an arrangement whereby the church was either patronized by the state or at least protected, and where the state was regarded by the church as *defensor fidei* and exalted by her.

deliberately choose to be a society that encourages secular or pagan ways of life. It may vote to follow policies based upon a low and hedonistic standard of values or that are isolationist and irresponsible in relation to the needs of other communities.²⁵ J.Moltmann, with the insight of Marxism, endeavours to develop a critical theology which helps the church to get rid of its ideological captivity.²⁶ This theology is not concerned with conferring an aura of sanctity on politics as much as with questioning and demystifying the political sphere. Rather it resists the reduction of faith to the terms of a particular political ideology, while affirming a close and necessary relationship between faith and politics and the need to interpret theology in its social and political context: neither is liberal democracy closer to the Kingdom of God, nor should the church be used as an instrument to fortify the liberal democratic ideology.

However, for Hauerwas, the fruits of political liberalism are by no means all bad, but Christians must submit liberalism's moral assumptions to radical critique. This critical questioning cannot be a matter of simply "qualifying some of the excess of liberalism" or proposing ways of fine-tuning the mechanisms of the liberal state for a more equitable distribution of goods, because Christians already have a primary, authoritative story, and they may not agree to the story of liberalism, which entices them "to believe that freedom and rationality are independent of narrative- i.e. we are free to the extent we have no story." Too often, in Hauerwas' opinion, the churches have surrendered to this conviction, and therefore have abandoned their duties. For Hauerwas,

²⁵ J.C.Bennett, Christianity and Communism Today (New York: Association, 1961), p.151

²⁶ Moltmann's theology of hope is largely indebted to the Marxist's philosopher Ernst Bloch's work, The Principle of Hope. Throughout his works, we find that on the one hand, Moltmann takes Marx's critique on religion seriously. On the other hand, he attempt to construct a theology which is both political and personal relevant. See Richard Bauckham, Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987).

the overriding conflicts of our time is not that between democracies and totalitarianism, not because those who are for human freedom and those that seek to repress it. Rather the overriding conflict of our time is the same as that from the beginning for it is the conflict between those that would remain loyal to God's Kingdom and those that would side with the world.²⁷

Now, we turn to see how the church and the world relate to one another in Hauerwas' theology. Generally speaking, there is a misunderstanding that Hauerwas' emphasis on the distinctiveness of the church is to advocate an anti-world or other-world mentality. This criticism always fails to see or appreciate that Hauerwas' emphasis on the Christian distinctiveness is for the sake of helping the world understand what it means to be the world. Hauerwas writes that

for the world has no way of knowing it is world without the church pointing to the reality of God's Kingdom. How could the world ever recognize the arbitrariness of the divisions between people if it did not have a contrasting model in the unity of the church? Only against the church's universality can the world have the means to recognize the irrationality of the divisions resulting in violence and war, as one arbitrary unit of people seek to protect themselves against the knowledge of their arbitrariness.²⁸

Thus, Hauerwas never excludes the world from his theological reflection. The world is still God's creation. The task of the church is to show the world what it means to be God's creation. Hauerwas continues to say that

church and world are thus relational concepts- neither is intelligible without the other. They are companions on a journey that makes it impossible for one to survive without the other, though each constantly to do so. They are thus more enemies than friends, an enmity tragically arising from the church's attempt to deny its calling and service to the world- dismissing the world as irredeemable, or transforming its own servant status into triumphalist subordination of the world. But God has in fact redeemed the world, even if the world refuses to acknowledge its redemption. The church can never abandon

²⁷ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.129.

²⁸ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.100.

the world to the hopelessness deriving from its rejection of God, but must be a people with a hope sufficiently fervid to sustain the world as well as itself.²⁹

Here, it appears to us that Hauerwas suggests a kind of dualism, that is, the norm of Christ and the norm of the world. However, this should be careful to note that what Hauerwas said is simply that the Christian's duties are not the same as those laid upon him/her by the state. Therefore, Hauerwas' dualism is the difference of the agents rather than the duality of Kingdom, namely, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of humankind. Thus, we can say that the call of the church to be itself is not a formula of withdrawal ethics, nor is it a self-righteous attempt to flee from the world's problems. It is clear in Hauerwas' mind that the existence of the church is for the world, not for itself. And the best contribution of the church is through its being a "contrast model". For Hauerwas, the world needs the church, not to help the world run smoothly or to make the world a better and safer place to live. Rather the world needs the church because, without the church, the world does not know who it is. The only way for the world to know that it is being redeemed is for the church to point to the Redeemer by being a redeemed people. The way for the world to know that it needs redeeming is for the church to enable the world to strike hard against something which is an alternative to what the world offers.³⁰ Therefore, for Hauerwas, the church's service and mission in the world is absolutely dependent on its being different from the world, being in the world and not of the world.

Hauerwas' account of the relationship between the church and the world may arouse some difficulties. For example, does Hauerwas' strong emphasis on the centrality of the church suggest that there is no salvation outside the church? Is

²⁹ Ibid., p.101.

³⁰ S.Hauerwas & W.Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.94.

Hauerwas' proposal a kind of idealism which takes no account of effectiveness? Finally, is there no convergence between the church and the world? To emphasize the centrality of the church does not mean that the church is the Kingdom of God. Rather, as Hauerwas states,

it is my thesis that questions of the truth or falsity of Christian convictions cannot even be addressed until Christians recover the church as a political community necessary for our salvation. What Christian believes about the universe, the nature of human existence, or even God does not, cannot and should not save. Our beliefs or better our convictions, only make sense as they are embodied in a political community we call church.³¹

Besides, when Hauerwas considers that the church is necessary for the world to know that it is part of a story that it cannot know without the church, this is nothing to do with the affirmation of the superiority of the church or of the authority of a particular church. Rather it is a call to be faithful and truthful to God's mission. It is a reminder that the church has no excuse not to be God's witnesses. Therefore, Hauerwas' emphasis is understood in terms of servanthood instead of authority.

Regarding the issue of whether or not Hauerwas' proposal is idealistic, he contends that obedience to Christ rather than effectiveness and calculated success is the criterion of faith. The New Testament ethic is based upon obedience and faithfulness, not upon expediency and calculation. That is to say, the cross is the Christian's example and pattern, the seeming defeat that was turned into the greatest victory in history through the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith lives by the means of a cross and through the power of a resurrection. Thus, the Christians' part in God's action in history is to be a servant people who live in radical obedience to Jesus Christ in whom is revealed God's will for human life and society. Faith is the willingness to pursue the seemingly ineffectual path of

³¹ S.Hauerwas, After Christendom, p.26.

obedience and trust God for the results.

Although Hauerwas maintains a sharp difference between the church and the world, it does not mean that the church cannot work with the world. Rather the church should know that its story is not the same as the world's. Therefore, when the church and the world work together, such as, in the peace movements, the church should know that its motivation and aim are not the same as the world, and on the other hand, the world should know that the church is never its loyal comrade. Concerning Christians' practice of justice, Hauerwas is sceptical, not because to practise justice is unnecessary, but because Christians allow their imagination to be captured by concepts of justice determined by the presuppositions of liberal societies, that is, rights and contractual agreements. Hauerwas considers that

the current emphasis on justice among Christians springs not so much from an effort to locate the Christian contribution to wider society as it does from Christians' attempt to find a way to be societal actors without that action being colored by Christian presupposition. In short, the emphasis on justice functions as the contemporary equivalent of a natural law ethic.³²

However, like his concepts of character, vision and virtue, Hauerwas fails to concretize what his alternative proposal is.

When Hauerwas talks about the marks of the church, he does not refer to any particular traditional marks of the church, namely, unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. Instead he points to the sacraments of the church and the life of Christians.³³ For Hauerwas, sacraments- eucharist and baptism- are central for the church because the story of Jesus is not only to be told, but also enacted. Through

³² Ibid., p.58.

³³ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, pp.106-111.

the very performance of the sacraments, the community in whose center it stands becomes shaped in a way that the story of Jesus can be rightly told and heard. Thus, the remembering enactment of Jesus' story is the root of Hauerwas' interpretation of baptism and eucharist.³⁴ He writes that

we call this new creation church. It is constituted by word and sacrament as the story we tell, the story we embody, must not only be told but enacted. In the telling we are challenged to be a people capable of hearing God's good news such that we can be a witness to others. In the enactment, in Baptism and Eucharist, we are made part of a common history which requires continuous celebration to be rightly remembered. Through this telling and enactment we, like Israel, become peculiarly a people who live by our remembering the history of God's redemption of the world.³⁵

Only if the churches understand baptism and eucharist as concrete activities which determine and pattern the church as church by drawing Christians more and more into God's story with all of humanity, and only if the sacraments are performed as the central witness to God's story, do Christians understand them adequately as the crucial and central activity of the church.

The second mark of the church, according to Hauerwas, is the life of Christians. He considers that the people of God are called to correspond to God's activity in a way which truthfully witnesses to that activity. He said

that story [Jesus] requires the formation of a corresponding community that has learned to live in ways appropriate to them.

A people formed in the likeness of God cannot be anything less than a community of character. That is, it is a community which takes as its task the initiation of people into the story in a manner that forms and shapes their lives in a desire and distinctive way.³⁶

³⁴ In the framework of Hauerwas' theology, sacraments is important in terms of his emphasis on the importance of narrative. See my discussion of narrative in chapter two.

³⁵ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.53.

³⁶ S.Hauerwas, "The Gesture of a Truthful Story." In: Theology Today, Vol.42, 1986, pp.182-183.

Hauerwas considers that there is a distinctive form and pattern which makes the church's witness to God's activity truthful. While the church can never prove the truth of God's activity in and through Jesus Christ, it is part of the church's responsibility to make a claim as strong as possible through its witness to that story, and this witness includes the form and pattern of the church, the shape of the life and coexistence of its members. Hope, patience, constancy and hospitality are some of the signs of a life of mutual edification and correction. However, Hauerwas makes sure that this should not be misunderstood in a moralistic and works-righteous manner by pointing out that the key for understanding this mark lies in the first mark, the performance of the sacraments. He said that

the kind of holiness that marks the church.... is not that of moral perfection, but the holiness of a people who have learned not to fear one another and thus are capable of love. We do not go ahead with our own meals, or our lives, but have learned to live in presence of others without fear and envy. We thus become a perfect people through the meals we share with our Lord. We learn that forgiveness of the enemy, even when the enemy is ourselves, is the way God would have his Kingdom accomplished.³⁷

"The truth demands truthfulness"³⁸ is the core of the second mark of the church. Does Hauerwas suggest that tradition is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the determination of the truthfulness of Christian life and thought? What Hauerwas means relates to D.Bonhoeffer's saying about cheap and costly grace. Thus, it is impossible and a mistake to isolate "external" evidence from "internal" evidence as the character of Christian belief which requires the transformation of the self, and vice versa. Obviously, Hauerwas concentrates on the internal evidence. However, he notes that

as Christians, we are not after all called to be morally good, but rather

³⁷ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.110.

³⁸ See the discussion between Hauerwas and Julian Hartt over this matter. Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol.LIII/1, 1984, pp.116-156.

to be faithful to the story that we claim is truthful to the very character of reality- which is that we are creatures of a gracious God who asks nothing less of us than faithful service to God's Kingdom.³⁹

These two marks of the church suggest that the Christian faith has to be understood in a communal context.⁴⁰ The path of obedience to God is a communal pilgrimage rather than merely an individual trek. The church as alternative society can be possible only when a body of believers share their lives together, support one another, take liability and responsibility for one another, hold one another accountable to a common commitment, and reinforce a set of values that is radically different from the larger society.

In summary, in order to be an alternative society, Hauerwas considers, firstly, that the church has to be active in creating new awareness of the meaning of its faith. It is concerned with a new understanding of the nature and demands of the Christian calling and how it relates to participation in the world. Secondly, the church has to be a place for the creation of styles of life based upon this new awareness. These new possibilities begin to free people from the intense pressures and demands of the world's forms and patterns. The community of believers becomes the first fruits of the Kingdom, a sort of pilot project for a whole new order of things. And finally, this can evoke creative responses to the world arising from new awareness and life-style. These responses bear witness to the faith and life of the community and become signs of social change, confronting the idolatries of the world system. That confrontation can open up new possibilities for change and the construction of alternatives. Therefore, Hauerwas' call for the church to be itself is not like the

³⁹ S.Hauerwas, "The Gesture of a Truthful story." p.182.

⁴⁰ See S.Hauerwas, "The Sermon on the Mount, Just War, and the Quest for Peace." In: Concilium, pp.36-43.

quietistic and the cynical understandings which both lead to a wrong passivity: the former thinks that all outer things, the world of activity and politics are unimportant as long as the soul is taken care of, while the latter despairs about a world which supposedly remains the same whatever one does or does not do. Moreover, Hauerwas' call is not like the activist and the utopian understandings, which by means of proxy usurp God's activity and, if necessary through force and violence, create a world of peace and justice. Rather for Hauerwas, the church has to give a truthful witness to justice and thereby calls society to join in. It is faithfulness that matters, not social effectiveness. Hauerwas sums up his thought in such words:

The most creative social strategy we have to offer is the church. Here we show the world a manner of life the world can never achieve through social coercion or governmental action. We serve the world by showing it something that it is not, namely, a place where God is forming a family out of strangers.⁴¹

⁴¹ S.Hauerwas & W.Willimon, Resident Aliens, p.83.

b. *A Critique*

Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology is frequently accused of being a kind of sectarianism. In what way then do Hauerwas' critics regard him as a sectarian? Here, I would particularly refer to Wilson D. Miscamble's and James M. Gustafson's critique simply because both of them have made a precise critique of Hauerwas' ecclesiology. According to Miscamble¹, Hauerwas' ecclesiology is sectarian because Hauerwas sees the mission of the church as one of standing apart from society and witnessing to it. He comments that to separate the church from the world in order to give witness does not remove its culpability for what takes place in the world. Miscamble accuses Hauerwas of running from responsibility because Hauerwas removes the church from the life and death policy issues of the human community. In comparison with the Latin American "ecclesial base communities", Miscamble's criticism is that Hauerwas' communities of character appear inwardly focused and self-absorbed. He concludes that Hauerwas' ecclesiology stands "against culture", to borrow from H. Richard Niebuhr's typology. Is Miscamble's critique based on a fair evaluation of Hauerwas' works? In the previous section, we have already noted that Hauerwas never separates the church from the world. Rather, he takes an unusual path to understand the relationship between the church and the world: that is, the church is to be itself. Miscamble's critique itself does have some problematic presuppositions. Firstly, is it reasonable to label any standpoint apart from active involvement in politics sectarian? Does witnessing to the Kingdom necessarily require engagement in politics? Secondly, how can we understand the model, "Christ- the transformer of culture", to borrow from H. Richard Niebuhr's typology, if it is the most appropriate model of the relationship between the church and the world, according to Miscamble? Can Hauerwas' ecclesiology itself, the church as

¹ See Wilson D. Miscamble, "Sectarian Passivism?" In: *Theology Today*, Vol. XLIV, 1987, pp. 69-77.

alternative society, also be considered as a transformative power in society, albeit less obvious and effective? And finally, is Hauerwas' sectarianism dependent upon the kind of challenge that living in a liberal society presents, or is it in principle a sectarianism that regards every society and its correlative political form finally as a form of atheism? Before moving on, I would like to refer also to Gustafson's critique.

In an article entitled to "The Sectarian Temptation"², Gustafson attempts to explain the sociological reasons behind the tendency and the attractiveness of being sectarian. In short, in the threat of cultural pluralism, the church is tempted to draw a line between true believers and others in order to ensure a clear identity which frees persons from ambiguity and uncertainty. Eventually, this prevents Christianity taking seriously the wider world of science and culture, and limits the participation of Christians in the ambiguities of moral and social life. In this manner, according to Gustafson, Hauerwas' theology is a form of sectarianism which promotes a kind of self-referential mentality, and ignores the truth claims of theology, except insofar as they are subjectively true for persons socialized into the Christian culture and language. In other words, Christian beliefs become subjectively meaningful, and their truth is not challenged.³ Sharing with Miscamble, Gustafson considers Hauerwas' ecclesiology to be inclined towards withdrawal from society. For Gustafson, it is necessary that Christians must withdraw from participation in any structure which would presumably compromise their fidelity to Jesus. However, it is an irresponsible act if it demands withdrawal from participation in controversial moral and political situations, because it lets the destiny of life in the world be determined by secular

² James M. Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation." In: Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society, Vol.40, 1985, pp.83-94.

³ I will refer to this issue again in chapter two when I discuss Hauerwas' view of narrative.

centres of power. Finally, Gustafson criticizes Hauerwas' theology for lacking a doctrine of creation. This lack makes Hauerwas fail to appreciate God's work in the natural world, and this results in an antagonistic attitude to the world. Gustafson said that

sectarianism preserves the identity of Christianity but at great cost to its intelligibility and to its participation in universities, politics and cultural life.⁴

In the following, I take both Miscamble's and Gustafson's critique together to discuss in what way their critiques hit the point, how true their interpretations of Hauerwas' standpoint are and to what extent their approaches are more valid than Hauerwas'.

In the preceding section, we have already discussed how Hauerwas understands the relationship between the church and the world. For Hauerwas, the church is never for itself, but for the world. The appropriate way for the church to serve the world is not through engaging in social transformation, but rather through being a contrasting example. Thus, the world is never dismissed from Hauerwas' concern. Besides, from Hauerwas' writings, we can detect that he deals with a wide range of the so-called social issues, such as war, nuclear disarmament, medicine and politics.⁵ However, these examples do not change Miscamble's and Gustafson's impression of Hauerwas. Why is this so? I do not believe that they fail to notice Hauerwas' writings on social issues. Rather I consider that there are two presuppositions of Miscamble and Gustafson which make it hard further to take in what Hauerwas has said. Put bluntly, Hauerwas' ecclesiology does not fit into their theological frameworks. Firstly, they consider that the only option for Christians is either "complete" involvement in culture or "complete" withdrawal. There is no other

⁴ Ibid., p.94.

⁵ See S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, Truthfulness and Tragedy and Against the Nations.

alternative. Secondly, they understand Christian ethics relatively, as a theoretical discipline to mobilize the energy and power of the church for social renewal. Regarding the first presupposition, we find such a rigid distinction problematic because it fails to appreciate the pluralistic possibilities or models of the church's involvement in culture. One may not agree that the church being an alternative society is an "effective" model, but one should not automatically draw the conclusion that this entails withdrawal from the world. This approach not only totally distorts other's meaning, but also absolutizes one's own preference. As I have indicated previously, Hauerwas never rejects the world. For him, the relationship between the church and the world is a matter of "how" rather than a matter of "whether". In other words, the church need not worry about whether to be in the world, but the church's only concern is how to be in the world, in what form, for what purpose. Interestingly enough, Hauerwas' ecclesiology is unusual but not without some support apart from the Mennonites. In an article entitled to "Christian Political Involvement in East and West: The Theological Ethics of Wolf Krotke"⁶, we find that Hauerwas' vision is shared by a Lutheran theologian in the context of a new united Germany. According to the exploration of John P. Burgess, Krotke takes secularization seriously. He considers that "in a time in which the individual has no ethical orientation, the ability to make ethical judgments is also missing, the Christian community is the offer to train this ability."⁷ To do this, the church must first train people in its distinctive language. Its distinctive language thus shapes a distinctive community, an alternative community. It does not seek to exercise control over society's power structures but to live out God's love and forgiveness. It is a community characterized by new possibilities for witness and service to the world. Gustafson is right that the

⁶ John B. Burgess, "Christian Political Involvement in East and West: The Theological Ethics of Wolf Krotke." In: Journal of Religion, Vol.71, 1991, pp.202-216.

⁷ Ibid., p.206.

attractiveness of the so-called "sectarianism" can be explained sociologically, but he is wrong to conclude that it intends to flee from engagement with reality. On the contrary, Krotke and Hauerwas show that the church to be itself is a responsible way of being witness in the world where people are lost. Therefore, Hauerwas' ecclesiology is not to retreat from the threat of uncertainty, but rather is a deliberate and active act to face the ambiguity of society by providing an example and a direction.

In relation to the second presupposition of Miscamble and Gustafson, it is true that there is a strong link between God and the world. This relationship is best illustrated in the biblical prophetic traditions. In the Old Testament, the activities of the prophets show us that God is concerned with right life as much as true worship. God is not merely the private morality of the home, but also the public morality on which national life is founded. The pure heart for the individual is as important as the just institution for the nation. The Book of Amos is the typical example of this tradition. In the contemporary theologies, this emphasis is largely held by political and liberation theologians. However, Hauerwas reminds us that the activities of the prophets also have the pastoral dimension. That is to say, the prophets are those who interpret past, present and future in the light of God's calling of Israel. It is the duty of the prophets to remind their community to discern and interpret events in the light of God's past relation with them.⁸ It is especially obvious in the post-exilic literature. The prophets not only proclaim a message of comfort and hope, but also remind the Jews that they would not be forgotten. Thus, the social and pastoral dimensions of the prophetic role should be evenly emphasized. The former is about the critical dimension of the prophetic task, while the latter is about the interpretative role of the

⁸ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, pp.75-80,

prophets. Nevertheless, when the prophetic role is solely understood as a call for justice against the status quo, then it overlooks the presupposition that is necessary to sustain such an endeavour, for the question of what kind of community is necessary to sustain the task of so interpreting the world is ignored. At the same time, when the prophetic role is solely understood as a self-reflecting and an inward searching discipline, then it misses the profound meaning of this calls: that is, the church is not called to be self-interested, but for a wider community. I believe that Gustafson would not wish to ignore the importance of the pastoral dimension of the prophetic activity.⁹ At the same time, Hauerwas would not wish to neglect its social dimension. Their difference is simply a matter of emphasis. I consider that each of them challenges the other not to neglect the dialectical prophetic tradition.

In his answer to the question, can ethics be Christian?, Gustafson said that Christian ethics and universal human ethics are convertible terms. What is ethically justifiable to do is the Christian thing to do, and vice versa. This is given theological legitimacy by the doctrine of the Trinity in which Christ, the second person, is the one in and through whom all things are created. From this point of view, in principle there is no distinctive Christian morality, but all morality that is rationally justifiable is Christian.¹⁰

⁹ Two typical examples can be found in J.M.Gustafson, Christ and the Moral Life (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), and "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life." In: Norm and Context in Christian Ethics (London: SCM, 1968), pp.17-36.

¹⁰ J.M.Gustafson, "Can Ethics be Christian? Some Conclusions." In: Readings in Moral Theology No.2, ed. Charles E.Curran (New York: Paulist, 1980), pp.147-148.

In this article, Gustafson goes on to say that the ethics of the Christian must be Christian. On the one hand, the Christian community has a particular vocation to follow Jesus and the way of life that he exemplified and taught; it is obliged to be fully obedient to his lordship, to be a distinctive people with a distinctive way of life. On the other hand, while Christ is confessed to be the saviour of the world, the sorts of philosophical speculations that give grounds for the convertibility of the Christian and the rational are eschewed. The Christian community has its significant grounding in a historical event, and its history and conduct are to be determined by that historical determination. Therefore, the ethics of the Christian is and must be Christian ethics; all of their moral actions are under Jesus' lordship; since he is Lord, the distinctive aspects of his way of life and teaching are as morally obligatory on those who confess him as Lord as are the ordinary aspect.

A full discussion of this can be found in J.M.Gustafson, Can Ethics be Christian?

Gustafson's reasoning is based on his theological belief that God's purposes are for "the well being of man and creation", and thus on most occasions the reasons that justify any moral act would justify the moral acts of Christians. This is what he means by the place of the doctrine of creation in Christian ethics. From our preceding study, we find that Hauerwas never denies the Christian affirmation of God as creator. However, Hauerwas is quite cautious to use the doctrine of creation to justify the church's involvement in politics and to underwrite an autonomous realm of morality separate from Christ's lordship. He said that

what allows us to look expectantly for agreement among those who do not worship God is not that we have a common morality based on autonomous knowledge of autonomous nature, but that God's Kingdom is wider than the church.¹¹

Here, both Gustafson and Hauerwas pose an interesting issue: that is, what the relationship is between an ethic of creation and an ethic of the Kingdom. For Gustafson, an ethic of creation is grounded in the fact that this world is God's creation. Thus, there is no area of earthly life which needs to be denied. Human life on earth is important to God. He has given it order and it matters that it should conform to the order he has given it. Therefore, the church's involvement in culture is affirmed and necessary because this order requires of the church both a denial of all that threatens to become disordered and a progress toward a life which goes beyond this order without negating it. For Hauerwas, an ethic of the Kingdom sets him to work differently. An ethic of the Kingdom is based on the "already, but not yet". Its "alreadiness" is the affirmation of the lordship of Christ over the world, while its "not-yet ness" is to avoid the historicalization of the Kingdom in earthly manner. For Hauerwas, the Kingdom of God is an eschatological event which serves as a challenge to the existing social order. But this challenge is represented by the church with its own communal life and institutional order as a model and a symbol

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.17.

of the ultimate destiny of humankind in the Kingdom of God. Has then one to choose either an ethic of creation or an ethic of the Kingdom? Regarding this, Oliver O'Donovan makes a fair remark saying that

a Kingdom ethics which was set up in opposition to creation could not possibly be interested in the same eschatological Kingdom as that which the New Testament proclaims. At its root there would have to be a hidden dualism which interpreted the progress of history to its completion not as a fulfilment, but as a denial of its beginnings. A creation ethics, on the other hand, which was set up in opposition to the Kingdom, could not possibly be evangelical ethics, since it would fail to take note of the good news that God had acted to bring all that he had made to its fulfilment. In the resurrection of Christ creation is restored and the Kingdom of God dawns. Ethics which starts from this point may sometimes emphasize the newness, sometimes the primitiveness of the order that is there affirmed. But it will not be tempted to overthrow or deny either in the name of the order.¹²

This account points to the fact that both an ethic of creation and an ethic of the Kingdom are mutually important and supportive. Thus, the difference between Gustafson and Hauerwas is not necessarily that they are talking of two different things, but rather they are representing two sides of a coin.

Hauerwas' ecclesiology is very often misinterpreted as the model of "Christ against culture". This model suggests a kind of "sectarianism". Sectarianism often conjures up a sense of narrowness and provincialism. Following the governing definitions of Ernst Troeltsch¹³ (and derivatively, H.R.Niebuhr¹⁴), a sect is a community that does not share in or participate in the commonly accepted definition

¹² Oliver O'Donovan, Resurrection and Moral Order (Leicester: IVP, 1986), p.15.

¹³ E.Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches (New York: Macmillan, 1931). Troeltsch's summary statement is: "The sect is a voluntary society, composed of strict and definite Christian believers bound to each other by the fact that all have experienced the new birth. These believers live apart from the world, are limited to small groups, emphasize the law instead of grace, and in varying degrees within their own circle, set up the Christian order, based on love; all this is done in preparation for and expectation of the coming Kingdom of God."

¹⁴ H.R.Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), pp.17-21.

of reality. It operates out of a different practice of perception, epistemology and language. It holds to a set of alternative values which it regards as the truth. That is to say, it seeks to construct for its members an alternative life-world. Is then Hauerwas' ecclesiology a form of sectarianism? In a sense, Hauerwas' ecclesiology is a form of "sectarianism" because Hauerwas teaches that the primary task of the church is to be itself.¹⁵ However, it is important to distinguish Hauerwas' "sectarianism" from our general understanding of sectarianism because Hauerwas' claim does not intend to retreat from responsibility and the world. On the contrary, it intends to be a unique way to give witness to the world. Thus, Hauerwas' "sectarianism" helps us see that an alternative perception of reality is not a defensive measure but may be an act of identity, energy and power. Besides, sect-truth as alternative need not be a protected and monopolized claim. It can be a proposal to the larger community, a proposal of an interpretation (a reading of reality) in which the larger community can share and which will bear that community's structure. The sect does not accommodate its truth. But at the same time, it need not to monopolize its sense of truth. It may share it in unaccommodating ways, knowing that such an alternative truth inevitably has an impact on dominant truth. In this sense, Hauerwas' "sectarianism" should not be one-sided negatively understood. On the contrary, his account can even be considered as a model of "Christ-the transformer of culture". Thus, the difference between "Christ against culture" and "Christ- the transformer of culture" depends on how we define what activities are "against culture" and "transformation of culture".

Even though one may agree with Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology, one may find it very difficult to put into practice. Is Hauerwas talking about an ideal church?

¹⁵ Hauerwas emphasizes the distinctiveness of Christian ethics by highlighting the qualified term, "Christian." See The Peaceable Kingdom, pp.17-34.

If not, how then is it put into practice? From the preceding study, we notice that Hauerwas always emphasizes that he is concerned with the visible church, the concrete community of faith, he clearly is not abandoning the so-called empirical church as such.¹⁶ Therefore, we may say that the strength of Hauerwas' ethical reflection upon the church is that he avoids the problematic distinction between an ideal and an empirical church, between a theological concept which does not relate to reality and a reality which is to be understood on primarily non-theological ground. What he does instead is to take the concrete visible church communities theologically seriously by reminding them primarily of their call as church. What he describes ecclesiologically is not an ideal church but rather is an exegesis of the church's call to be the church. In our terminology, Hauerwas is concerned more with the congregation, the local church. In other words, he starts with the revival of the congregation. This emphasis leads first of all to the right kind of ethical perception of the congregation which is neither simply a social club nor simply some political pressure group, but rather the local church is the people of God called to be the people of God in all of their practices and activities. It makes a demand on the congregation by calling it into its concrete responsibility to its call. That is to say, ethics does not become relevant somewhere outside the congregation in the so-called real world, but starts right in the middle of the congregation. That life, to which this ethics refers, does not pass by the congregation, but takes place in the middle of it. However, an emphasis on the local church does not necessarily discredit the significance of apostolicity and catholicity of the church. As L. Newbigin writes that

the local congregation is not a branch of the universal Church, but it is the place where the universal Church is made visible. When the local congregation speaks and acts, its words and acts most claim to be the words and acts of the universal Church if they are to be

¹⁶ An obvious example can be found in his book Resident Aliens. In this book, he uses examples of his local congregation to demonstrate what it means for the church to be itself.

authentic.¹⁷

Interestingly enough, Hauerwas' emphasis on the local church is becoming increasingly widely accepted in contemporary theological reflection. For instance, Newbigin shares Hauerwas' view, suggesting that the Christian congregation itself is a significant impact on public life. Furthermore, he proposes that the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it. He considers that

if the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society....., it will not be forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns..... It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society.¹⁸

The most important contribution which the church can make to a new social order is to be itself a new social order. The basic unit of that new society is the local congregation. The local congregation is the place where the truth of the gospel is tested and experienced in the most basic way. In this sense, Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology proves important.

From the above discussion of Hauerwas' ecclesiology, one important question arises concerning to what extent Hauerwas' ecclesiology is effective. Nevertheless, Hauerwas always reminds us that it is wrong to measure any account of ecclesiology

¹⁷ L.Newbigin, Truth to Tell (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p.88.

¹⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp.232-234.

in terms of its social effectiveness, but only by the criterion of faithfulness to God. Otherwise, the church is trapped by the sociological understanding of functionalism. Hauerwas is correct in stating that what God requests Christians is to be faithful to him rather than to be socially effective in accordance with the standard of the world. This is fully revealed in the cross of Christ. In the American context, Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology may be found passive and conservative because Christian political involvement is allowed and even encouraged in America. However, in other social contexts, for instance, China where I come from, Hauerwas' account may be proved influential and important. In China, the Christian church is a minority community, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of cultural relevance. I consider that Hauerwas' account reminds the churches in China as to what extent they accommodate the Christian faith to the communist ideology. On the other hand, Hauerwas' account encourages Christians to live out their faith in accordance with the Kingdom's values in all areas of life, even though they may be deprived of political activity. The history of the church in China affirms that no one can deny that this is not a powerful witness.

However, I have to point out that if faithfulness is the criterion of the church, according to Hauerwas, then faithfulness should be nothing less than justice. If so, I find that the weakness of Hauerwas' account of ecclesiology is not concrete enough. I agree that the Christian community is the ultimate parallel institution, a group within a society constantly confronting all other groups with models of life and hope while demonstrating the possibility of human community, but I find it abstract to follow. In other words, if Hauerwas' ecclesiology is concerned with a visible church, he need to describe how this church may live out the meaning of faithfulness. Otherwise, his account can only be confined to the epistemological level which is contrary to his intention to accommodate the church to the Gospel.

2. SOBRINO'S ACCOUNT OF ECCLESIOLOGY

a. *The Church of the Poor*

Latin American liberation theology is born out of a situation marked by social injustice, oppression and poverty. Its task is to change the reality rather than to explain the reality.¹ Thus it demands a new way of doing theology and of practising the Christian faith. This demand is concretized in its ecclesiology. Sharing with other liberation theologians, Sobrino considers that "the church of the poor" is not only the most appropriate form of ecclesiology in Latin America, but also is "in its structure the true way of being a church in Jesus."² Before going to discuss what the church of the poor is, and how it is the true way of being a church, I consider that it is necessary to say something about the history of the church in Latin America. The history here is confined to the Roman Catholic church simply because the Catholic faith is dominant in Latin America, and Sobrino primarily writes as a Catholic.

When we look at the history of the church in Latin America, despite scattered reforms and sporadic innovations, it is fair to say that until the late 1950s, the Latin American churches had a well-deserved reputation for stodgy conservatism. Long-standing alliances with political and economic powers were rarely challenged, and for the most part the churches remained frozen in a defensive stance, suspicious of change, and strongly insistent on their guiding role in national culture. Their image of popular groups stressed the traditional view that the poor would be "always with us" and would require constant instruction and guidance to overcome a heritage of

¹ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor (London: SCM, 1984), pp.7-38.

² Ibid., p.124.

ignorant superstition.³

Since Vatican II, in social and political terms, the 1960s were on the whole an open and optimistic period for the churches. The 1968 conference of Latin American bishops at Medellin marked a high point in this process and shaped the outlines of a critical and prophetic stance for the churches, along with efforts to implement many liturgical, structural and pastoral innovations. But soon after Medellin, significant polarization appeared between those committed to a more thorough and radical promotion of change, and others content to modernize within the church as they looked toward gradual reform in society and politics. The tensions of this period came to a head at the 1979 Puebla meeting.⁴ At Puebla, a bitter and usually public struggle between progressives and conservatives ended in something of a standoff. No one was condemned, and each side continued its activities. However, since 1979, conflict on these issues has not declined. Conservative voices in the region's Catholic churches have been amplified by the appointment of large numbers of relatively young and highly conservative bishops, by determined campaigns to rein in what are seen as dangerously independent and excessively politicized groups, by concerted efforts to purge seminaries and schools of the influence of liberation theology, and by related attempts to promote alternative and presumably more malleable popular organisations linked to the church.⁵

³ See Daniel H. Levine, Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), Chapter Two.

⁴ See J. Sobrino, "The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic church in Latin America." In: Reflection on Puebla (London: CIRR, 1980), pp.22-43.

⁵ An example of this is the suppression of the political activities of the base Christian communities. See W.F. Hewitt, Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). Besides, the case of Leonardo Boff is another example. See J.L. Segundo, Theology and the Church (Chicago: Winston, 1985).

For Sobrino, to consider the church as the church of the poor is, on the one hand, to challenge the historical alliance between the church and the state, and on the other, to respond to the "signs of the times". The church of the poor is nothing other than an attempt to live faithfully to its call.

Primarily speaking, to see the church as the church of the poor relates to the concept of the Kingdom of God.⁶ Sobrino considers that "the church is entrusted with the tradition of the Kingdom and the requirement to make the Kingdom a reality."⁷ The church exists for the Kingdom, albeit that it is not identical with the Kingdom. How then does the Kingdom relate to the church of the poor, and vice versa? According to Sobrino, the Kingdom of God can be understood in three related ways: that is, the notional way which examines Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom by comparing it with earlier notions in Israel, the way of the addressee which considers that the addressees will intrinsically clarify what is "good" in the news, and the way of the practice of Jesus on the basis that what Jesus said and did was in the service of proclaiming the Kingdom.⁸ In the following, I intend to concentrate my attention to the way of addressee, because the notional way is not a unique contribution of liberation theology, while the way of the practice of Jesus will be examined in the chapter two of this thesis.

To consider the addressee of the good news as the way to know the Kingdom

⁶ Generally speaking, this understanding should meet with little disagreement among theologians, no matter how this may proceed to different views on the relationship between the world and the Church. For example, W.Pannenberg writes that "the central concern of the Church, and the primary point of reference for understanding the Church, must be the Kingdom of God. That is, the Kingdom must be the central concern of the Church if the Church is to remain faithful to the message of Jesus." (Theology and the Kingdom of God. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p.73.

⁷ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.200f

⁸ See J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, pp.67-104.

is based on the view that "if the Kingdom is good news, its recipients will help fundamentally in clarifying its content, since good news is something essentially relational, not all good news being so in equal measure for everyone."⁹ Briefly speaking, Jesus' ministry is to restore the gospel to its rightful place- to the place from where it ought to be read, and to the place where it becomes transparent for us all. This is the place where the poor are. For Jesus, poor and gospel are correlated terms. The poor are those whom the gospel is primarily intended to address, while the gospel is the good news only if it proclaims to the poor.¹⁰ The poor are the true representatives of God on earth. Sobrino considers that

the poor are those who are at the bottom of the heap in history and those who are oppressed by society and cast out from it; they are not, therefore, all human beings, but those at the bottom, and being at the bottom in this sense means being oppressed by those on top. Both economic poverty and lack of moral dignity can express this being at the bottom.¹¹

In Latin America, according to Sobrino, the poor are not only those who are economically, socially and politically deprived, but also those whose lives are deprived.¹² Their life is a type of life which is daily threatened by death and comes

⁹ Ibid., p.79.

¹⁰ Jesus did not wait to be asked for whom was his message intended. He gave the answer without being asked. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor....." (Lk.4:17-21) However, in the light of the biblical criticism, the question arises whether Lucan record is a fair elaboration of what Jesus might well have said on that occasion, or a work of sheer imagination. James D.G.Dunn insists that the former is much likely. The reasons are that the same emphasis appears in at least two other traditions of Jesus' teaching preserved in the first three gospels. More importantly, Jesus lived it out in his own ministry. See James Dunn, Jesus' Call to Discipleship (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.32-36.

¹¹ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.81.

¹² L.Boff makes a clear distinction between the human rights in terms of the dignity of the oppressed and of the powerful. He provides a theological foundation of the rights of the impoverish masses and concludes that the promotion and defense of human rights means primarily the promotion and defense of the "rights of the poor" which are concentrated in the basic right to a human existence with a minimum of dignity. See When Theology Listen to the Poor (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), pp.50-64.

close to death. They are the victims of the privileged class and of the excuse of "national security" which are the historical decisions made by human beings, that is, unjust structures. Their poverty is not simply their misfortune of being poor, but rather is the consequence of a tragedy of race, class and culture. In short, poverty means the denial of life, peace and justice. It is against God's creation.¹³ Sobrino calls the poor "the crucified peoples"¹⁴, a term borrowed from Ignacio Ellacuria. Although Sobrino is aware of the fact that the term, "the crucified peoples", need further analysis, he unreservedly recommends that it is the most appropriate expression to describe the poor because in a real sense, to be crucified means death, and in a historical-ethical sense, crucified is concerned with a type of death inflicted rather than simply to die. These are the exact experiences of the Latin American. More importantly, at a religious level, God makes himself present in these crosses, and the crucified peoples become the principal sign of the times.¹⁵ Sobrino considers that they are the "historical continuation of the servant of Yahweh", and "the actualization of Christ crucified, the true servant of Yahweh". Therefore, the crucified peoples and Christ refer to and explain each other. He elaborates this as follows:

Suffering Servant

1. a man of sorrows acquainted with grief
(Isa.53:3)

The Crucified Peoples

hunger, sickness, slums, lack of education, health
and employment

¹³ Sobrino makes a very close connection between anti-life and anti-Christ. See J.Sobrino, "The Epiphany of the God of Life in Jesus of Nazareth." In: The Idols of Death and the God of Life, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.

¹⁴ See J.Sobrino, The Crucified Peoples (London: CIIR, 1989), "The Crucified Peoples: Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today," In: Concilium, 1990, pp.119-129 and "A Crucified People's Faith in the Son of God." In: Jesus, Son of God. In his most recent book, Jesus, The Liberator (p.270), Sobrino also considers the crucified peoples as "martyred people" because he believes that faith has something to say to these passively crucified people and they have something important to say to the faith. Nevertheless, Sobrino does not further clarify his point.

¹⁵ See J.Moltmann, The Crucified God and also Kazoh Kitamori, Theology of the Pain of God (London: SCM, 1966).

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| 2. no form or comeliness.... no beauty
(Isa.53:2) | disfiguring bloodshed, the terror of tortures and mutilations |
| 3. despised and rejected (Isa.53:3) | basic human right is deprived, no human dignity |
| 4. he was oppressed and he was afflicted
yet he opened not his mouth (Isa.53:7) | millions died in silence, their names and even the number of death are not known |
| 5. he was taken away defenceless and without
judgment (Isa.53:8) | sudden arrest, assassination, massacre |
| 6. he had done no violence and there was
no deceit in his mouth (Isa.53:9) | innocent people who loves justice and peace |
| 7. bearers of salvation, light of nations
(Isa.42:6, 49:6) | has evangelizing and humanizing potential; that is, hope, love, faith, solidarity, and forgiveness |

Sobrinó considers this analogy in such a paradox: "Through looking at Christ crucified, they [the poor or the crucified peoples] come to know themselves better, and through looking at themselves, they come to know Christ crucified better."¹⁶

The idea of the crucified peoples is appropriate in the Latin American context because the killing is no longer a matter of an individual's tragedy, but is rather a matter of the fate of class, race and culture. For the poor, the term "the crucified peoples" is meaningful because they realize that God shares their suffering and they also share God's suffering. This strengthens their hope and faith. For the oppressors, this term is a powerful accusation because they are not simply killing men and women but God's servants. If they do not repent, God's wrath comes upon them. For the church, this term is an existential challenge because it demands the church make a clear stand on this matter: that is, to defend and protect the crucified peoples or to ignore them. Nevertheless, many of us would be in doubt to what extent Sobrinó's use of the metaphor of the Suffering Servant is in accordance with the biblical hermeneutical principles.

Generally speaking, historical-critical scholarship tries to distance the reader

¹⁶ J.Sobrinó, "A Crucified People's Faith in the Son of God." p.25.

from the text, making it possible to find an original and valid witness in the scripture that becomes authoritative. But this distancing of reader from the text has the effect of devaluing later interpretations and making assimilation of text to experience difficult. Recent hermeneutical theory therefore rejects the dichotomy between text and experience and sees interpretation as a dialogue between text and reader. However, it moves too quickly to surrender of the reader's experience to the text. For Sobrino, scripture and situation are the two "texts" upon which theology is built. The "re-reading" of scripture suggests that the original meaning of the text is not exhausted by the original intention of the author. There is a "reservoir of meaning", a richer dimension of the text, for each changing situation. This is not a new meaning since there is always continuity with the past. The meaning of the text is enriched by its distance from its initial appearance through accumulated interpretations. But above all its significance is free to be applied in a new way in each changing situation.

If the poor are those to whom the Kingdom is addressed, then the life and dignity of the poor are to be protected. In order to proclaim the good news to the poor, the church has to consider beginning from the transformation or even revolution of the present existing social structures rather than merely promoting individual charity. Besides, the poor are not only the beneficiaries, but also have evangelizing potential. That is to say,

the poor become good news for the church, both because their very condition of poor moves it to conversion and by incarnating in their lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity and openness to accepting the gift of God.¹⁷

Before examining the issue of how the church can be evangelized by the poor and what it looks like, I consider that it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the poor

¹⁷ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.128.

further.

Among critics, I consider Jacques Ellul's comments comprehensive although his comments do not particularly refer to liberation theology. He is critical that

the poor are looked at from an economic point of view exclusively. The poor are those who have no money, who are exploited in their work and deprived of the fruit of their labours. When modern theologians speak of the humble, they speak in terms of financial poverty. This goes directly against the biblical image of the poor, as we have shown. Jesus spends time with rich men who are poor socially. He spends time with Roman officers who are poor because they are sorrowful. All this is forgotten in order to keep nothing but deprivation of economic means.

Collectivization is the second result of modern theology's adoption of socio-political ideas. It is no longer the poor individual but the poor class that is important. Similarly, I am not told to respond to the direct, immediate, personal need of the poor person I meet, but to go back to the causes, that is, to the economic and political regime which produced this situation..... We totally lost contact with the poor that we know personally. We work in the abstract toward the liberation of a social category that we never meet. We know the political leaders of this class, who are no longer poor themselves.¹⁸

Regarding the first point, it cannot be denied that Sobrino understands the poor primarily from the economic point of view. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that he distorts the biblical image of the poor because the Bible does understand the poor materially. Furthermore, his emphasis is a counter response to the institutional church which often spiritualizes the poor. To highlight the necessity of the economic interpretation of the poor has no intention of eliminating other interpretations of the poor, but rather it sees that the God of the Bible is not merely a God who acted in history: God is the one who continues to act in history. Therefore, an emphasis on the economic interpretation of the poor is a "theology of the Word made flesh". But at the same time I have to point out that Sobrino's

¹⁸ J.Ellul, Money and Power (London: Marshall Pickering, 1986), pp.171-172.

interpretation may run the risk of historical reductionism. Ellul's remark is right that the meaning of human existence is not exclusively found in relation to the historical process, but also in the ultimate destiny of the individual. Thus, what we need is to relate the public and private, the social and personal, life shared with others and the inner life of the individual person rather than the way suggested either by an ahistorical theology or by a theology bent towards historical reductionism.

Regarding the second critique, it cannot be denied that Sobrino considers that the poor are not simply individuals, but a class. He also emphasizes that personal charity is not enough because the unjust reality is a structural violence. However, this does not necessarily mean that Sobrino ignores the personal need of the poor person, not only because his emphasis on spirituality and his constant contact with the base Christian communities keep his heart "pure", but also because to see the poor as individual and as class are not contradictory. I consider that an emphasis on the poor as a class is important, not in terms of the Marxist theory's class struggle, but in terms of unmasking the myth of the poor; that is to say, their poverty is their misfortune.

Now, I turn to see what the church is when it is evangelized by the poor, if the poor are the addressees of the Kingdom. Firstly, this is a church not simply concerned about the poor, but rather being of the poor, a transition from a church present for the poor to a church of the poor. Sobrino comments that

historically a Church that is simply for the poor without being of the poor could not succeed in the long run even in being for the poor.¹⁹

The church of the poor then is the "people's church". In Spanish, it is called *Iglesia Popular*. However, it should be very careful not to be confused with the

¹⁹ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.92.

understanding of the "people's church" [Volkskirche] in the West. Generally speaking, the people's church used in the West is understood in a sense of a "national church" or an "official church", for instance, the Church of Scotland and the Church of England. Clearly, this is not what Sobrino means by "Iglesia Popular".²⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx makes a very useful distinction to clarify this term. He writes that

1. it has much more the sense of a collective reality, as an actor in history;
2. it means especially the poor majority: the poor are the purest form of the people.²¹

L.Boff explains that "Iglesia Popular" is a mass of people without consciousness of their situation, who without their own historical purpose and lacking adequate means, under the influence of a number of factors, began to organise themselves into communities. In process terms, the mass become a people, that is, an organized entity taking stock of itself and working out social practice with a view to their participation in society and the transformation of that society. When the institutional church supports this process and made itself part of the progress of the people, the church becomes a people's church (a Igreja se faz popular).²² Thus, the meaning of the "people's church" is primarily determined by who the people are and where the people are. In fact, this understanding of the "people's church" becomes both an ecumenical and a crucial issue in the contemporary churches' agenda.²³ For instance, "Minjung" theology (in Korea) takes up this issue seriously and reflects

²⁰ Ibid., pp.84-124. The Spanish title of this chapter is "Resurreccion de una Iglesia popular".

²¹ E.Schillebeeckx, "Offices in the Church of the Poor." In: Concilium, 176, P.105.

²² L.Boff, "A Theological Examination of the Terms People of God and Popular Church." In: Concilium, 176, p. 89.

²³ If one is aware of the recent theological trend, one can easily discover that many theologians more or less take account of this issue in their works. Besides, Christian organisations like WCC, LWF and WARC make a clear stand on this matter as well.

what it means in its particular context. In short, "Minjung" is not simply the people, but rather the mass of the poor.

The minjung is present where there is talk of social and cultural alienation, economic exploitation and political oppression. So a woman is minjung when she is dominated by her husband, her family or social and cultural structures and factors. An ethnic group is minjung when it is discriminated against politically and economically by another group. A race is minjung when it is dominated by the power of another race, as is the case in the colonial situation. When intellectuals are oppressed because they use their creative and critical capacities against rulers on behalf of the oppressed, they belong to the minjung. Workers and peasants are minjung when they are exploited, when their needs and desires are ignored, and they are crushed by the ruling powers.¹²⁴

Although it is a mistake just simply to consider the Iglesia Popular equivalent to Minjung, there is no doubt that they are taking a same path; that is, from option for the poor to commitment to the cause of the poor. In the light of Iglesia Popular and the church of Minjung, the people's church is "from a church linked to the ruling class to a church linked to the people and the lower class; from a church which acts in a biased way as a factor of conservation and legitimation to a church which has opted for liberation; from a colonial church for the poor to a church with the poor and of the poor; from a hierarchical church in which all the power is concentrated in the hierarchy to a pneumatological church according to which every Christian has or is a bearer of his or her charisma."²⁵ In the history of the church, we find that the church runs away from the "people", and eventually becomes the church of the power and even against the "people". The importance of the church of the poor is a call to repentance, a repentance from the church of the power and the intellectual to the church of the people.

²⁴ Theo Witvliet, A Place in the Sun (London: SCM, 1985), p.163. Also see Minjung Theology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

²⁵ Rosino Gibellini, The Liberation Theology Debate (London: SCM, 1987), p.33.

In Latin American context, this church is concretized in the form of the "ecclesial base communities". A common working definition takes off from the three elements of the name "ecclesial base communities": striving for community, an emphasis on the ecclesial, and a sense in which the group constitutes a base. Gutierrez defines that

"base" means the poor, oppressed, believing people: marginalized races, exploited classes, despised cultures, and so forth. It is from them that these Christian communities are arising. From these poor, oppressed sectors the Spirit is bringing to birth a church rooted in the milieu of exploitation and the struggle for liberation. These Christian communities are not parallel organisations operating alongside those of the people's movement. Rather, they are communities and a church made up of persons involved in that movement who seek to live their faith and break bread together in such communities.

The base, then, refers to persons from the common classes who have made, and are making, an option to join in solidarity with their brothers and sisters of the same class, culture, and race, and who proclaim their faith in the Lord. It also refers to all those, whatever their ecclesial responsibility might be, who make their own life, the interest, and the aspirations of the poor and oppressed.²⁶

The ecclesial base communities function variously according to a range of social conditions.²⁷ Generally speaking, they embrace the following characteristics.²⁸ They emphasize personal and interpersonal relationship. Members of the community have a very strong sense of solidarity with one another, and they emphasize lay leadership and a search for consensus in decision-making, and the traditional emphasis on authority turns to autonomy. For instance, the role of the priests is no longer regarded as the mere authorised source of truth, but rather they bring a

²⁶ G.Gutierrez, The Poor and the Church in Latin America (London: CIIR, 1984), p.17.

²⁷ A more detailed and contextual study of the ecclesial base communities can be found in W.E.Hewitt, Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1991) and also Pablo Galdmez, Faith of a People: The Story of a Christian Community in El Salvador (London: CIIR, 1986).

²⁸ See Sergio Torries ed., The Challenge of the Basic Christian Communities (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982) and also L.Boff, Ecclesio-genesis (London: Collins, 1986).

knowledge of the Scripture, while the people bring their experience of life. It is not simply a division of labour, but rather they work together to make new insights from the Bible. Furthermore, it is a community marked by a profound spirituality. Their worship is informal and open. The practice of prayer, joy, hope and love are found here. Finally, they are involved in the popular movement for liberation. However, is the ecclesial base community a form of church or a kind of movement? I do not intend to make a judgment here because it involves an unnecessary epistemological process. But no matter whether it is a church or a movement, the ecclesial base community is a model of the church in terms of its familial, missionary and liberating nature. That is to say, it is familial because it enables people to live the reality of the church as the family of God in an intense way; it is missionary because it is committed to the transformation of the world; and it is liberating because it is the expression of the church's preferential love for the common people.

Secondly, a church which is evangelized by the poor is a church which exists in the here and now. It is not intended simply to reflect a general principle or approach appropriate to a secular world come of age, but rather to be in a specific time and space, namely, the unjust social conditions of Latin America. Because of this, the church of the poor would never reduce salvation to the supernatural sphere and purely otherly character, but rather considers it taking place in the here and now. However, it understands that the Kingdom of God cannot be confused with the Marxist utopia. For Gutierrez, the church is the sacrament of God in history.²⁹ That is to say, the church manifests the salvific activity of God in the world. The church of the poor understands God's salvation historically, not because it has a theology of history, but rather it is a result of a deep consideration of the mystery of

²⁹ Rebecaa S.Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), pp.55-57.

incarnation. Incarnation means that God comes into human history and identifies himself with humankind. Jesus enters earthly life to the full: he therefore cannot be related only to religious life beyond history, he must be sought in the middle and in the depth of the reality of history. If history is the place where Jesus accepts the human lot in complete solidarity, in which he becomes contemporary in history, and dwells among us, then it must be taken with great seriousness. If Christ acts in this way, then history is not a matter of chance, not a matter of indifference and not a side-show imposing no responsibility upon humankind, which they can change in an arbitrary manner. It calls for the church's responsibility. The church has always been a company of real men and women standing on the earth, breathing the air of the time, and yielding avowedly or unavowedly to the impact of the moral, religious, social, economic, and political atmosphere surrounding them. It is an irresponsible act not to give attention to history or to claim that Christians have nothing to do with it. However, taking history seriously does not necessarily imply that the church has no standpoint but rather goes to and fro. J.M.Lochman rightly makes the point that

if we mean by this slogan [the world provides our agenda] that theology and the Church must be prepared to accept themes and criteria dictated by views prevalent in the "market" at any given time, then the countenancing of such directives whether from "right" or "left"- with flirtatious side glances either at the conservative market or the progressive one- would encourage an illegitimate "affiliation" and shortlived "alliance", a deliberate or unconscious sell out of the very substance of the faith.

But another way is also open to us, one which shows genuine theological respect for "the world's agenda": theologians and Christians will examine the actual social and cultural situation at a given moment and develop theology and its themes not in isolation from that situation but in dialogue with their contemporaries.

A relevant theology- one which is related to and measured by the gospel- is practised within a particular temporal horizon. For the gospel, because it is witness to the Incarnate Word, made flesh in the concrete historical person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, is itself a

concrete historical truth with contemporary relevance.³⁰

Thus, the church takes history seriously, not because history can provide the profound meaning to the church, but rather the church finds its meaning of existence through a precise understanding of human history. In other words, taking history seriously concretizes the mission of the church because it is no longer an isolated community which just cares about its own survival and existence. Rather it exists as both means and sign of God's gratuitous activity in the commitment of not ignoring humankind's history, but the liberating history of the world. Because of the fact that the church of the poor exists in the here and now, it has to take history seriously and responsibly. In order to do this, the church has to have a sharp discernment which can only be given by the Spirit. This discernment is from the people by the power of the Spirit. It is the people in whom the church is called to serve, and it is the Spirit in whom the church finds its meaning of existence and strength to fulfil its mission.

Finally, a church which is evangelized by the poor has to be an ecumenical church. At first glance, this description may seem inappropriate because the church of the poor reflects a particular understanding of the church, namely, of the poor. More importantly, the church of the poor is criticized as a para-church, fundamentally opposed to the institutional church and showing heretical and sectarian tendencies by the official institution. It cannot be denied that the church of the poor may generate conflict and tension within the churches. An example of this is the conflict in the Puebla Conference.³¹ But conflict is not necessarily tragic. Ironically, according

³⁰ J.M. Lochman, Reconciliation and Liberation (Belfast: Christian Journal, 1980), pp.120-121.

³¹ Some stressed the spiritual side of the Church's mission and resented active efforts at the improvement of society, while they were provoked by people who wanted to make the Church's mission nothing more than an effort at human betterment. See J.Sobrino, "The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America." In: Reflections on Puebla (London: CIRR, 1980), pp.22-44.

to Sobrino, it is a "necessary, historical path to a higher form of church unity."³² Also, conflict is a danger only if we let conflict direct the churches to see the limitation and sin in others. In other words, conflict does not pursue the quest of truth, but rather seeks to defend one's own truth. Conflict is a danger only if it renounces love but exaggerates mistrust and hastens further conflict. In other words, it is the absolutization of one's neighbour as one's enemy. On the contrary, if the churches positively and humbly face the challenges brought by the church of the poor, such as, to their capitalist ideology and their lack of love, then, the church of the poor becomes an important signpost for Christian unity. In the light of the Reformation, this internal conflict can be positively considered as "*Ecclesia semper reformanda*". That is to say, constant reform is needed because Christ is the living lord who is restlessly moving on and working within the changing shapes of human hope and need. Yesterday's structures of obedience may become today's barriers to new obedience. Obedience is an ever-new event, not a changeless order of continuity. Clearly, internal conflict within the church not only may bring one to further unity, but also may bring one to be more truthful to God.

Regarding the matter of how the church of the poor contributes to ecumenism, Sobrino refers to the traditional marks of the understanding of the church, namely, the unity, catholicity, holiness and apostolicity.³³ Regarding the mark of unity, Sobrino considers that the church of the poor does not describe a correct principle of unity but rather the concrete way in which the principle unifies. That is to say, this basic unity is achieved when the church truly decides to understand its total faith as a faith-process in which Christians bear one another's burdens. J.Moltmann said

³² J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.141.

³³ Details of this presentation can be found in The True Church and the Poor, pp.98-121.

that "the church is not one for itself; it is one for the peace of divided mankind in the coming Kingdom of God."³⁴ Thus, the unity of the church does not primarily relate to its institutional structure, and so it allows a diversified participation in the church for the building of Christ's body in history. In other words, new ecclesial ministries and new forms of ecclesial organization are acceptable and necessary.

Concerning the mark of holiness, Sobrino considers that, for the church of the poor, holiness is ultimately identified with God. God's holiness does not mean a separation from the profane, but rather God's holiness separates what belongs to grace and what belongs to sin.³⁵ This is expressed in the unconditional character of God's "Yes" and "No". Therefore, Sobrino considers that the basic sin of the church is to participate in the sin of the world and to make this sin possible and effective, while the holiness of the church is the church's liberating mission, its promotion of justice. Thus the church of the poor offers a model of the meaning of holiness.

Regarding the mark of catholicity, Sobrino emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the local congregation and the universal church. At the level of the local church, it is obvious that the church of the poor has made possible the discovery of the originality and specificity of the Latin American church. It develops its own type of theology. At the level of the universal church, the church of the poor displays the profound meaning of catholicity in terms of solidarity. It is about co-responsibility of churches for one another in all areas of life. This embraces the gift of faith to faith, of churches sharing with one another the diversity of our faith.

³⁴ J.Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p.345.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.107

Therefore, catholicity is not simply universalism or the concrete application of universal principles, but rather mutual responsibility within the church. It is the mutual bearing of burdens within the church and the active co-operation of each as it gives what it has to offer to the building of the universal church.

Finally, regarding the mark of apostolicity, Sobrino explains that if this is concerned with the origin of the faith, then the church of the poor concretizes what it means by its continuation of the apostolic mission. The church of the poor is an authentically missionary church dedicated to evangelization.³⁶ The church of the poor is a church which restores the Good News in a rightful place: that is, among the poor as the addressees of the Kingdom.

For Sobrino, ecumenism (the fundamental unity of the church) is its solidarity with the poor, its faith in favour of life for human beings. There can be no hope for any other type of inter-confessional unity than this fundamental unity. Besides, to contend that the church of the poor is "more" true to the church of Christ does not idealize the church of the poor. Rather it suggests that

no one should feel excluded from a Church that has made such an option [for the poor]; but by the same token no one can presume to be included in that Church without such an option.³⁷

For Sobrino, the option for the poor is neither an ethical alternative nor a form of missionary strategy, but rather is an existential reality of ecclesiology. That is to say, the role of the poor is both important and determinative in any interpretation of ecclesiology. Sobrino said that

³⁶ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of spirituality and liberation.

³⁷ J.Sobrino, "The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America: In: Reflections on Puebla (London: CIIR, 1980), p.42.

the Church of the poor is not a Church for the poor but a Church that must be formed on the basis of the poor and that must find in them the principle of its structure, organisation and mission. For the same reason I maintain that this Church does not conceive of the poor as part of itself, even a privileged part, but thinks of them as the "center" of the whole.³⁸

The poor are the centre of the church because objectively they are the concern of the church and subjectively they are the criterion of the church. Then, the question arises whether "the poor" is an ideal or an evil. In order to answer this question, one has to distinguish the poor or poverty in two levels: namely, a reality caused by injustice and a reality caused by love or charity. The former implies that the church aims at overcoming injustice in the possession of material goods which causes poverty, while the latter means that the church follows Jesus in the solidarity with the poor. Therefore, the church evangelized by the poor entails these two levels; that is to say, through being in solidarity with the poor the church learns to be poor, and vice versa.

³⁸ Ibid., p.93.

b. *A Critique*

For some people, Sobrino's account of ecclesiology mixes up the Christian faith with politics, theology with social theory, the church with the political party. To borrow H.Richard Niebuhr's terminology, Sobrino's ecclesiology is a form of "Christ in culture" because it accommodates the Gospel to the world. However, for some people, Sobrino's ecclesiology is an example of "Christ-the transformer of culture" because it does not leave the world alone, but participates in the historical process in order to transform society in the direction of the Kingdom of God. Does then Sobrino's account of ecclesiology belong to the category of "Christ in culture" or "Christ-the transformer of culture"? As indicated previously, Niebuhr's typology is problematic because it depends on the presupposition of how we consider what kind of activity is to transform culture, and what is not. Then, the difference between those who consider Sobrino's ecclesiology as "Christ in culture" and those who consider it as "Christ-the transformer of culture" is their different understanding of the relationship between church and state, the Christian faith and politics. In the following, I intend to explore the presupposition of those who consider that Sobrino's ecclesiology is a model of "Christ in culture", with reference to H.M.Kuitert and Donald Bloesch, and to assess to what extent their understanding is biblical and evangelical. Then, I will evaluate in what ways Sobrino's ecclesiology, the church of the poor, is faithful to its call.

In his book, Everything is Politics but Politics is not Everything¹, Kuitert contends that the validity of the church's involvement in politics depends on what politics is. For Kuitert, politics is concerned with principles, an analysis of the situation in which these principles must be implemented, an estimate of the

¹ H.M.Kuitert, Everything is Politics but Politics is not Everything (London: SCM, 1986).

consequences of decision. Only if people have gone through all these, are they in a position to give specific directives for political action.² Thus, the Christian faith has nothing to do with politics because it cannot provide any blueprint of what the political principles are or what decision is the best. Besides, theology has no social theory which can provide any criterion for making political decision. Rather it is primarily an examination and criticism of the outline proclamation of the church. Therefore, political theologies and liberation theologies are nothing other than betrayal of the Christian faith. For him, the task of the church is to proclaim the Good News to the world with a clear distinction of the two Kingdoms. This cannot be confused. Kuitert says that

the Christian church has more arrows to its bow. It has its own diaconal care which is irreplaceable, and is all the more so the more it can help people outside the political struggle. It has its preaching of God's commands and promises. It also has its intercessions. All that cannot be got anywhere else, but only in the church, and only in the church do people know- or should people know- what that is worth. Living people share the life of their world and they can make that contribution to it. That means arousing emotions: perplexity, anger, bewilderment, disappointment, sorrow. And arousing political and social emotions. Christian living in two kingdoms bring these emotions into the church and there they are given a special place. In its prayers the Christian world open up the world to God. It does not ask him for any solutions, but it commends itself and the world to him. That is how politics is done in the church's way in the church.³

According to Kuitert, if the church does not do politics in such a way, it brings the church into contradiction with its interpretation of itself, saddles the church with a role for which it is not equipped, brings politics in political style into the church and finally, the church becomes a social organization. However, Kuitert's position should not be mistaken. He is not talking about that the works of love are unimportant, but rather this cannot be applied at all to politics. For him, the diaconal service of the

² Ibid., pp.128ff.

³ Ibid, pp.152-153.

church is one of its most distinctive features.

Kuitert's comment is important because he does not confuse the church with the world. He acknowledges that the church and the world are two different realms which have different ways of life and doing things. The church should not pretend that it knows everything better than others do, and then consider itself as a "prophet". But so often the political statements made by the church are just repeating what other socio-political parties have said. Nevertheless, he holds that in case of emergency, the church must try to be involved in politics.

By emergency I [Kuitert] mean a situation in which the gaining of power through political parties is forbidden or political parties do not exist. South Africa is a good example: who is to give a voice and support to the oppressed blacks and coloureds if they themselves may not gain power through party and parliament? In such situations the churches may and indeed must try to give a voice to those who have none.⁴

Therefore, for Kuitert, a distinction between the two kingdoms is not absolute. This also marks the contradiction of his thesis which will be discussed later.

Before moving to the explication of the viewpoint of Donald Bloesch, it may be interesting to explore whether Kuitert and Hauerwas are occupying the same position. Apparently, they agree that the church should be involved in politics in its own way. Also, they agree that the value of faith is not determined by its social or political significance, no matter what further importance this may have. Rather, it is faithfulness that matters. But their main differences are that, firstly, for Kuitert, the church should not involve itself in politics because politics is concerned with principles which eventually leads to the struggle for power, while for Hauerwas, the church is already a **polity** which intends to be an alternative model for the world.

⁴ Ibid., p.151.

In other words, for Kuitert, it is the politics that matter, while for Hauerwas, it is the church as the polity that matters. Secondly, for Kuitert, the church should not involve in politics because the church and the world are two different Kingdoms, while for Hauerwas, it is the two different agents in the sense that the Christian's duties are not the same as those laid upon him/her by the state. Therefore, although Kuitert and Hauerwas may seem to be holding the same view, they are different.

Like Kuitert, D.Bloesch also defends the position that the church has nothing to do with politics⁵, but he pursues a different argument. Primarily speaking, he considers that the basic mission of the church is "spiritual", not political. The backing for this, he says, is Jesus himself. Regarding the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus concentrated upon spiritual matters. He offered deliverance from sin and death, not from political and economic bondage. Besides, Jesus refused to be the political messiah the Jews expected. It showed that he was primarily interested in the salvation of individuals. He called his followers to a ministry of proclamation, not building a new social order.⁶ Since Jesus is the "final and complete" revelation of God's will and purpose, the church must concentrate upon the same things. Therefore, it must seek conversions and prepare individuals for life with God in eternity. The church should consider this as its primary task. It is a task that consists in helping sinners to have faith in God and thus enter into a salvation that endures beyond this world in an eternal, heavenly world. In short, Bloesch believes that the Christian faith is eschatological both in spiritual and individualistic terms.

⁵ D.Bloesch is a professor at the theological seminary of the University of Dubuque. His major works are Essential of Evangelical Theology (San Fransico: Harper & Row, 1978-79), The Invaded Church (Waco: Words, 1975), and Centers of Christian Renewal (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974).

⁶ D.Bloesch, Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Vol.2, pp.156-157.

Even though Kuitert and Bloesch have different reasons for arguing against the church's involvement in politics, they would agree that the church of the poor is an example of the model of "Christ in culture" because the church of the poor does not fit into their understanding of the relationship between church and politics. Nevertheless, in order to assess their views fairly, we should first pay attention to what they intend to say to us. Firstly, their concern reminds us that when the church is involved in politics, there is always a danger of its identifying the Christian faith with secular ideologies. In the West, it is liberalism, while in the Latin America, it is Marxism. Regarding the latter, I myself find the resources of the Marxist analysis of society a legitimate possibility, but it is far from being the only one possible or even the best. To confuse or identify the Christian faith with political commitment or to derive it from that is to lose its own identity. Therefore, the church of the poor should make a clear distinction between "Marxism as the worldview" and "Marxism as a tool for understanding social conflict and social change." When the church of the poor finds in Marxism a political strategy to build up the Kingdom of God, it has clearly fallen prey to a humanist illusion that is not in agreement with either the historical facts or biblical revelation. It amounts to a sociological co-option of theology.

Secondly, they remind us that the church of the poor should be very careful not to confuse social liberation with spiritual liberation. There is always a temptation to believe that when unjust social structures have gone, there will be prosperity and freedom. It is only an illusion. The church of the poor should remind itself and the poor that, no matter how just and affluent society may be, it cannot provide them freedom because the deepest alienation of humankind can only be reconciled by God. The fact is that if the life of the individual person has meaning only in relation to the world of public, historical events, then it has no meaning beyond death. According

to biblical teaching, however, the meaning of human existence is not exclusively found in relation to the historical process, but also in the ultimate destiny of the individual.

Finally, the church of the poor should learn from both Kuitert's and Bloesch's critique about the danger of its reducing the Gospel to an ideology. When the church of the poor intends to free the church from ideological captivity, it also has to be aware that no theology is free from ideological entanglements. Therefore, the church of the poor should be critical of its partiality. Otherwise, it can result in to another captivity like the one it is meant to replace. A far better alternative is theology that reads the Bible on its own terms and refuses to force it into an ideological straitjacket, consequently imposing its own limitations on the word of God.

Bearing these remarks in mind, we turn to see in what ways Kuitert's and Bloesch's arguments fail to communicate the full gospel. Firstly, they consider that a separation from politics is the best way to preserve the uniqueness of the Christian faith, but in fact they pay the price of becoming less human for the sake of becoming more "Christian". P.Hinchliff attacks this view: "[the church which] does not care about what actually happen in the political sphere, [which] does not lift a finger to do anything practically about it, is not really [the church] at all."⁷ The church of the poor takes the world seriously not because it wants to extend its influence on the world. Nor does it want to maintain the Constantinian era. Rather, it knows that the essence of its existence depends on its servanthood to the world. It finds that its holiness lies not in its separation from politics, but rather in its involvement in politics by means of denouncing the anti-Kingdom's values. Hinchliff explains that

⁷ P.Hinchliff, Holiness and Politics (London: DLT, 1982), p.182.

"those who participate in Christ are the church and therefore share in his work. It is that purpose, too, which makes the church holy."⁸ He uses an analogy saying that

the sentence, "the church is holy and therefore ought not to soil its hands with politics which is a dirty game," ought really to read, "the body of Christ is holy and therefore....." But can the ideal church interfere in politics and get its hand dirty? A child, hearing that the Prime Minister was calling a general election and "was going to the country", might ask, "What is she doing in London, then?" The legal style of my college is "The master and scholars of Balliol College, Oxford," does not mean that the masters and scholars are closed to visitors. With one proviso, a statement that the holy church ought not to soil itself with politics, is making a confusion of a similar kind.⁹

If the holiness of the church comes from Christ himself, then the church has to follow Jesus in order to be holy. If following Jesus, according to Sobrino, is to partake Jesus' ministry of proclaiming Good News to the poor, then the church has no option but to be involved in politics.

Secondly, if politics is understood in a broader meaning like structuring of human relations, then the nature and the duty of the Christian faith and thus of the church is to further truth and justice in the world in the way of a spiritual power, critical, and ethical, because the church is a power. Its power does not lie in its social relevancy and recognition, but rather lies in its vision and gifts given by God. Therefore, its mission is to keep alive the heart of humanity to form human society into a city in which it is good for everyone to live, something for which it is good to live. Besides, since politics are not so precise all the time, the church can raise issues like "what kind of society are you opting for?" This is clearly the case with legislation about biotechnology, the arms race, peace and so on. It is true that the church has no political theory and principles, but it has a vision and the responsibility

⁸ Ibid., p.119.

⁹ Ibid., p.123.

to ask critical question about the nature of society. Kuitert fails to appreciate this contribution of the church because his arguments are sociological rather than theological, related to the nature and function of religion rather than to the distinctive emphases of the Christian faith.¹⁰

Thirdly, Kuitert believes that in the case of emergency the church has to try to make a political stand. How can we define emergency? Emergency not only happens in South Africa, but also in Latin America and the West. For instance in the West, in a world system where economic and often also military interests have priority, this political reason is often manipulated and begins to function ideologically. Therefore, the political emergency is to be found even in the smallest details of the most democratic political decision-making in the West. The pressure of economic processes arising out of what is *de facto* the universal dominance of the economy can make a democratic majority decision a purely ideological decision against which the churches must protest if they still want to be the church of Christ. If politics is practised in a totalitarian way or is imposed through violence in areas in which it is not subjected to the laws of what can be established and controlled, or if the historical contingency of political structures is distorted ideologically or if politics becomes everything, then the church should provide a reminder that the state is transgressing its limits or not living up to its task.

Finally, it is a distorted view to understand Jesus' ministry exclusively in terms of individual concern. We must acknowledge that Jesus does address individual persons, but the address to individual persons is itself a political act. This

¹⁰ Duncan B. Forrester, Theology and Politics (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p.50.

has been fairly discussed previously.¹¹ Jesus was not proclaiming himself, but the Kingdom of God. Because of the fact that the Kingdom embraces both personal and cosmic dimensions, it is a mistake to confine the Kingdom to personal and transcendental interests. Furthermore, it is important to note that Jesus was condemned on a political charge; the Romans would not have been interested in any other. The fact that he was executed by crucifixion is important, because crucifixion was the punishment reserved for slaves but also for rebels amongst subject races. The title over the cross in all four gospels describes him as "the king of the Jews". The mockery of the Roman soldiers likewise attests the ground of his accusation: Jesus died as a messianic pretender. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus' ministry relates to both individual and society.

However, to consider that the church has something to do with politics does not mean recognizing the church as only a social institution. For Sobrino, the political involvement of the church of the poor is never due to an interest in politics, but rather is a matter of faith; it is not basically about struggle for power, but about faithfulness to God; it is not primarily about society, but about the Kingdom of God; and it is not principally about fighting against unjust structures, but about against the "spiritual principalities and powers" of social demonology. This is not to "christianize" the political activities of the church of the poor, but rather to make clear that the commitment of the church of the poor flows from its profound spirituality rather than from a political ideology. In the following, I intend to clarify the convictions of the church of the poor.

Primarily, the church of the poor seems to politicize the personal life. It gives

¹¹ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of following the historical Jesus.

less attention to personal development and inter-personal relationship, but rather relates human relationship to the socio-political structure. However, politicizing private life does not necessarily mean threatening its precious inner core of personal intensity, but making it conscious of its true historical character. That is to say, every human act, even the most private, possesses not only a social content [because it transcends the individual], but a political content [because that transcending of the individual is always related to change or stability in society]. Political consciousness means awareness of the basic fact that all human actions have a political dimension, and of the implications of this fact in the light of human's ethical responsibilities, in a particular situation at a certain time and space in history. Political action means acting in accordance with the responsibilities revealed by political consciousness, which takes account of particular implications of the essential political dimension of all human acts. In other words, political action is an effective acceptance of the historical character of human existence. The church cannot avoid this, not because sociologically it is a social institution, but because it lives in the here and now, and so it has to exercise its responsibility.

When talking of the political dimension of faith, it is important to remember that it is not something added to the normal content of faith, but the very act of faith in a particular historical context. It is ambiguous simply to speak of the political consequences of faith, since this gives a false impression that it is possible to live a life of faith in isolation from daily life, but with the bonus of occasional political applications. From the perspective of historical theology, we can easily recognize that the acknowledgement of the sole lordship of Christ always plunges the church into political conflicts. For instance, the early church which confessed Jesus as the only lord met persecution from society. Recently, the Confessing Church in Germany also put the church in conflict with society even though the Barmen

Declaration was not a political statement. Clearly, their faith does not have any political interest, but rather is a religious concern. But their religious concern cannot guarantee them not falling into the political conflict because faith itself is a political act.

According to Sobrino, if the church is sent to the world in the service of the Kingdom for the world, then the church has to proclaim the dialectical nature of the Kingdom of God; that is, its "YES" and "NO". In other words, proclamation has to be understood in relation to denunciation, and vice versa. The dialectical "NO" of the Kingdom is no to sin, the anti-Kingdom's values. Sin is a personal reality: that is, one's refusal to give up his/her own security, and to accept the future of God who is approaching in grace. In the time of Jesus, this is typified by the Pharisees and the persons with power. But at the same time, sin is also a public, social and structural reality: that is, certain features of social life that are inconsistent with the definite Kingdom of God. Sobrino considers that

[Jesus] could not proclaim the ideal state of the Kingdom and the eschatological banquet without simultaneously denouncing any form of sin that made human reconciliation impossible in the brief interim that would remain, so he expected, between the breaking in of the Kingdom and its transcendent fulfilment.¹²

Put concretely, the dialectical "NO" is expressed in a situation where life is neglected, threatened and damaged.. This is a historical product of human wills, crystallized in structures that produce injustice. On the other hand, the dialectical "YES" of the Kingdom is yes to the victims. It is not purely a transcendental affirmation, but rather it has its historical implications. The concrete meaning of this is the preferential option for the poor. Thus, the church of the poor is nothing other than to take the dialectical "YES" and "NO" of the Kingdom seriously and faithfully.

¹² J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.52.

Now, it is clear that Sobrino's account of ecclesiology has nothing to do with politicizing and socializing the Christian faith, but rather it tries to understand the political dimension of the Christian faith in a different historical framework. That is to say, the question is not how to speak of God in an adult world, but how to proclaim him as a Father in a world that is not human. However, regarding the dilemma between church and politics, J.Ellul summarizes his view as follows:

Christianity has become a religion of conformity, of integration into social body. It has to come to be regarded as useful for social cohesion. Alternatively a flight into spiritual world, into the cultivation of the inner life, into mysticism, and hence as evasion of the present world. The two perversions are complementary. Theologically they negate the incarnation by separating the physical and the Spirit. Sociologically they are the result of political action regarding the church and the church's acceptance of it.¹³

The church of the poor is against these two temptations. On the one hand, it tries to terminate the Constantinian relationship between church and state, and become a church of the "people". On the other hand, it tries not to fall into the trap of dualism, but rather to be engaged in history as Jesus did. Is then Sobrino's account of ecclesiology an example of "Christ, the transformer of culture"? As said previously, Niebuhr's typology is problematic because it confines the witness of the church to its relationship to culture. Therefore, it is not "Christ, the transformer of culture" that matters, but rather whether the church of the poor is a church which faithfully confesses Jesus as Christ and the Lord of history. The preceding account has shown that the church of the poor does.

¹³ J.Ellul, The Subversion of Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp.133-134.

3. DISCUSSION

From the previous discussion of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's account of ecclesiology, on the surface it appears that they do not have much in common. For instance, Hauerwas emphasizes that the church is to be itself, while Sobrino stresses the concept of the church of the poor. Hauerwas is very suspicious of the church's involvement in politics, while Sobrino is very doubtful how the church can become itself without unmasking the idolatry of politics. In short, Hauerwas seems to propose a "sectarian" option for the church, while Sobrino seems to propose a "revolutionary" option for the church. Their difference leads us to the temptation of seeing them as "either-or". Nevertheless, I do not think that this is necessary. Although both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that their accounts of ecclesiology are better to equip Christians to be God's witnesses, they never absolutize their claims. The danger of holding a homogeneous view on everything is that we are no longer led by the truth, but rather by our prejudice. In other words, we are not talking about truth, but rather our partiality. Furthermore, ecumenism always reminds us of the importance of diversity in unity. This is not to give way to the fashionable idea of pluralism, but rather is a reality of itself. Therefore, the differences between Hauerwas and Sobrino do not necessarily become a threat to our existence [or faith], but rather a challenge to our tendency of absolutization [or becoming tribalism]. This then marks the importance of dialogue. Through dialogue, we are not only working together to look for the truth, but also confessing our imperfection. If the church is not the Kingdom, how can we say that the church should follow a particular model? What God requires of the church is its faithfulness and truthfulness. This can only be done through a continuous process of repentance and dialogue. The former re-orientates the vision of the church, while the latter prepares for the former by opening the vision of the church. Therefore, I do not see any threat caused by the differences between Hauerwas and Sobrino. Furthermore, I do not see any

impossibility of accepting both of their accounts. On the contrary, their differences can help us to appreciate the distinctiveness and the diversities of what our Christian faith means to us. Hauerwas and Sobrino complement one another. Thus it is not my purpose here to make a choice between Hauerwas and Sobrino, not because it is safer to sit on the wall than to make a stand, but because it is unnecessary. What really concerns us is how their efforts stimulate us to find our own way of being the true church of Christ. In the following, I will illustrate their similarities and differences, and suggest in what ways the church can learn from them.

Firstly, both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology is a christological ecclesiology. Christology gives and defines the meaning of the church. In return, the church produces its own form of christology as a reflection of its concrete life and reality. As said in the previous section¹, Hauerwas and Sobrino hold a different point of departure to understand Jesus' ministry. In short, for Hauerwas Jesus' life is better understood in the light of his Sermon on the Mount, while for Sobrino Jesus' life is better understood in the light of his Jubilee Proclamation. It is understandable that these different points of departure eventually bring different understandings of the church. That is to say, Hauerwas considers that the church is a sign of God's salvation. If the church is a sign of God's salvation to the particular society in which it exists, attention is often given to the quality of the church life. For Sobrino, the church is the continuation of Jesus' history. Then, the church is the servant of God in service for human existence and its ministry to human existence is a ministry of human freedom. These two emphases are mutually inter-dependent because Jesus promises to be present in the apostolate, the sacrament and the fellowship of Christians, and also he promises to be found in the least of the

¹ See my discussion on Hauerwas' view of the imitation of Christ and Sobrino's view of following the historical Jesus.

brethren.

Secondly, both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology is an eschatological ecclesiology. They look forward to the Kingdom of God on earth. The eschatological foundation is determined by the tension in the relationship between the church and the world, and between the Kingdom of God and human history. For Hauerwas, the eschatological present manifestation is in the gathered community of disciple-believers, the new community created by God through the work of Christ. In this community, Christians can live to the norm of the coming Kingdom. For Sobrino, to hope is to grasp the future as a gift, opposing injustice and struggling for the establishment of peace and brotherhood/sisterhood, for the future begins now. Eschatology, for Sobrino, relates to the transformation of society and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. Obviously, both Hauerwas and Sobrino lean toward realized eschatology, but at different levels. Hauerwas' eschatology is a "sacramental eschatology", while Sobrino's eschatology is a "prophetic eschatology". The former affirms the presence and power of God in the world through the church, while the latter emphasizes the biblical narrative as a critical, motivating and sustaining force within the world and the church. These two levels of the realized eschatology should be understood dialectically for the reason stated before.

Thirdly, their different emphases on realized eschatology also lead them to have a different understanding of history. For Sobrino, the boundary between the church and the world is not obvious. He rejects all dualism. The relation between the sacred and the profane, or between the spiritual and the physical is dialectical: two dimensions of one reality. Therefore, the church should not limit its effort to the life and influence of a small community of Christians. Rather, the church as God's

faithful people is responsible for announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is in the true church that the eucharist is celebrated in memory of love and faithfulness of Jesus and in the ministry to the poor with whom Christians share both their sorrow and their resurrected joy. Hauerwas demands a more sectarian view of the church as a body of believers that maintains its own identity yet is responsible for ministry in the world. The distinction between the church and the world is maintained sharply. As said, this is not the matter of two kingdoms, but two agents. This difference becomes obvious when they discuss the marks of the church. Sobrino discusses the traditional marks of the church in terms of the all-embracing Kingdom², while Hauerwas discusses the marks of the church in terms of the Christian life.³ As said previously, the difference between Hauerwas and Sobrino primarily relates to their different points of departure in terms of an ethic of redemption and an ethic of creation respectively. They are not in contrast, but complement one another.⁴

Fourthly, both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology cannot be understood apart from concrete congregational lives. They do not have an interest in developing a doctrine of ecclesiology, but rather they find the meaning of ecclesiology in the lives of the visible church. Hauerwas calls this "a community of character", while Sobrino calls this "ecclesial base communities". Despite the different orientations of their visible church, they would agree that discipleship has a prior claim to ecclesiology.

² See pp.129-133.

³ See pp.97-100.

⁴ See pp.106-107.

Negatively put, the above comparative account of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology may give us an impression that Hauerwas proposes a "conversionist" church which contends that no amount of tinkering with the structures of society will counter the effects of human sin. Therefore, the promises of secular optimism are false because they attempt to bypass the biblical call to admit personal guilt and to experience reconciliation to God and neighbour. On the other hand, Sobrino proposes an "activist" church which is concerned with the building of a better society. Through the humanization of social structures, it glories God. It calls on its members to see God at work behind the movements for social change so that Christians will join in movements for justice wherever they find them. This understanding of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's ecclesiology makes the same mistake as those who regard Hauerwas as proposing a sectarian option for the church, and Sobrino as proposing a revolutionary option for the church. It is because their accounts of ecclesiology suggest that on the one hand, Hauerwas seeks to live a Kingdom life in the present, but not at a distance from the world, rather within the world and with a view to making the world aware of God's rule. On the other hand, Sobrino recognizes the importance of human action in the present with a view to the Kingdom, but not as a means to bringing in the Kingdom, rather as a celebration of the kingly rule of God in the here and now. In short, they suggest that the church lives wholly within this world by the Kingdom's values and enablings. Thus, their ecclesiology is primarily that of a "confessing" church. It finds its main political task to lie, not in the personal transformation of individual hearts or the modification of society, but rather in the congregation's determination to worship Christ in all things. For Hauerwas, a "confessing" church seeks to influence the world by being the church which is something that the world is not and can never be. For Sobrino, a "confessing" church seeks to influence the world by denouncing its anti-Kingdom's values and proclaiming the good news to the poor. These are two different approaches, but they

are one. Not all the Christians in the "Confessing church" in Germany at the time of Hitler took up arms like D.Bonhoeffer. Many of them were "silent", and kept their loyalty to God. Therefore, I consider that both Hauerwas and Sobrino are united under the cross of Christ. Christ's cross is the place where the churches are assembled and made more deeply one than they could have conceived. Hence, no dialogue about the cross is possible without standing together under the cross. The nearer the churches come to the cross of Christ, the nearer they come to each other.

Now, I turn to explore in what ways we can learn from their similarities and differences. Firstly, both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that the church has to be a community of radical commitment. This is expressed in their emphases on the fact that ecclesiology is about the visible church. This radical commitment affirms that the meaning of the church finds its meaning only in Jesus. This demands it committing itself to Jesus unreservedly: that is, to confess Jesus as the lord. The martyrdom of Oscar Romero, and countless thousands of Christians less well known, all resulted from refusing the shift of this fundamental homage. Suffering is not the mark of the Christian community, but rather it is a community whose commitment makes them aliens, with no fixed address, in territory under the control of the secular powers.

Secondly, they consider that the church has to be a community oriented to the Kingdom. Our attention should not only focus on the differences between Hauerwas and Sobrino, but rather on their attempt to live in accordance with the Kingdom's values. The Kingdom is not an excuse that they use for the sake of promoting their convictions, but rather their attitudes and practice are oriented to the Kingdom. This is the community in which God's transvaluation of values is apprehended and cherished as the clue to his redemptive purpose.

Thirdly, they consider that the church has to be a servant community. The existence of the church is not for itself, but the church is sent to the world in the service for the Kingdom of the world. The relationship between the church and the world is never a matter of dualism. The church should never leave the world free for the "principalities and powers" of social demonology. However, there are many options to be a servant community. Being an alternative society is nothing less responsible than being the church of the poor, and being the church of the poor is nothing less faithful than being alternative society.

Fourthly, they consider that the church has to be a community of friends where people relate to each other in a brotherly and sisterly way, as amongst equals. Hauerwas said that

friendship is not only a possibility but a necessity for Christians because we are an eschatological people that live by hope. That life is a journey which is something that Aristotle sensed in his account of the life of happiness, virtue and friendship. But for Christians, life is not just a journey, but a journey of a very particular kind in which we are invited to be participants in a community of friends formed by the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Such friends do not just love one another as mirror images of their own virtue, but rather they love one another in God. Friendship is a manifestation of hope, therefore, as hope but names the kind of journey to which Christians have been called that makes possible the risk of friendship.⁵

For Sobrino, this is understood in terms of solidarity.⁶ Solidarity is not an alliance to defend the common interest of the churches. Rather it is a matter of co-responsibility. It entails two dimensions. That is to say, it is about solidarity with the poor, and about catholicity in terms of giving and receiving the best they have, teaching and learning their most valid insights, bearing with one another.

⁵ S.Hauerwas, "Happiness, the Life of Virtue and Friendship." In: The Asbury Theological Journal, 1990, Vol.45, p.45.

⁶ See J.Sobrino & Juan Hernandez Pico, A Theology of Christian Solidarity (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987).

Finally, they consider that the church has to acknowledge its minority position. The church has little influence on the world. This is more obvious in Hauerwas' ecclesiology than Sobrino's. But we should not ignore a basic fact that Sobrino's ecclesiology is also a feeble voice in Latin America because the churches in Latin American are dominated by pentecostalism.⁷ To acknowledge the church's minority position is important not only because it ends the Constantinian era, but also because the churches no longer act as those who know everything better or who know all the truth, but as those who help to find truth, as mid-wives. This is a humble service, but a promising and meaningful one.

These five points serve as the indicators for any consideration of ecclesiology. They do not define any particular model for the church, but rather they provide the foundation for the church to reflect how it can be faithful to God's mission at its particular time and in its particular place.

⁷ See Tom Barry, El Salvador (Albuquerque: The Inter-Hemisphere Education Resource Centre, 1990).

D. CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections, I have discussed the agent of the Kingdom in terms of both an individual Christian and the church. On the level of an individual Christian, the agent of the Kingdom is concerned with spirituality, and spirituality is about discipleship. The call to discipleship begins with a recognition of God, that God is the ultimate, the hidden reality behind all reality, the power beside which our power shrinks to infinitesimal insignificance. This recognition inevitably requires repentance. Such repentance is a response which goes beyond mere words or feelings or individual actions. It is a response which turns the whole of life through 180 degrees and points that life in a new direction. For Hauerwas, this is characterized by having character, vision and virtue. For Sobrino, this brings a person to have a new understanding of and a commitment to the poor. Both Hauerwas and Sobrino realize that it is Jesus who issues the call to discipleship. Included here is the recognition that in him, in his message and actions, the kingly rule of God has already begun to come to expression. The urgency is because the character of God's kingly rule has so vividly and compellingly manifested itself in his life and ministry. Jesus' own teaching and life-style show what living in the light and in the power of the Kingdom should mean in the lives of those who repent and believe. Therefore, the call to discipleship is to follow him.

On the level of the church, the agent can never escape from the world. The church has a very specific mission in the world. As an eschatological community, the church is the light of the world by showing the world what the Kingdom of God is and demands. It does not imply that the church is the Kingdom, but rather the church is a place where grace is realized and lived even here on earth. For Hauerwas, in order to be a witness to the Kingdom, the primary task of the church

is to be itself because through being an alternative example, the world knows what it is and should be. In order to do this, the church has to help its own members work out their salvation by giving them guidance, admonition, comfort and every kind of pastoral and sacramental assistance. For Sobrino, the church has the task of introducing the values of the Kingdom into the whole of human society, and thus of preparing the world (insofar as human effort can) for the final transformation when God will establish the new heaven and the new earth. This emphasis does not necessarily politicize the church, but rather the church cannot be silent in the face of social injustice, because the Kingdom of God kindles the church.

The church has a very special role in the Kingdom of God because it is called to be the agent of the Kingdom. This is its privilege, not in terms of power and superiority, but rather in terms of mission and servanthood. Put bluntly, it is the grace of God. However, in order to be a faithful agent of the Kingdom, the church has to be truthful to its calling. This calling relates to its internal nature and external relationships. If the church fails to take these seriously, it betrays its own nature. Nevertheless, this betrayal would not delay the final coming of the Kingdom because, I believe, it will be the work of God, dependent on his initiative. On the contrary, this betrayal is rather a self-denial of its existence.

In this chapter, I only pay attention to the role of the agent in the Kingdom of God. However, the role of the agent primarily relates to the understanding of what the Kingdom of God is. That is to say, what the Kingdom is defines what the role of the agent is, or what the role of the agent is illustrates what the Kingdom is. In the next chapter, I will discuss the models of the Kingdom in Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theology based on the findings of this chapter.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP TODAY: A STUDY OF
THE ETHICS OF THE KINGDOM IN
THE THEOLOGIES OF STANLEY HAUERWAS AND JON SOBRINO

A THESIS PRESENTED BY

LAP YAN KUNG

TO

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CHAPTER TWO

THE MODELS OF THE KINGDOM

A. METHODOLOGY

The Kingdom of God plays a significant role in contemporary studies on Christian ethical thought. Sallie McFague calls the Kingdom of God the "root-metaphor" of Christianity.¹ This is because on the one hand, Jesus is both the proclaimer of the Kingdom and the way to the Kingdom, and on the other, Christians are called to a way of being in the world under the rule of God. In the previous chapter, we have already discussed how an individual Christian and the church can be the agents of the Kingdom by following Jesus and witnessing to the Kingdom in the world. However, Hauerwas' and Sobrino's accounts show us two possible interpretations of what following Jesus and witnessing to the Kingdom are. Their differences, I consider, lie in their different understandings of what the Kingdom is.² What then is the Kingdom of God? In the New Testament, no definition of the Kingdom is given; what we have are models or exemplifications of it, none of which specifies what it is, but each of which shows us the way to the Kingdom. No one of the parables is adequate alone, and even all together they do not add up to a

¹ S.McFague said that a root metaphor is the most basic assumption about the nature of the world or experience that we can make when we try to give a description of it. Each root metaphor is a way of seeing all that is through a particular key concept. It is also about thinking by models and even the phrase root metaphor is itself a metaphor. See Metaphorical Theology (London: SCM, 1983), pp.108-111.

² In his book The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), Gosta Lundstrom displays how one interprets the conditions for entry into and life in the Kingdom of God, and so the whole ethic of Jesus obviously largely determines the image we form of the Kingdom of God, and also the question of the relation between the Kingdom of God and the Church.

definition of the Kingdom. Therefore, in this chapter, I do not intend to sum up a precise definition of what the Kingdom is, but rather intend to see how Hauerwas and Sobrino understand the Kingdom in relation to their theological reflections and orientations, to what extent their accounts are theologically valid, and to suggest a possible resolution of their differences, if any.

In this chapter, the methodology I employ is the notion of the model. Model is often understood in terms of metaphor, symbol, image and paradigm. Although there are differences among them³, there is one common feature; that is, they are not the entity itself but rather they point to it, albeit imperfectly. Comparatively speaking, the notion of the model is widely used in the natural sciences, while concepts like metaphor, image and symbol are employed in the area of the human sciences (anthropology, religious studies, sociology, etc). However, theologians like Frederick Ferre⁴ and Ian T.Ramsey⁵ find that the notion of the model in the scientific understanding should be recognized as of central importance to theologians and philosophers of religion. In the following, I intend to discuss such themes as: what the model means in scientific usage; how this is relevant to our theological reflection; what the criteria for theological models are; and finally how our study of the notion of model is related to models of the Kingdom.

According to Thomas S.Kuhn, the model

³ For Instance, S.McFague considers that when some metaphors gain wide appeal and become major ways of structuring and ordering experience, they are models (Metaphorical Theology, p.23). R.P.Scharlemann suggests that a symbol results from the impress of reality upon mind. It arises as a subject's response to the imposition of reality upon him, whereas a model arises out of the free play of a subject's imagination (Theological Models and Their Construction, p.70). Both T.Kuhn and H.Kung use the terms models and paradigm interchangeably.

⁴ F.Ferre, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology." In: New Essays on Religious Language, Dallas M.High ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.54-96.

⁵ See Ian T.Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London:SCM, 1964), Chapter III.

stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.⁶

In the field of science, the first usage of model particularly refers to a scientific revolution when a sweeping change takes place in a whole network of assumptions and concepts, such as the Copernican theory. Its second usage primarily refers to a particular scientific task. However, their relationship is not simply a difference between macro-model and micro-model, but rather the fulfilment of the macro-model largely depends on the successful findings of the micro-model. It does not necessarily mean that a successful finding of the micro-model will naturally bring a scientific revolution. Rather, without the emphasis on the micro-usage of model, we cannot talk about the macro-usage of model. Because of this, my following study will concentrate solely on the micro usage of model; that is to say, a model is an instrument epitomizing a particular phenomenon or a particular concept. Before turning to this, I would like to say a few words about how the above understanding of model is related to theological reflection. In the conference "The New Paradigm for Theology", Stephen Pfurtner presented a paper entitled "The Paradigms of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther: Did Luther's Message of Justification mean a Paradigm Change?".⁷ He shows that it is illuminating to consider Luther's idea of justification by faith as a new paradigm because it led to the reconstruction of prior beliefs and the reinterpretation of previous data in a new framework of thought.

⁶ Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1970), p.175. In his book, Kuhn himself does not distinguish model from paradigm. On the contrary, he uses them interchangeably.

⁷ This conference was held in Germany in 1983. The papers presented in this conference are collected in a book entitled Paradigm Change in Theology, ed. Hans Kung (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).

Justification by faith affected almost all other doctrines. This parallels Kuhn's definition of the model as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community."⁸ At the same time, the notion of justification by faith can also be understood in the second usage of model because it primarily refers to one particular issue, namely, salvation.

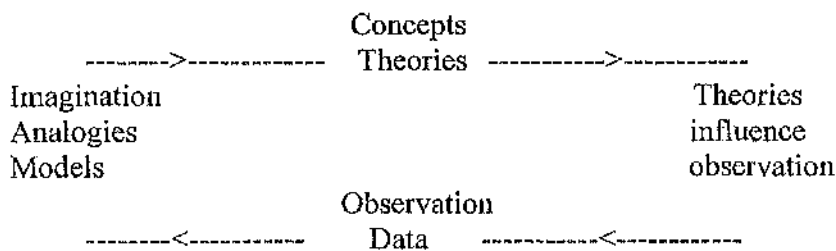
There are various kinds of models in science, such as, experimental models, logical models, mathematical models and theoretical models, which serve a diversity of functions.⁹ For the sake of theological use, in this study I will emphasize theoretical models because experimental models are constructed in the laboratory, while mathematical and logical models are abstract and purely formal relationships. Theoretical models find the essential question not in the issue of "picturability" or "non-picturability" but in the capacity of a model to focus language drawn from one domain of discourse to another and less familiar domain.

Ian G.Barbour suggests that the fundamental components of modern science are particular observations and experimental data, and general concepts and theories.¹⁰ However, theories involve concepts and hypotheses not found in the data, and they often refer to entities and relationships that are not directly observable. In order to bridge these two sets of components, one then has to employ the notion of the model. Its role can be visualized in the following diagram:

⁸ Thomas S.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, p.175.

⁹ See Max Black, Models and Metaphors (New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp.219-243, F.Ferre, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology." pp.56-59; and Ian G.Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigm (London: SCM, 1974), pp.29-30.

¹⁰ Ian G.Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science (London: SCM, 1990), pp.31ff.



This diagram can be illustrated as such: the billiard ball model of a gas postulated invisible gas particles that were imagined to collide and bounce off each other like billiard balls. From the model, the kinetic theory of gases was developed. Thus, a theoretical model "is a mechanism or process, postulated by analogy with familiar mechanisms or processes and used to construct a theory to correlate a set of observations."¹¹

From the above brief explanation of what a model is, we can draw some observations. Firstly, models provide intelligibility for the non-intelligible. They simplify and offer suggestive, concrete detail for expansion and exploration. Like the billiard ball model of a gas, it successfully concretizes the abstract idea of kinetic force. Furthermore, it also provides a fertile ground for a better understanding of the use of kinetic force, such as, how the kinetic theory of gases might be applied to gas diffusion, viscosity and heat conduction. Secondly, models are not pictures of entities, but networks or structures of relationships. This is what Barbour calls model as analogue.¹² Whether we take the example of a chess game for war, or waves and particles for the atom, they are not the entities themselves. Rather, in each case we are dealing with a set of relationships that serve as an explanation of the way an unfamiliar phenomenon works in terms of the structure of a more familiar area. Thirdly, models may provide an ever widening panorama of explanation, allowing

¹¹ Ian G.Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigms, p.30.

¹² Ian G.Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, p.41.

phenomena within a field and at times across fields to be linked in connecting networks. Hence, systems are constructed that provide intelligibility, not just to this or that phenomenon, but to reality as a whole. Therefore Kuhn says that a "model stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community."¹³ Finally, models are created as well as discovered by persons working within a set of assumptions. Thus, they are always partial, even when deemed appropriate, necessitating both alternative and complementary models as well as eternal vigilance against their literalization. Furthermore, a good model is not a dispensable temporary expedient but a fruitful and open-ended source of continuing ideas for possible extensions and modifications. For instance, in the sixteenth century, Ptolemaic astronomy was unable to cope with increasing clearly recognized discrepancies; that is, a persistent incapacity of normal science to solve the puzzles imposed on it, especially that of long-range forecast of the positions of the planets. It not only needed further rectification of itself, but also gave way to the new model, namely, Copernicus' theory.¹⁴

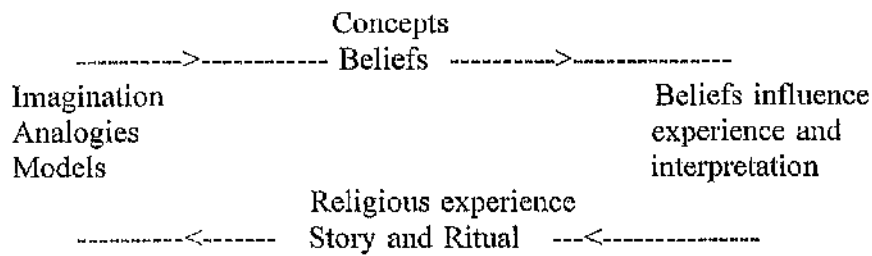
Now, we come to see how the scientific usage of theoretical models can be used in theological reflection. However, this attempt is not a blind transplantation. We have to be aware of the differences between the scientific and the theological use of models. Accordingly, we have to modify the scientific use of models in order that they serve their purposes here.¹⁵ Otherwise, theological reflection turns out nothing

¹³ Thomas S.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, p.175.

¹⁴ See Hans Kung ed., Paradigm Change in Theology, pp.11-31.

¹⁵ For instance, S.McFague considers that the function of theological models is comprehensive ordering rather than discovery; they are a necessity for meaning and explanation in theology in a more pronounced way than in science; models are ubiquitous in theology and related hierarchically as they are not in science; theological models affect feelings and actions in ways scientific models do not (See Metaphorical Theology, pp.103-108).

theological. Meanwhile, let us see what theological models are in the light of scientific models. Barbour primarily suggests that the structure of religion looks like the structure of science. Therefore, he adopts the same diagram to describe the structure of religion, but he changes its substance considerably.¹⁶



The data for a religious community consists of the distinctive experiences of individuals and the stories and rituals of a religious tradition. Let us start by considering religious experience, which is always interpreted by a set of concepts and beliefs. These concepts and beliefs are not the products of logical reasoning from the data, but rather they result from acts of creative imagination in which analogies and models are prominent. Models are also drawn from the stories of a tradition and express the structural elements that recur in dynamic form in narratives. Models, in turn, lead to abstract concepts and articulated beliefs that are systematically formalized as theological doctrines. These can be illustrated by the creeds. For instance, the Apostles' Creed is very metaphorical. It employs metaphorical language like "the Father Almighty" and "descended into hell". Are then the creeds models or dogmas? McFague rightly says that

the models provide explanation for doctrine, or, more accurately, the theory emerging from the creeds of the relationships involved is exemplified in terms of models. The theory is not illustrated by the models but the models are exemplars of it: one does not have doctrine

¹⁶ Ian T. Barbour, *Religion in the Age of Science*, p.36.

and models in the creeds, but doctrine in models.¹⁷

Thus, a model gives epistemological vividness to a theory by offering as an interpretation of the abstract or unfamiliar theory-structure something that fits the logical form of the theory.¹⁸ Besides, it is a construction that provides us with a methodical way of dealing with an object being investigated. If so, what are the theological significances of theological models?

Firstly, according to Ian T.Ramsey, the purpose of models is to achieve "cosmic disclosures".¹⁹ It means that models are analogical knowledge which result in existential insight and not cognitive knowledge only. In other words, the whole purpose of models is to cause a disclosure of truth; that is, to facilitate spiritual discernment. This insight is not necessarily knowledge of new facts, but rather it is primarily awareness of knowledge already present but not relevant or existentially meaningful. He writes that

when we appeal to "cosmic disclosures", we are not just talking about ourselves, nor merely of our own experience, we are not just appealing to our private way of looking at the world. If that were so, then the appeal to cosmic disclosures would be a scarcely-veiled form of atheism..... On the contrary, a cosmic disclosure reveals something of whose existence we are aware precisely because we are aware of being confronted. Indeed, we speak of a disclosure precisely when we acknowledge such a confrontation, something declaring itself to us, something relatively active when we are relatively passive.²⁰

Ramsey's suggestion is best understood in terms of the parables of Jesus. When Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God he uses parables to describe it; such as

¹⁷ S.McFague, Metaphorical Theology, pp.113-114.

¹⁸ F.Ferre, "Mapping the Logic of Models." p,75.

¹⁹ See Ian T.Ramsey, Models and Mystery (Oxford University Press, 1964) and Models for Divine Activity (London: SCM, 1973).

²⁰ Ian T.Ramsey, "Talking about God: Models, Ancient and Modern." In: Myth and Symbol, ed. F.W.Dillstone (London: SPCK, 1970), p.87.

mustard seed, lost coin, buried treasure and wayward children. These parables do not tell outright, but they hint, suggest and puzzle. They do not yield their meaning to a mathematical-type analysis, but go straight from one intuitive centre to another. Therefore, a parable is a conceptual instrument designed to evoke spiritual insight by the interest it elicits and the analogue design of the model. However, for Ramsey, theological models are rather naturally given when the mystery is disclosed. He says that

we may remark that some cosmic disclosures "just happened". This is the case of what used to be called "religious experience"- when a model would be self-selected- being some kind of focal point- with regard to each particular situation of this type. In other words, a cosmic disclosure will in the one way or in the other supply a model as that which alone enables us to be articulate about what has disclosed itself to us. A cosmic disclosure will supply a model either because it has been generated by the use of the model, or because the situation itself highlights a particular feature within it.²¹

Because of this, Ramsey does not offer a systematic study of models, but rather simply describes different phenomena of models. Thus, his approach is defective in that, on the one hand, he seems to turn theological insight into merely a psychological event; and on the other hand, he seems to imply that theological models are nothing more than tools for mediating insight or cosmic disclosure which have nothing to do with organizing our knowledge and information, and communicating our thoughts.²² With this, we come to the second theological significance of theological models.

Generally speaking, Avery Dulles follows Ramsey's understanding of models as a means for "cosmic disclosures". However, Dulles goes further to describe what

²¹ Ian T. Ramsey, "Talking about God." p.88.

²² Robert P. Scharlemann, "Theological Models and Their Construction." In: Journal of Religion, Vol.53 (1973), p.68.

"cosmic disclosures" are involved. He suggests that the use of models in theology can be understood in two ways, namely, explanatory and exploratory.²³ On the explanatory level, models serve to synthesize what we have already known or at least are inclined to believe. For instance, Hauerwas' account of character, vision, and virtue has this purpose. These concepts summarize what the Christian life is about, namely, justification and sanctification. On the exploratory level, models serve as the capacity to lead to new theological insights. For instance, Sobrino's account of the church of the poor is a relatively new model. It shows us that Jesus does not simply call the church to be the church for the poor, but rather radically he calls the church to be the church of the poor. This brings a new insight for us to consider what the church is and how it should be. Here, we find that Dulles' account is more comprehensive than Ramsay's because Dulles points out the explanatory significance of models. However, this differs from a descriptive function. What I mean is that the content of a model is not intended to be a replica of how an object appears or really is. But, at the same time, it does intend to provide a way of cognitively dealing with that object. Even if the model contains no description of the object it refers to, it does allow one to come to terms with the object. This is the "is and is not" characteristic of models.

Thirdly, apart from the explanatory and exploratory significance of theological models, Ian Barbour considers that one of the theological significance of theological models is its expression of attitudes.²⁴ This is because religion is a way of life and its main interest is practical rather than theoretical. Therefore, theological models

²³ Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), p.22.

²⁴ In his book Myths, Models and Paradigms, Barbour describes the function of theological models as follows: 1]. the interpretation of experience, 2]. the expression of attitudes, 3]. the evocation of disclosures, and 4]. the construction of metaphysical systems. However, I only highlight the expression of attitudes here because other aspects have been already discussed.

ought to have the capacity to inspire devotion, serenity, and a new pattern of living. From both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's accounts of spirituality and ecclesiology, we find that Barbour's remark is right and important. That is to say, Hauerwas' account of the concepts of character, vision and virtue and Sobrino's account of the historical Jesus are not intended to promote our intellectual interest, but rather to arouse our discipleship. Therefore, it is inadequate to consider that theological models are merely concerned about God himself. More importantly, they should provide analogies for our attitudes towards God. For instance, I am to look on God as Father; I am to have the kind of respect and trust I ought to have towards a father, even though I cannot say in what respects God resembles a father since he is not describable. However, an emphasis on the expression of attitudes does not reduce the significance of "cosmic disclosure" of theological models. In Scripture, attitudes are often justified as a response to what is understood to be the case; for example, "We love because God first loved us." [IJohn 4:19] Therefore, theological models not only purport to tell us something about God, humans and the world, but also encourage distinctive attitudes.

From the above study of models, we can conclude that a theological model is seeing one thing as something else, pretending "this" is "that" as a way of saying something about it. Using models means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better-known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known. However, the model itself "is and is not" the object itself. This dialectical nature of models should be maintained all the time. The "is not-ness" of models is against the tendency of idolatry. It is very easy to be tempted to understand models literally. When a model becomes an idol, the hypothetical character of the model is forgotten and what ought to be seen as "one" way to understand the object [God] has become

identified as "the" way. In fact, when a model becomes an idol, the distance between image and reality is collapsed: "father" becomes God's name. Therefore, this "is notness" reminds us that there is no one model which can embrace the total truth of God, but rather different models work mutually in order to understand the truth better.

Because of the basic fact that models are constructed rather than naturally given, models are testable. We must have means for determining the reliability with which a model allows us to understand the object. However, theological models are different from scientific models because their objects and concerns are different. For instance, Christians believe that God is the "Absolute", and we cannot know who God is, except as he reveals himself, while scientists do not share this belief or assumption. Therefore, we cannot blindly use the criteria of scientific models in theology, but rather we have to develop our own set of criteria for theological models. Thus, the criteria for theological models are concerned with two issues. First, how shall we decide which existing biblical model to use? It is a concern of preference. Secondly, how can we be sure that if a non-biblical model is used instead of a biblical model, that the contemporary model will neither distort nor lose entirely the essence of revelation recorded in Scripture? It is a concern of reference.²⁵

Regarding the criteria for preference in model selection, first, a preferential model should correlate a high proportion of the related biblical materials. For instance, Walter Rauschenbusch is right to use the notion of the Kingdom of God as

²⁵ See Ian T. Ramsey, "Talking about God." pp.86-97.

the core of Christian ethical thought.²⁶ But his interpretation has been criticized for being one-sided because he wants to find general principles for his social programme in the life and teaching of Jesus which he could apply to the economic system and social policy of the present-day world. For him, the Kingdom of God tends to mean that humanity organizes itself according to the principles of love and solidarity. However, this interpretation loses sight of the eschatological nature of the Kingdom of God, in the sense that the Kingdom of God is something different in quality from all human institutions and cultural values.

Secondly, a preferential model should communicate the clearest and deepest understanding of the truth. For instance, facing the challenge of the modern sciences and the unfruitful discussion of the critique of the historical Jesus, R. Bultmann proposed a theory of demythologization.²⁷ Bultmann is right that the gospels were written as Gospels and not as simple historical chronicles. Furthermore, he is correct to say that faith is an event in which we meet Jesus and encounter his challenge. However, these do not mean that the Christian faith can be understood "unhistorically" because "incarnation" is a historical event [*Historie*, not simply *Geschichte*]. Without the factual, historical element, and the theological interpretation, the Christian faith is dissolved. His model of demythologization gives in to the "scientific" habit of life, and finally, gives up the truth of the Gospel.

Thirdly, a preferential model should make the truth of the Bible relevant to our lives. This relevance is concerned more about correspondence with the religious experience of humankind today than practicability. In other words, it is related to

²⁶ See Robert T. Handy, ed., The Social Gospel in America 1870-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.253ff.

²⁷ See David Fergusson, Bultmann (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), pp.107-125.

issues such as how we can communicate the Gospel to contemporary people. Theology is based on changeless Truth, but not a timeless interpretation of this Truth. Therefore, if models are to interpret experience, then interpretation has to have a deep knowledge of real people as they live, struggle, rejoice, and lament.

Fourthly, a preferential model should help us to meditate on Christ, his love, forgiveness, power and truth. This is to sustain our faith and renew it with the very life of Christ. Besides, it should lead us to have a fresh commitment to Christ for work to be done in his name and for his Kingdom's sake; that is, in sincere obedience to Christ and his will. As said before, the Christian faith is never a theory, but rather is a way of life.

Obviously, these four criteria are the extension and further implications of the functions of theological models as cosmic disclosure, explanatory significance and discipleship which I have already discussed. However, these criteria should reflect the flexibility of the use of models rather than be an exclusive statement saying which models cannot be used. No matter whether we can successfully select a model in accordance with these criteria, it is not a replica of the entity. The limitations of models do not necessarily discredit their degree of usefulness, but rather they are to indicate the "regulations" of how to use them. In other words, they help us to use models properly.

Concerning the criteria for reference in model construction, Bernard Lonergan proposes two useful and related concepts in our theological reflection, namely, the "categories intending" and the "transcendence intending".²⁸ According to Lonergan,

²⁸ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, Method in Theology (London: DTL, 1971), p.10.

the "categories intending" is finite and has a limited denotation. It varies with cultural variations. He writes that

the derivation of the categories is a matter of the human and the Christian subject effecting self-appropriation and employing this heightened consciousness both as a basis for methodical control in doing theology and, as well, as an a priori whence he can understand other men, their social relations, their history, their religion, their rituals, their destiny.²⁹

In other words, this means the cultural biblical truth. It is a mode of expressing something that is intended as true, but the way it is stated is limited largely to a particular period of time and culture. On the contrary, the "transcendence intending" is comprehensive in connotation, unrestricted in denotation, and unvarying through cultural change. I consider that this means the transcultural biblical truth (although I realize that nothing is purely transcultural). It is truth that is not unique to the cultural patterns of any one particular period in history, but rather is a factual knowledge in every generation, such as, humans are sinners. However, the relationship between the "categories intending" and the "transcendence intending" is dialectic. That is to say, the "categories intending" is the foundation of "transcendence intending", while the "transcendence intending" widens and deepens the scope of "categories intending".

Now, we turn to see how these two concepts can help us to assess a non-biblical model. The concept of "categories intending" reminds us that models cannot be culture free. Therefore, they need to be interpreted into contemporary models so that the insight of the "transcendence intending" of the truth can be communicated. At the same time, the "transcendence intending" allows us a great degree of flexibility in the construction of models. In order to construct a contemporary model which can

²⁹ Ibid., p.292.

better communicate the truth, Max Black sets out criteria as follows:

1. There is an original object of investigation in which some facts and regularities have been established.
2. There is the need better to understand and explain the facts of the original.
3. We describe features of some object belonging to our familiar domain.
4. There exists a basis of correlation between these second domain features and the features of the original we are seeking better to understand.
5. We check our basis of correlation between the original and secondary features to see if it yields insights.³⁰

Let us use the doctrine of God as an illustration, with reference to S.McFague's suggestion of "God the friend".³¹ McFague considers that the parental models alone are insufficient because they screen out certain critical aspects of divine-human relationship. For instance, by their elevation and absolutizing of divine compassion, guidance and security for the individual, they neglect the public and political dimensions of that relationship. Therefore, she suggests that the model of friend for God is relatively appropriate to describe the divine-human relationship because first, this model has biblical foundation; secondly, in the western society, when parent-child relationships are not as central as they have been in former times, the model of friendship has a greater capacity to describe divine-human relationship; and thirdly, the model of friend can express mutuality, maturity, cooperation, responsibility which the parental images fail to provide. In short, this model shows us at least, that God's transcendence is not necessarily hierarchical, but also, alongside, a horizontal rather than a vertical relationship; and emphasizes sacrifice, support, and solidarity with

³⁰ M.Black, Models and Metaphors, p.230.

³¹ S.McFague, Metaphorical Theology, pp.177-192.

others and the world. The model of friendship provides us with a deeper interpretation of the biblical data that is also consonant with our total knowledge of reality. However, this does not mean that there is no weakness in this model.

Both the criteria for preference and reference are inter-related. Although the concern of reference is different from the concern of preference, it also has to meet criteria such as promoting discipleship and yielding insight. So does the concern of preference. Nevertheless, no matter whether our aim is to select or construct a model, a model should be in dialogue with the experience of its audiences, but not absorbed in it. Thus, the task of models is not to create completed, doctrinal systems, but to interpret the multi-dimensional, rich, ambiguous metaphors arising from the symbolic base of a tradition so that those symbols will once again speak to our existential situation.

After this long discussion of the use of model in theology, it is time for us to see what the relationship between the Kingdom of God and models is. McFague suggests that the Kingdom of God is a root-metaphor, on the one hand, and a relational model, on the other.³² It is a root-metaphor because it is the most basic assumption about the nature of the world or experience that we can make when we try to give a description of it. It is a relational model because its distinctive note is not a new view of God or a new image of human being, but a new quality of relationship, a way of being in the world under the rule of God. Therefore, in order to understand what the Kingdom is, we need to have "subordinate" models. These subordinate models bring new insights and challenges to us. However, because of the fact that the Kingdom is a relational model, the subordinate models cannot remain

³² S.McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p.109.

on the purely cognitive level of description, but should have the power of transformation in terms of the attitudinal and behavioural influence. In other words, the subordinate models should interpret our relationships to the Kingdom rather than picture what the Kingdom is. Thus, the relationship between the Kingdom of God and models is a concern of discipleship.

For Hauerwas and Sobrino, the Kingdom of God cannot be understood apart from Jesus himself because he is the way to the Kingdom. At the same time, Christology is not simply a matter of knowledge, but rather is a call to discipleship. We have already discussed this in chapter one. Nevertheless, Hauerwas also employs the concept of narrative as a model to understand the Christian life and the Kingdom. Although he refuses to admit that he is doing a "narrative theology", it cannot be denied that narrative plays a central role in Hauerwas' theology. For Sobrino, it is obvious that he uses the concept of justice as a model to understand the Christian life and the Kingdom. Unlike G.Gutierrez, Sobrino uses the concept of justice more extensively in his works than the concept of liberation. But liberation and justice are not two totally different concepts because both of them are describing the same particular activity of God; that is, the preferential option for the poor. Their difference is that liberation is an all-embracing concept³³, while justice is primarily confined to the socio-historical level of human experience. To consider that the concept of justice is primary in Sobrino's theology does not mean that Sobrino reduces the Christian faith to social theory, but rather the historical experience of the people considers the concept of justice both relevant and existential. It widens and deepens their faith in God. In the following, I will discuss how the concepts of

³³ For instance, Gutierrez considers that there are three levels of liberation, namely, liberation from unjust social structures, liberation from the power of fate and liberation from personal sin and guilt. See G.Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp.36-37 & 176-181.

narrative and justice work in Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theological reflection respectively, assess to what extent these two concepts can be considered as theological models and compare their difference, if there is any. However, I have to admit that both Hauerwas and Sobrino do not refer explicitly to the concept of model. This is my contention that their use of narrative and justice is better understood in terms of model.

B. NARRATIVE

1. NARRATIVE AND THE MORAL LIFE

In chapter one, I have illustrated the basic argument of Hauerwas' understanding of the moral life. In short, for Hauerwas,

the moral life is not simply a matter of decision governed by publicly defensible principles and rules, but rather we can only act in the world we see, a seeing partially determined by the kind of beings we have become through the stories we have learned and embodied in our life plan.¹

At the same time, I pointed out that Hauerwas gradually replaces vision by narrative in his writings. This shift does not necessarily imply that the concept of vision itself is deficient, but rather that it does not have a capacity to provide us with a comprehensive understanding of a moral self. That is to say, the concept of vision is primarily employed to suggest that the agent's moral life is largely determined by his/her way of "seeing", while the concept of narrative is fundamentally employed as an attempt to explain how the agent's vision [seeing] is related to his/her personal and social experience. Thus, both the concepts of vision and narrative should always be understood complementarily because it is narrative that focuses vision and forms character, and it is vision which needs narrative to concretize its meaning.

In this section, my primary concern is to explore how Hauerwas understands and uses the concept of narrative as a theological category. And I would like to discuss this matter under three sub-topics. They are: first, according to Hauerwas, to what extent the concept of narrative comprehensively reveals the character of the moral agent; secondly, according to Hauerwas, how the Christian convictions and the Christian life are understood in terms of the concept of narrative; and finally, in what

¹ S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, p.69.

way and to what extent the concept of narrative can be used as a theological model. In this part, the first sub-topic, I will discuss themes such as what a narrative is, how human experience is understood in terms of narrative, and what its ethical significance is. It is obvious that my concentration is chiefly on the ethical use of narrative² because this is Hauerwas' main concern. Before turning to these, I would like to point out that Hauerwas does not differentiate between story and narrative. For him, they are synonymous.

What is a narrative? According to Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, a narrative primarily needs a story and a story teller.³ Narrative is thus separated both from drama which lacks a teller and from lyric which lacks a tale. Besides, by narrative, Scholes and Kellogg mean the interaction between character and action; that is, plot.⁴ Hauerwas also considers that

stories themselves attempt to probe that source and discover its inner structure by trying to display how human actions and passions connect with one another to develop a character.⁵

A narrative, therefore, may be differentiated from chronicles, diaries and the like which lack two elements essential to the narrative art: selectivity and movement. Concerning the way of reading narrative, Hauerwas considers that what follows in the course of a narrative does not necessarily follow along the lines of a well-constructed syllogism but instead follows from the way the narrative builds up, takes shape, and then unfolds. Thus, a narrative must at least elicit the question, "What

² Other usages of narrative can be seen from S.Hauerwas ed., Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

³ Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 6.

⁵ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.29.

happens next?" because narrative is a connection between non-necessary, contingent events.⁶ Furthermore, Hauerwas points out that there is a difference between narratives which are told to make a point or to produce a certain effect, and narratives which embody the meaning in themselves.⁷ In Hauerwas, as we will see later, the latter usage is dominant. This is a literary perspective of what a narrative is.

Nevertheless, Michael Goldberg remarks that the skills for understanding the meaning of a narrative are dependent on certain linguistic and communal conventions. For example,

there are certain cultural conventions which ensure that images in a painting will be read one way rather than another, so, too, there are communally dependent style-guides for the story-teller in every society.⁸

Therefore, narratives are manifestations of both languages and peoples, and stand within a whole narrative tradition. Goldberg's remark directs our attention to understand narrative from a socio-historical perspective. In the following, we will see how these two perspectives, literary and socio-historical, interweave with Hauerwas' anthropological use of narrative in relation to human experience.

In common with other narrative advocates⁹, Hauerwas is committed to the general thesis regarding the narrative quality of human experience because he

⁶ Ibid., p.75.

⁷ Ibid., p.77.

⁸ Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), p.203.

⁹ For instance, Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience." In: Journal of American Academy of Religion, vol.39 (1971), pp.291-331; Harald Weinrich, "Narrative Theology." In: Concilium, Vol.9 (1973), pp.46-56; J.B.Metz, "A Short Apology of Narrative." In: Concilium, Vol.9 (1973), pp.84-96; James Wm.McClendon, Biography as Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974); and Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984),

considers that "the moral life must be grounded in the *nature* of man. However, that *nature* is not *rationality* itself, but the necessity of having a narrative to give our life coherence."¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the fact that Hauerwas takes narrative as a crucial category for understanding the continuity of the self, from the assertion that theology is primarily reflection about the significance of the narrative quality of human experience. In other words, for Hauerwas, the notion of narrative is a necessary "means" for reflection and enquiry about the moral life. Regarding the narrative quality of human experience, Hauerwas does not develop a full systematic account of what it is. Rather his account is relatively fragmentary. But, especially from his two related articles entitled to A Tale of Two Stories¹¹ and Self-Deception and Autobiography¹², we can still discern some basic features of what he says is involved in the narrative quality of human experience.

From Hauerwas' articles, we can perceive that the first anthropological use of narrative signifies human beings as "historical" beings. That is to say, humans' characters and identities are more or less formed by their societies and communities, and therefore, they cannot understand who they are unless they understand themselves within a given historical context. The term historical context does not only mean the history of a particular community, but also the traditions, cultures, and languages attached to it.

Concerning the claim that the agent's moral life is historically derived, Hauerwas demonstrates it in his experience of being a Texan. For him, being a

¹⁰ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.27.

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, pp.25-45.

¹² S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, pp.82-98.

Texan means that the unique cultural experience of Texas places its stamp on him forever. It does not simply mean biologically where one happened to be born, but also represents for many Texans a story that has, for good or ill, determined who they are.¹³ Hauerwas summarizes that "a Texan is not a man who has the presumption he is without a story; he has a story that he accepts as it locates him on a land and within a people without whom he could not be at all."¹⁴ The story of being a Texan then provides a Texan with the skills to find the boundaries between himself/herself and other stories that would claim his/her life. However, Hauerwas' illustration of being a Texan not only plainly demonstrates how humans are defined by stories, as when Alasdair MacIntyre says that

man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question, "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question, "Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?"¹⁵

but also acknowledges the power of story on the formation of humans' identities as when Don Cupitt considers that

stories actually produce desires and patterns of behaviour. They teach us and equip us with selves to be, feelings to have, actions to perform, people to meet, games to play and a world to inhabit.... Stories provide us internally with a functioning economics of selfhood, and externally with a theatrics of the life world and the various parts that we are going to be playing in it. The self as a self-regulating system is made by stories, and the dramas of everyday life in which it plays its various roles are also scripted by stories.¹⁶

These two different but related roles of narrative in the understanding of ourselves

¹³ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.31.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.34.

¹⁵ A.MacIntyre, After Virtue, p.216.

¹⁶ D.Cupitt, What is a Story? (London: SCM, 1991), p.48.

can be clearly illustrated by Stephen Crites' categories of stories: mundane stories and sacred stories.¹⁷ In short, mundane stories are stories which are set within a determined world and frame of consciousness and by which people explain where they have been, why things are as they are and so on, while sacred stories are stories which are not directly told, but they themselves create a world of consciousness and the self that is oriented to them. Crites considers the relationship between these two types of stories as follow: "All people's mundane stories are implicit in its sacred story, and every mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story."¹⁸ For Crites, mundane stories are static, while sacred stories are dynamic. It is true that people cannot change their mundane stories, but this does not necessarily suggest any form of determinism because I believe to a certain extent people can choose their own sacred stories which will change the subjectivities of mundanes stories, at least [although I realize that this freedom, to a certain extent, is determined by the mundane stories].

The second anthropological use of the notion of narrative, according to Hauerwas, suggests that personal identity is best understood in terms of narrative form because narrative is required by those matters that we can only describe analogically, for instance, the self and God. Hauerwas borrows Hannah Arendt's saying: "The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is, [and] we can know who somebody is or was only by knowing the story of which he is."¹⁹ In addition to this, Hauerwas also considers that narrative "binds events and agents together in an intelligible pattern" and it is this

¹⁷ S.Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience." In: Journal of American Academy of Religion, Vol.39 (1971), p.305.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.296.

¹⁹ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.79.

pattern which provides the form and meaning for personal identity because "to tell a story often involves our attempt to make intelligible the muddles of things we have done in order to become a self."²⁰

The narrative form of personal identity involves therefore two processes: memory and interpretation. The process of memory takes a narrative form because it embraces chronicle, while the process of interpretation is a story of the ordering of a process. In relation to his story of being an Texan, the process of memory is something related to 1] the official story of Texas; 2] the story of his family in Texas; 3] his story of being a Texan; and 4] his story of a Texan who no longer lives in Texas²¹, while the process of interpretation is concerned with which parts of these stories are adopted and how these stories are understood. George W.Stroup notes that "without the use of human memory we could not talk about personal identity in any sense as persistence through time or as a quality of personhood."²² At the same time, without the process of interpretation, personal identity cannot be formulated. Thus, the relationship between these two processes is that on the one hand, a person's memory is restricted to his/her interpretation, and on the other, a person's interpretation is restricted to his/her story [it may be part of his/her memory] because every interpretive act relates to the tradition and community within which the interpretation takes place. Therefore, these two processes are indeed circular. For Hauerwas, their relationship is best expressed in the form of autobiography.²³ The autobiographer cannot simply recount the events of his/her life. He/she must write

²⁰ Ibid., p.76.

²¹ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.6.

²² G.W.Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology (London: SCM, 1984), p.102.

²³ S.Haucrwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.96f.

from the dominant perspective and image of his/her present time. In other words, autobiography is not simply an activity of memory and the sum of those events and experiences which constitute an autobiographer's personal history; but also a matter of interpretation, which brings order out of the writer's unstructured past and in so doing imbues it with a particular significance.

Continuing the above explication of the interpreting role of narrative, Hauerwas' third anthropological use of narrative relates to its moral significance. As previously noted, narrative intends to explain and interpret a person's chronicle because chronicle is simply the sum of those events and experiences which constitute an individual's personal history, but "only when the chronicle is interpreted does it begin to have plot and become history."²⁴ Therefore, the interpreting role of story has an incredible impact on the formation of personal identity. As Hauerwas states: "It is just such a power that at once is the significance and danger of stories, for if our stories are false or limited then so will be our world and lives."²⁵ Negatively stated, a "false" story may cause alienation which brings self-deception. In Albert Speer's autobiography²⁶, Hauerwas points out that self-deception is not simply engaging in contradictory beliefs and actions, but doing so without being fully aware of doing so, so that one is helpless to extricate oneself from this condition. Furthermore, self-deception is compounded not only by our avoiding becoming conscious of our actions but also "avoid[ing] becoming explicitly conscious that we are avoiding it..... To bring certain things to consciousness requires the moral stamina

²⁴ G.W.Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology, p.113.

²⁵ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.31.

²⁶ A.Speer, Inside the Third Reich (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

to endure pain that such explicit knowledge cannot help but bring."²⁷ Hauerwas argues that the very nature of self-deception requires that it be practised as a consistent policy, as an expression of one's character, for to let up for even one moment would be to come face-to-face with precisely that which cannot be faced. The cynic has no need for self-deception. Self-deception feeds the illusions which need to keep us "sane", that is, to sustain the sense of identity we cling to as sincere, decent, and responsible individuals. Thus, self-deception is "systematically [to] delude ourselves in order to maintain the story that has hitherto assured our identity."²⁸ Self-deception is not a single act, but a pattern of life. On the contrary, positively stated, a "true" story may initiate conversion which means that a person's self-understanding or personal identity comes into question and his/her personal history must be reworked, reinterpreted and reappropriated. For Hauerwas, a "true" story could only be one powerful force to check the endemic tendency toward self-deception.²⁹ The Christian story, Hauerwas holds, can provide the skills for people to make their lives their own and to be free from their self-imposed fears.³⁰

These three anthropological uses of narrative in relation to the quality of human experience are mutually related and defined. In short, the narrative quality of human experience is primarily concerned with personal identity, while personal

²⁷ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.85.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.95.

³⁰ This is the remark of his discussion of being a Texan. It comes out of a context that "we Texans have little ability to know how to admit our failures, and cruelty, and our tragedies. We thus make a virtue out of some of our worst sins- like the sign that hung over the main street of Greenville for years: "Welcome to Greenville: The Blackest Land, the Whitest People." The way we hide our sins is to turn them into a banner. Our inability to know how to integrate into our lives some of our less noble practices means that our souls are not capable of facing the full reality of this existence." S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.37.

identity relates to the possession of the capacity of having a history and this history takes the form of narrative displaying its impact on the formation of personal identity. This is why Hauerwas insists that "ethical objectivity cannot be secured by retreating from narrative, but only by being anchored in those narratives that best direct us toward the good."³¹ Moreover, narratives have the power to seduce us into a new way of seeing the world. Unlike purely rational arguments, narratives unite reason and emotion so as to move not only the mind but the heart. When they are successful, their seductiveness can bring about a conversion in our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our destiny. The seductive power of the narrative reaches down into the unconscious and transforms our way of seeing and our willingness to act on our new insights. The kinds of narratives that have this power are not those allegorical stories whose meaning can be summarized "in other words". Rather, they are those mythic stories (political, social, religious) that have no point beyond themselves but give meaning and intelligibility to everything else.

We may find difficulty in understanding what narrative is about, not only because Hauerwas has a different use of narrative, but also because narrative itself is a complex concept on which it is hard to achieve an uniform agreement. As previously stated, I will concentrate on Hauerwas' use of narrative in a socio-ethical sense. Then, let us try to reflect and summarize Hauerwas' socio-ethical use of narrative which we have discussed so far. First, narrative is used to describe the narrative of the self as constituted in the person's historical particularity. That is to say, human actions are intelligible only when placed in contexts. Secondly, narrative means the context of historical communities. In other words, narrative functions as a description of the community's story and history. Thirdly, narrative explanation

³¹ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.17.

is fundamental for the understanding of human action because it displays the interaction between intentions and behaviour. Fourthly, Hauerwas uses narrative as a description of the constitution of a tradition. Tradition determines what ought to be considered the proper understanding of its sacred stories by its selective use of them in preaching, ritual and liturgy. In conclusion, we can discern that these four uses of narrative come together in a core argument; that is to say, traditions and individual human lives are fundamentally narrative in form.

We now turn to see the ethical significance of the notion of narrative in the moral life. The first issue that immediately appears in my mind is the relationship between freedom and agency. Put bluntly, does the nature of narrative, according to Hauerwas, suggest that the freedom of an agent is restricted? In order to discuss this matter, we have to also refer to Hauerwas' concept of character. In short, the concept of character relates to the concept of personhood, in the sense that the agent has the capacity to shape his/her character.³² If we put Hauerwas' understanding of character and narrative together, we can discern that, on the one hand, Hauerwas emphasizes the importance and the possibility of self-determination [i.e. having character] and, on the other, he makes a strong claim for the essential sociality of human nature [i.e. narrative]. The question for Hauerwas, then, is whether he considers that the agent has self-determination or is socially formed. Gene Outka puts Hauerwas' dilemma in this way:

On the one side, [there is Hauerwas'] insistence that the self is never just the product of social forces, the distinction between agent and observer and the privileged position of the former, the gulf between what I do and what happens to me..... On the other, he appropriates as much of the Meadian legacy in social psychology as he can..... What Hauerwas neglects to ask is whether his nearly unqualified appropriation may not effectively jeopardize his distinction claims

³² See my discussion on Hauerwas' concepts of character, vision and virtue in chapter 1.

about character. Even if he wishes to keep room for the agent "I", it is in effect a kind of reed on the intersubjective field. That reed may be too slender to bear all of the presuppositions about agency which he elsewhere adopts.³³

Fundamentally, Hauerwas acknowledges this tension, and admits that he is unsure how it might be solved. He simply wants to emphasize character while allowing for the social construction of the agent's perspective. Without pretending to solve this problem, Hauerwas suggests that his claim of the self-determination and the social formation of the agent might be better formulated as: "Our agency is actually our ability to be able to interpret and understand our dependency and through understanding integrate our dependency into a more determinate character."³⁴ Let us explore this in the light of sociology.

Here I find that Hauerwas' claim is more or less parallel to sociological theories of socialization.³⁵ According to these theories, Hauerwas is right that a human being is fundamentally "historical". Sociologically stated, personal identities are socially bestowed. Identity is not something "given", but is rather bestowed in acts of social recognition. Peter Berger illustrates the relationship between agent and society in such a way:

Society is external to ourselves. It surrounds us, encompasses our life on all sides. We are in society, located in specific sectors of the social system. This location predetermines and predefines almost everything we do, from language to etiquette, from the religious beliefs we hold to the probability that we will commit suicide.... We are located in society not only in space but in time. Our society is an historical entity that extends temporally beyond any individual biography.

³³ G.Outka, "Character, Vision and Narrative." In: Religious Studies Review, Vol.6 (1980), p.112.

³⁴ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.257.

³⁵ Anthony Giddens defines socialization as "the process whereby, through contact with other human beings, the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable human being, skilled in the ways of the given culture and environment." Sociology (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), p.87.

Society antedates us and it will survive us. It was there before we were born and it will be there after we are dead. Our lives are but episodes in its majestic march through time. In sum, society is the walls of our imprisonment in history.³⁶

He continues to say that:

Society not only determines what we do but also what we are. In other words, social location involves our being as well as our conduct. Society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thought and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness. Society does not stop at the surface of our skins. Society penetrates us as much as it envelops us.³⁷

Berger's remark seems to suggest and affirm that the agent is fundamentally passive. The agent has no self-autonomy at all. Nevertheless, Berger is not pessimistic. He considers that

for a moment we see ourselves as puppets indeed. But when we grasp a decisive difference between the puppet theatre and our own drama, unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this fact lies the first step toward freedom.³⁸

Translating the metaphor from drama to narrative, it could be said that however much our stories shape our dispositions and our vision, it is possible for us to be conscious of that influence. Once it is perceived, it may be affirmed or resisted. Although some proponents of story seem to be of mixed mind about our potential for self-awareness and change, it seems to me that this capacity is essential to a conception of freedom strong enough to bear the weight of a notion of moral responsibility.

In the light of Berger's remark, we begin to understand Hauerwas' dilemma positively. That is to say, the relationship between the freedom and the sociality of

³⁶ P. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, pp. 108-9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

the agent is dialectical in nature. On the one hand, it is right that most of the stories or convictions "charge us morally like the air we breathe- we never notice them"³⁹, and on the other, we can adopt stories or allow them to adopt us on the basis of an evaluative process.⁴⁰ In the course of this development, Hauerwas turns our attention from the problem of whether or not we have freedom to the issue of whether we are formed by a "true" story. Therefore, for Hauerwas, the issue is never whether we should try to become free from all stories, except those we have freely chosen; but whether we are formed by a truthful narrative that helps us to appreciate the limits and possibilities of those stories we have not chosen but are part and parcel of who we are. Summing up Hauerwas' view, a human person is involved in the interdependent, material and communal world. Hauerwas believes that the agent is responsible for his/her movement. But it is also the case that the agent has limits which are set on that agency by human creatureliness. However, the concepts of character and narrative are a way of emphasizing the necessity of the concept of agency for a description of human personhood while maintaining the contingency and particularity of that agency. Agency is not freedom from all determination, but agency that is based in a well-informed character is indeed free. This is the basic thesis concerning narrative. However, it is important to maintain a balance that narratives are passively received and also actively claimed.

The second important ethical issue that arises from narrative is related to relativism. Because of the fact that each person is formulated by their particular story and interpretation, it is suggested that there is no agreement and unity among them. Besides, talk about traditions, practices, stories and narratives seems to suggest

³⁹ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.19.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.35.

that there are many moralities. Does Hauerwas suggest ethical relativism? Hauerwas admits that his position involves a certain kind of relativism.⁴¹ But it does not necessarily mean that the moral use of narrative is ethically unsustainable? For instance, among the critics, Wesley J. Robbins poses a case showing the failure of narrative ethic.⁴² His example involves a "Mansonseque" group of killers. Captured, convicted and imprisoned, they maintain that, although their vision of life includes a category of action called "murder" and considers such action to be wrong, the killings in question do not fall within that category. On the basis of their particular vision, their actions were not wrong. Regardless of the outcome of the legal proceedings, Robbins thinks that, given Hauerwas' concept of morality, one would be "forced to admit, however reluctantly, that morally speaking, i.e. in terms of what their vision calls for them, their actions are appropriate; they have done nothing wrong."⁴³ In Robbins' view, Hauerwas' only recourse would be to claim that there is an objectively correct vision for which all persons are accountable regardless of whatever particular visions they may hold.

In order to respond to a critique like that of Robbins', we have to clarify Hauerwas' position. First, throughout his works, Hauerwas never suggests abandoning the so-called "standard account of morality"; rather he says that this is not a sufficient condition to reveal the reality of the moral life.⁴⁴ Moreover, Hauerwas admits that "the universalizability principle expresses the fundamental commitment to regard all men as constituting a basic moral community. This should

⁴¹ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.101.

⁴² Wesley Robbins, "On the Role of Vision in Morality." In: Journal of American Academy of Religion XLV (1977).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.635.

⁴⁴ S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, p.87.

not be understood as an ideal that is to be achieved in some far off future; rather it is a condition without which moral argument and judgment are not possible."⁴⁵ Secondly, Hauerwas' relativism does not advocate a belief that we can do what we like because we have different narratives, but rather he emphasizes the importance of one's integrity within one's narrative. In other words, Hauerwas insists that "we must have a form of thought not relativized to our own existing system of beliefs."⁴⁶ Therefore, within one's narrative, Hauerwas demands a matter of consistency and integrity. Thirdly, Hauerwas' relativism is a confessional relativism. Put theologically, he says that

[this] does not mean Christian convictions are of significance only for the church, for Christians claim that by learning to find our lives within the story of God we learn to see the world truthfully. Christians must attempt to be nothing less than a people whose ethics shine as a beacon to others illuminating how life should be lived well.⁴⁷

I will refer again to this confession relativism in the next section when I discuss the relationship between narrative and theology.

However, does a universal rational ethic provide an objectifiable and rationalistic ethic? Here, I find Alasdair MacIntyre's comment provoking. He presents our situation most vividly by telling the following story or parable:

Imagine that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of catastrophe. A series of environmental disasters are blamed by the general public on the scientists. Widespread riots occur, laboratories are burnt down, physicists are lynched, books and instruments are destroyed. Finally a Know-Nothing political movement takes power and successfully abolishes science teaching in schools and universities, imprisoning and executing the remaining scientists. Later still there is

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.85.

⁴⁶ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.104.

⁴⁷ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.34.

a reaction against this destructive movement and enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was. But all that they possess are fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context which gave them significance..... None the less all these fragments are reembodyed in a set of practices which go under the revived names of physics, chemistry and biology. Adults argue with each other about the respective merits of relativity theory, evolutionary theory and phlogiston theory, although they possess only a very partial knowledge of each..... Nobody, or almost nobody, realizes that what they are doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all. For everything that they do and say conforms to certain canons of consistency and coherence and those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably.

In such a culture..... what would appear to be rival and competing premises for which no further argument could be given would abound.⁴⁸

The world MacIntyre is describing is produced by what B.Lonergan calls the "longer cycle of decline", in which knowledge is reduced to common sense, hence no further questions need be raised.⁴⁹ In such a world, by default, the way things are is viewed as the way things ought to be, since no one seems able to imagine otherwise. The point MacIntyre is making, of course, is not about science but about ethics. "The language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described."⁵⁰

According to MacIntyre, the quest for a universal rational ethic that philosophers have been pursuing has been a dismal failure. This is because such a quest is historically naive in that it fails to recognize the socio-historical and narrative context of every ethic. As a result, ethicists have tried to construct an ethic by stripping the narratives from different ethical traditions and by lifting various

⁴⁸ A.MacIntyre, After Virtue, pp.1-2.

⁴⁹ B.Lonergan, Method in Theology (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

⁵⁰ A.MacIntyre, After Virtue, p.2.

theoretical components out of their diverse socio-historical and narrative contexts in order to fit them together, as if they were all from the same jigsaw puzzle. This results in our living in a world of ethical quandaries in which our best philosophical minds cannot come to agreement because they are arguing from arbitrary and incommensurate first principles with no coherent narrative to make sense of them. Faced with such storyless first principles, we have no rational way of adjudicating on their rival and contrary claims. Thus, unintentionally, ethical theories that argue from duty, utility, etc., are reduced to diverse expressions of ethical emotivism or relativism. Therefore, if Robbins accuses narrative ethic of ethical relativism, we do not see the universal ethic that can solve the ethical dilemma.

In summary, whatever universal, narrative-independent features of morality there may be, they ought not to be assumed to generate a comprehensive account of moral rationality that would make the narrative-dependent features irrelevant or even secondary. What they may not do is to assume a priori a substantive description of these categories. Indeed, they must look and see. Narrative-dependence would be indispensable. An important aspect of morality is that it is epistemologically dependent upon narrative. Hauerwas states that

even though moral principles are not sufficient in themselves for our moral existence, neither are stories sufficient if they do not generate principles that are morally significant. Principles without stories are subject to perverse interpretation (i.e., they can be used in immoral stories), but stories without principles will have no way of concretely specifying the actions and practices consistent with the general orientation expressed by the story.⁵¹

Finally, regarding narratives themselves, Hauerwas points out that we have to have a narrative which can sustain us to get rid of self-deception. Does this then

⁵¹ S.Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, p.89.

mean that there is a distinction between narrative in which no provision is made for critical reflection, distancing and self-determination and narrative which encourages self-determination? If so, what are the criteria? On the basic belief that the test of a good narrative is the sort of person it shapes, Hauerwas formulates a list of working criteria by which stories may be evaluated. According to him, any good narrative should meet these criteria:

1. power to release us from destructive alternatives;
2. ways of seeing through current distortions;
3. room to keep us from having to resort to violence;
4. a sense for the tragic: how meaning transcends power.⁵²

In other words, we should look for these effects in the lives of those shaped by a particular narrative. Narratives whose effects meet these criteria are considered to be good.

However, Hauerwas' criteria do not provide anything resembling an "objective" evaluation of various narratives because in each criterion, the key words, destructive, distortion, violence and tragic, are narrative-dependent. In his own example, a P.L.O. leader might describe a proposal for creating a Palestinian homeland as "constructive", while the prime minister of Israel might well describe it as "destructive".⁵³ Nor is it likely that one could find agreement in their use of the word "violence". For one of them, it would refer to acts of terrorism, and for the other, to political decisions that are responsible for the creation of refugee camps. Therefore, if Hauerwas' criteria are not entirely narrative-dependent, then one must conclude that there is in Hauerwas' position a submerged theory of something like natural law. And if this is true, then Hauerwas ought to communicate more clearly

⁵² S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.35.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.22.

and in more detail than he has to date what sort of a thing it is. This is unlikely to be Hauerwas' position however, because throughout his works he always emphasizes the distinctiveness of the Christian faith against the suggestion (from natural theology) that we can use our human reason to arrive at a proper understanding of God's will for us. On the other hand, if Hauerwas' criteria are mainly narrative-dependent, then they work within the framework of a confessional relativism. It seems to me that this is more likely to be Hauerwas' position for the reasons stated previously. But this does not solve the fundamental problem, because even under the "same" story, there may be more than one interpretation.⁵⁴ Although the practical consequences [the life shaped by the story] can be used to test our interpretation, this is also narrative-dependent. Therefore, the narrative understood within the context of a confessional relativism should also receive the test of truthfulness because the history of Christianity testifies that so often Christianity cut itself off from the covenant story into which it had been grafted. This test is about the non-narrative independent form of rationality. Reasons are appropriate though they are not sufficient. However, this does not necessarily reject the fundamental presuppositions of the Christian story. Truthful lives do not always follow from truthful stories. But a truthful story has the utopian capacity to bring about judgment and the possibility of renewal so that we can begin again.

In conclusion, for Hauerwas, the ethical importance of narrative is because the nature of human experience requires narrative display, and human life is fundamentally narrative in form. Hauerwas' account does successfully associate ethic with the formation of a moral self. Ethics, according to him, is never only a matter of decision-making, but rather is a concern of the formation of character which is

⁵⁴ A stimulating discussion of this matter can be found in Paul Lauritzen, "Is Narrative Really a Panacea?" In: *The Journal of Religion*, Vol.67 (1987), pp.322-339.

acquired through the narrative we have come to possess. Nevertheless, Hauerwas' narrative-dependent ethics is for the purpose of illustrating his "confessional" narrative, namely, Christian. That is to say, narrative is a category to explain the behaviour within a particular community rather than to sustain the reality of our dissimilarities. With this we turn to the relation between narrative and the Christian faith.

2. NARRATIVE AND THEOLOGY

According to the remark made by Paul Nelson, Hauerwas is the preeminent champion of narrative in Christian ethics.¹ Does Nelson's comment exaggerate Hauerwas' contribution? Before saying anything on this, I consider that the basic issue, perhaps, is to discern what role the concept of narrative plays in Hauerwas' theological reflection. Hauerwas states explicitly that his interest in narrative is simply because it relates his concepts of character, vision and virtue in an appropriate way rather than because he hopes to re-formulate the major doctrines of the Christian faith by means of narrative. He unreservedly says that

it has never been, nor is it now, my intention to develop a narrative theology or a theology of narrative. Theology itself does not tell stories; rather it is critical reflection on a story; or perhaps better, it is a tradition embodied by a living community that reaches back into the past, is present, and looks to the future. Hence, it is a mistake to assume that my emphasis on narrative is the central focus of my position- insofar as I can be said even to have a position. Narrative is but a concept that helps clarify the interrelation between the various themes I have sought to develop in the attempt to give a constructive account of the Christian moral life.²

Therefore, it is a mistake to over-emphasize and to under-estimate the importance of narrative in Hauerwas' thought. In other words, the concept of narrative in Hauerwas' thought is neither dominant nor negligible. My task here is to provide a clear explication and assessment of Hauerwas' use of narrative in relation to the Christian faith, especially, theological ethics. However, it is important to note that this section is built on the discussion of the previous section, namely, narrative and the moral life; because if narrative plays an important role in shaping our understanding of ourselves, our communities, our histories, and our moralities, then

¹ Paul Nelson, Narrative and Morality (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1989), p.7.

² S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.xxv. Besides, in his other book Christian Existence Today (p.25), Hauerwas also makes the same remark.

we would expect narrative to be vital to theological reflection. In the words of Stroup,

if narrative does have an almost primordial location in human experience, then every philosophical anthropology, Christian or not, which claims to offer a full description of human being must come to terms with the narrative structure of human identity. Any theological description of Christian identity that does not take into account this narrative structure ignores an essential dimension of human experience in the interpretation of faith.³

In the following, I will discuss Hauerwas' use of narrative as a hermeneutical process in three related ways, namely, the description, explanation and justification of the Christian faith.

By "description" of a tradition we mean the linguistic representation of its temporal web of beliefs and practices. By "explanation" we mean the act of comparing it to other- religious or non-religious- conceptual schemes, and the interpretation of its rituals and doctrines in light of moral general categories. By "justification" we refer to the act of giving reasons that it is not irrational to think the tradition's beliefs true and its rituals effective.⁴

In order to discuss these three aspects, I will especially refer to H.Richard Niebuhr's work, The meaning of Revelation, George Lindbeck's category of religion mentioned in his work, The Nature of Doctrine, and finally, Hauerwas' use of the Bible in the light of the work of Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. Before pursuing these themes, let us see why Hauerwas finds the notion of narrative relevant to theological reflection.

For Hauerwas, the appropriateness of narrative in theology is mainly because first, he considers that the only way to know God, the world, or the self is through

³ G.Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology, pp.87-88.

⁴ Gary Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology." In: The Journal of American Academy of Religion 55 (1987), p.690.

their histories⁵ which require narrative to display them; and secondly, the Christian faith is primarily concerned with how one's life is formed in a particular way rather than a knowledge about Christianity⁶, and therefore, narrative proves itself to be appropriate. Regarding Hauerwas' first reason for using the notion of narrative in theology, I have previously illustrated it in the discussion of the necessity of the historicity of the agent. In relation to God, Hauerwas simply applies the analogy of the narrative nature of the self to our knowledge of God. He holds the fact that we come to know God through the recounting of the story of Israel and the life of Jesus because God has revealed himself historically and, therefore, narratively in them. Besides, these stories themselves are the points. Hauerwas says that "[they] are not substitute explanations we can someday hope to supplant with more straightforward accounts. Precisely to the contrary, narratives are necessary to our understanding of those aspects of our existence which admit of no further explanation."⁷ Thus, the Christian faith, according to Hauerwas, is not a set of doctrines. Nor can the doctrines summarize the essence of the Christian faith. But rather "[doctrines] are tools, meant to help us to tell the story better."⁸ This does not mean that doctrines are unimportant, but rather they should be seen as an explanation of the Christian faith which take a narrative form, not vice versa.⁹ Nevertheless, Hauerwas never intends to replace doctrines by narrative, or to reformulate doctrines in a narrative way.

⁵ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.26.

⁶ See my discussion on Hauerwas' view of the imitation of Christ.

⁷ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁹ An interesting and stimulating account of the historical development and importance of the notion of doctrine can be found in J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.311-345.

Hauerwas' second reason for using the notion of narrative in theology relates to his concepts of character, vision and virtue, which we have discussed. For him, the Christian faith is not simply concerned with a philosophical enquiry, but rather it demands of its believers that they should learn how to feel, act and think in conformity with their tradition, namely, the Christian one. Theologically stated, discipleship is the key to understanding the Christian faith. Hauerwas insists that we cannot know who Jesus is unless we follow him. But how then does discipleship relate to narrative? Because of the fact that discipleship is not a theory, but rather a way of living, then it involves the matter of seeing. According to Hauerwas, our vision does not arise *sui generis*; rather, we view the world in accordance with story-related metaphors and symbols. Our vision is formed and given content by the narrative context in which we live, by "the stories through which we have learned to form the story of our lives."¹⁰ In the words of M.Goldberg,

by allowing a particular story to direct our attention to the world in some specific way, we let it direct our activity in a certain manner.¹¹

Thus, Christian narrative not only describes the world in the present, but also indicates how it ought to be changed. It also challenges our own self-deceptions and mediates to us the courage "appropriate to human existence."¹² Therefore, discipleship requires one's life being conformed to a particular story, namely, the Christian one.

Now, I turn to Hauerwas' use of narrative in theology. First, I will look at its "descriptive" dimension. According to Niebuhr, the Christian faith cannot be separated from history because the symbols and texts of the Christian community

¹⁰ S.Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue, p.74.

¹¹ Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative, p.176.

¹² S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.80.

refer to people and events in history and make claims about the meaning and goal of history. Furthermore, he contended that theology is implicitly historical, and the revelation of God comes through the medium of history.¹³ He exemplified his view by saying that

we are in history as the fish is in water and what we mean by revelation of God can be indicated only as we point through the medium in which we live.¹⁴

History itself takes the form of story. Nevertheless, Niebuhr makes a distinction between outer history and inner history, or external and internal history.¹⁵ According to him, external history objectifies the succession of past events and records them in an impersonal and disinterested manner; while internal history apprehends past events "from within, as items in the destiny of persons and communities," and interprets them "in a context of persons with their resolutions and devotions." Internal history is deeply personal, but not individual, because it is mediated through "a community of selves." Within this community, selves are internally related and members of each other. To become a member of a community of selves is to "adopt its past as our own" and thereby to be "changed in our present existence." Internal history "can be communicated and persons can refresh as well as criticize each other's memories of what has happened to them in the common life; on the basis of a common past they can think together about the common future."¹⁶ Thus, for Niebuhr, to speak of revelation in the Christian church is to refer to the history of selves within the community and to history as it is lived and apprehended from within. However, this does not mean that external history should be dismissed

¹³ H.Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp.21-22.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.48.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.59-90.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.47, 52 & 53.

or absorbed into internal history. Rather they are in a dialectical relationship. On the one hand, external history provides a basis for self-criticism. Because of the fact that our view of God is finite and limited, the Christian community should closely examine its external history as it hears it recounted by others in order to determine whether it bears any similarity to its internal interpretation of that history. If it does not, then the community must at least raise the question of whether it is engaged in some form of collective self-deception. On the other hand, without the support of internal history, external history has no significance at all because faith has to relate to the intensely personal I-Thou encounter. Niebuhr considered that

a faithful external history is not interested in faith but in the ways of God, and the more faithful it is the less it may need to mention his name or refer to the revelation in which he was first apprehended, or rather in which he first apprehended the believer. In this sense an external history finds its starting point or impulsion in an internal history.¹⁷

It is clear that Niebuhr gives preference for internal history because in internal history our concern is with subjects. But a preference for internal history has nothing to do with individualism and experientialism because "the history of the inner life can only be confessed by selves who speak of what happened to them in the community of other selves."¹⁸

Like his typology of the church¹⁹, Niebuhr's account of internal and external history may suffer the same limitation of rigidity. Nonetheless, it still provides us with a simple clarification of the complexity of the Christian faith. In relation to Hauerwas' emphasis on narrative, I would suggest that Hauerwas has attempted to

¹⁷ Ibid., p.88

¹⁸ Ibid., p.73.

¹⁹ See H.Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (London: Faber & Faber).

work out the implications of Niebuhr's internal history [although I realize that this claim oversimplifies his work] because his concept of narrative particularly relates to the self within a community and the story of a community. In chapter one, we have already seen Hauerwas' view of ecclesiology. In short, for him, the church is a group of people who have a common narrative. This common corporate memory expressed in living traditions is the glue that holds the members of a community together, for to belong to the group means to share the community narratives, to recite the same stories and to allow them to shape one's identity.²⁰ We will return to this in more detail in due course. On the other hand, we have already seen that throughout his works, Hauerwas endeavours to spell out the importance of the concepts of character, vision and virtue in the moral life. For him, story and life cannot be understood separately, not only because story forms life, but also because life testifies to the truthfulness of a story. If we take external history as a matter of asking about truth, then internal history is a matter of asking about truthfulness. For Hauerwas, the truth of Christian stories is not primarily to do with beliefs and metaphysics, but rather it has to do with practices and ethics. For instance, he says that we identify a true story, not by consulting past history or ontological principles, but by examining the lives of those people who live by it.²¹ Thus, Hauerwas argues that we should assess the truth of Christian stories [i.e. external history] by looking to see whether they shape lives of courage, patience, and virtue in those who take them to be sacred [i.e. internal history]. We should not speak of the truth or falsity of some biblical tale, but of the truthfulness of the lives it shapes. However, this does not mean that Hauerwas fails to realize the difference between truth and

²⁰ A good example of this can be found in Hauerwas' usage of the story of *Watership Down* (*A Community of Character*, pp.9-35). Hauerwas uses the story of the rabbit to display and contend the importance of narrative for a community.

²¹ See pp.182-183.

truthfulness. But for him, questions of truth cannot be separated from questions of the good [truthfulness]. Thus, it is clear that Hauerwas' view is consistent with Niebuhr's tradition of internal history.

Now, I turn to examine Hauerwas' use of the notion of narrative in terms of its "explanatory" dimension, with reference to Lindbeck's typology of religion. Interestingly enough, Lindbeck's account is quite similar to Niebuhr's account. That is to say, Lindbeck also draws the distinction between the "objective" approach and the "subjective" approach to the understanding of the Christian faith. However, unlike Niebuhr's account which is set within the Christian context, Lindbeck's account is set on a wider perspective, namely, religion in general.

In his book entitled The Nature of Doctrine, Lindbeck suggests that there are three models for understanding religion, namely, the cognitivist model, the experiential-expressive model and the cultural-linguistic model. Due to the fact that my interest here is their relation to the concept of narrative, I will confine my discussion to the last two models. According to Lindbeck, the experiential-expressive model understands a religion to be a system of "non-informative and non-discursive symbols" that objectifies and evokes fundamental "inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations."²² Put bluntly, this model assumes that there is some universal experience that all people have that can be characterized as religious. Therefore, the particular religions and their doctrines are manifestations of that experience giving it expression in a range of ways. The experience, however, always transcends particular religions so that it can be called on as a basis for critique of their expression. In relation to the concept of narrative, this model of religion

²² G.Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), p.16.

adheres to the general anthropological thesis regarding the narrative quality of human experience. For instance, Stephen Crites is one of the proponents. He says that

the inner form of any possible experience is determined by the union of these three modalities (past, present, and future) in every moment of experience..... The tensed unity of these modalities requires narrative forms both for its expression (mundane stories) and for its own sense of the meaning of its internal coherence (sacred stories). For this tensed quality is already an incipient narrative form.²³

The second relevant model is the cultural-linguistic model. It sees religion "as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought... [as an] idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings and sentiments."²⁴ According to Lindbeck, this model denies that there is an experiential core to religion because

the experiences that religions evoke and mold are as varied as the interpretive schemes they embody. Adherents of different religions do not diversely thematize the same experience; rather they have different experiences. Buddhist compassion, Christian love and French revolutionary *fraternite* are not diverse modifications of a single fundamental human awareness, emotional, attitude or sentiment, but are radically (i.e. from the root) distinct ways of experiencing and being oriented toward self, neighbour, and cosmos.²⁵

In relation to narrative, this model is supported by people like Hans Frei who considers that

if there is a "narrative theology", the meaning of that term in the context of the self-description of the Christian community is that we are specified by relation to its particular narrative and by our conceptual redescription of it in belief and life, not by a quality of "narrativity" inherent in our picture of self and world at large.²⁶

²³ S.Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience." pp.301-302.

²⁴ G.Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine, p.33.

²⁵ Ibid., p.40.

²⁶ Hans Frei, "Theology and the Interpretation of Narrative." In: p.28.

Among these models, Lindbeck gives preference to the cultural-linguistic model.²⁷

Like all kinds of typology, Lindbeck's may suffer the limitation of rigidity. But, at the same time, typology can also help us to elucidate certain complexities of a problem. Therefore, my interest here is to clarify Hauerwas' use of narrative in theology in the light of Lindbeck's typology.

Obviously, from time to time, Hauerwas seems to employ both the experiential-expressive and the cultural-linguistic models. He accepts the general thesis of the narrative quality of human experience and, at the same time, he upholds the distinctiveness of the Christian faith. Does this mean that Hauerwas is inconsistent with his theological reflection? If not, how then can Hauerwas' ambiguity be solved? First, it is obvious that Hauerwas insists upon the distinctiveness of the Christian faith [i.e. the cultural-linguistic model]. This can be discerned from his view of ecclesiology and Christian ethics. For him, the social ethic of the church is to be the church, and Christian ethics is a "qualified" ethics which reflects a particular people's history. Therefore, we have reason to believe that for him, the proper object of theology is neither stories nor the narrative quality of human experience, but God. His task is not to show how stories save but rather how

²⁷ Lindbeck argues that religions are "idioms for dealing with whatever is most important-with ultimate questions of life and death, right and wrong, chaos and order, meaning and meaninglessness. These are the problems they treat in their stories, myths, and doctrines. They imprint their answers through rites, instructions, and other socializing processes, not only on the conscious mind but in the individual and cultural subconscious. Thus a Balinese, molded by a ceremonial system in which is embedded a partly Hindu and partly animist world view, will fall into a catatonic trance when confronted by types of stimulus that might plunge a Westerner, influenced by a long tradition of biblical monotheism, into strenuous activity. Centuries of ritual reiteration of certain definitions of what is ultimately good and true have so shaped these two cultural types that their basic attitudinal reflexes are different even in the absence of belief or of much explicit knowledge of their religious traditions. In the face of such examples, it seems implausible to claim that religions are diverse objectifications of the same basic experience. On the contrary, different religions seem in many cases to produce fundamentally divergent depth experiences of what it is to be human. The empirically available data seem to support a cultural-linguistic rather an experiential-expressive understanding of the relation of religion and experience." (The Nature of Doctrine, pp.40-41)

God saves.²⁸ Secondly, although Hauerwas accepts the anthropological thesis of the narrative quality of experience, his purpose is to simply state the fact that we are narrative beings and therefore, Christian ethics should not neglect it. Furthermore, Hauerwas never stops at the thesis of the narrative quality of human experience, but rather he takes a step further to illustrate the truthfulness of Christian narrative among other narratives. This illustration is not a result of comparison, but rather a confession. Thus, for Hauerwas, his use of the experiential-expressive model is simply as a "stepping-stone", albeit indispensable, for further proposals. At the same time, his use of the cultural-linguistic model is not an end in itself because he considers that "it is our conviction that we must attend to the distinctiveness of our language, and to the corresponding distinctiveness of the community formed by that language, because it is true."²⁹ For Hauerwas, an appropriate explanation of Christianity should come, not in terms of external philosophical theories or social-scientific laws, but in terms of the internal rules and procedures of its own language game. This is the cultural-linguistic model.

Both Niebuhr's and Lindbeck's typologies help us to clarify the role of narrative in Hauerwas' theology. That is to say, Hauerwas' use of narrative is both historical in terms of internal history and confessional in terms of the cultural-linguistic model. I turn now to Hauerwas' final use of narrative in terms of the dimension of "justification". I propose to discuss this matter in terms of the use of the Bible because on the one hand, any discussion of the use of narrative in theology is insufficient if it does not refer to the Bible, for it is primary literature [i.e. the literary use of narrative], and on the other, the Bible is the testimony and tradition

²⁸ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.26.

²⁹ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.5.

[i.e. the socio-historical use of narrative] of the church.

Regarding how the Bible is interpreted, in his influential work on the hermeneutics of biblical narrative, namely, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative³⁰, Hans Frei observes that interpretation of the Bible underwent a drastic change in the eighteenth century with the advent of historical criticism. Prior to that time,

Western Christian reading of the Bible..... was usually strongly realistic, i.e. at once literal and historical, and not only doctrinal or edifying. The words and sentences meant what they said, and because they did so they accurately described real events and real truths that were rightly put only in those terms and no others. Other ways of reading portions of the Bible, for example, in a spiritual or allegorical sense, were permissible, but they must not offend against a literal reading of those parts which seemed most obviously to demand it. Most eminent among them were all those stories or historical sequences..... Christian preachers and theological commentators..... envisioned the real world as formed by the sequence told by the biblical stories.³¹

Since the emergence of the historical-critical method in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the "realistic" reading of the Bible gradually diminished in the theological world. Under the historical-critical method, understanding the text means looking behind or outside of the text at its development or formation, historical setting, the theological intentions of author, and at parallels in other religious or cultural traditions. Consequently, the categories of meaning and truth are no longer understood to cohere in any "realistic" text. The meaning of a narrative could be uncovered by grammatical study, but the determination of the meaning of the text was no longer understood to be the resolution of the question of its truth. Meaning and truth became distinct categories, and the question of meaning no longer cohered with the question of truth. A literal or grammatical reading of a text may disclose

³⁰ Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

its meaning, but if the reader wants to know whether the narrative is true then it must be determined whether the claim of the text coheres with some referent external to the text, such as, historical fact. Frei finds this result disastrous because it distorts the Bible. He proposes an alternative option of reading the Bible, namely, realistic narrative. In short, "realistic narrative" is not history but "history-like". It renders a world or the identity of an agent which cannot be separated from the narrative itself. The subject of the narrative cannot be divorced from the narrative because it is the narrative that renders the subject, and precisely because biblical narrative is realistic, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of reading it.³² Frei's view is concretized also in another work The Identity of Jesus Christ³³. Frei suggests that the Gospels must be read as realistic narrative. He defends his claim that much of the Bible falls into a literary genre which requires an appropriate and specifiable method of interpretation. But this genre is not restricted to Christian Scripture. Therefore, the danger is that as the literary theory goes, so does the christological assertion. He insists that it must be the community's rules for interpreting these texts which are used rather than a general theory of texts and reading. In other words, the christological assertion of the community of faith must control the method of interpretation by which the Bible is read, not vice versa.

Generally speaking, Hauerwas' position is similar to Frei's.³⁴ However, because of the fact that Hauerwas is not a biblical scholar, he does not take the enquiry about theories of reading further. On the contrary, his focus is on the implications of the biblical narrative for the identity of Christians and Christian

³² Ibid., pp.12-16.

³³ Hans Frei, The Identity of Jesus Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

³⁴ See S.Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), pp.15-46.

community. Hauerwas shares with Frei a view that the theological use of the Bible must be understood within the context of the Christian community. Hauerwas comments that

part of the difficulty with the rediscovery of the significance of narrative for theological reflection has been too concentrated attention on texts qua texts. It is no doubt significant to rediscover the literary and narrative character of the texts of the Bible. That is particularly the case if one is interested in redirecting the attention and method of those engaged in the scholarly study of the Bible. But the emphasis on narrative can only result in scholarly narcissism if narrative texts are abstracted from the concrete people who acknowledge the authority of the Bible.³⁵

Therefore, for Hauerwas, the mistake of fundamentalism and biblical criticism is that they "seek to depoliticize the interpretation of scripture on the grounds that the text has an objective meaning."³⁶ An emphasis on the ecclesial context of the Bible poses an important direction for "narrative theology" to go. That is to say, "narrative theology" should be contented with its emphasis on narrative neither as a transcendental category of experience nor as a literally form illuminative for the Bible, but rather should display the proper and practical relationship between the Bible and the church.

According to Hauerwas, the Bible is basically the church's book. It means that, on the one hand, the Bible is a record of the history of the church which gives the church's existence meaning. Therefore, Hauerwas suggests that the most appropriate way to understand the Bible is to regard it as a narrative. It is a narrative, not only because it has a narrative literary genre, but also because it embodies the shared memory and communal history which binds individuals together into a community. On the other hand, the authority of the Bible is confirmed by the

³⁵ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.55.

³⁶ S.Hauerwas, Unleashing the Bible, p.18.

Christian community which is governed by its confession of Jesus Christ, because it considers that the Bible has authority in its witness to the identity of Jesus Christ. The question then, is whether the church "controls" the Bible or vice versa. Hauerwas answers that

of course the church creates the meaning of Scripture, but that does not invite an orgy of subjectivistic arbitrariness. Rather the church must continue to return to the Scripture because they are so interesting, given the church's task to live as a people of memory in a world without memory. The church returns time and time again to Scripture not because it is trying to find the Scripture's true meaning, but because Christians believe that God has promised to speak through Scripture so that the church will remain capable of living faithfully by remembering well. The more interesting the challenges facing the church, the more readings we will need. It is for this reason that the church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, tests contemporary readings of Scripture against the tradition, knowing that such readings help us to see the limits of the present.³⁷

Besides, the authority of the Bible requires community because "it derives its intelligibility from the existence of a community that knows its life depends on faithful remembering of God's care of his creation through the calling of Israel and the life of Jesus"³⁸, and community must have authority because "authority is the means through which a community is able to journey from where it is to where it ought to be."³⁹ Therefore, the church and the Bible are in a dialectical relationship. Hauerwas clarifies his view of the authority of the Bible by saying that it is not to claim the infallibility of its content, but rather to claim it as

the testimony of the church that this book provides the resources necessary for the church to be a community sufficiently truthful so that our conversation with one another and God can continue across generation.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., pp.36-37.

³⁸ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.53.

³⁹ Ibid., p.63.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.64.

Accordingly, one may expect any critical approach to the text to be concerned at least in part with the question of what it means to interpret that text in the context of the community that uses it to understand and interpret reality.

The above account of the "ecclesial" context of the Bible proposes that the Bible is primarily concerned with the ethical lives of the community because truth in general (and particularly the truth of the Christian faith) cannot be known without initiation into a community that requires transformation of the self. Put bluntly, this is concerned with Christian ethics. Hauerwas says that

[the] scripture functions as an authority for Christians precisely because by trying to live, think, and feel faithful to its witness they find they are more nearly able to live faithful to the truth. For the scripture forms a society and sets an agenda for its life that requires nothing less than trusting its existence to the God found through the stories of Israel and Jesus. The moral use of scripture, therefore, lies precisely in its power to help us remember the stories of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives.⁴¹

Thus, he considers that the Bible helps to nurture and reform the community's self-identity as well as the personal character of its members. Put differently, the Bible requires a corresponding community which is capable of remembering and for whom active reinterpreting remains the key to continuing a distinctive way of life. Hauerwas considers that "the narrative of scripture not only renders a character, but renders a community capable of ordering its existence appropriate to such stories."⁴² In this sense, questions about how to remember the stories are not just questions about fact or accuracy, but about what kind of community we must be to be faithful to God and his purposes for us. Furthermore, a biblically informed ethics will not ultimately prize accurate historical knowledge of the text or sophisticated

⁴¹ Ibid., p.66.

⁴² Ibid., p.69.

hermeneutical schemes for getting at its meaning. Rather, it will require first and foremost that we form ourselves into a people who can understand and carry forward the memories and expectations narrated there. However, Hauerwas does not think that the Bible lays down rules for Christians. It rather provides us with a story into which they must fit their lives. The ecclesial use of the Bible rejects any inclination to see the Bible as the "revealed morality" and the "revealed reality" because they see the Bible independent from the community. Hauerwas' ecclesial use of the Bible is shared by other theologians, like Johannes Baptist Metz, who comments that

Christianity as a community of those who believe in Jesus Christ has, from the very beginning, not been primarily a community interpreting and arguing, but a community remembering and narrating with a practical intention- a narrative and evocative memory of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The logos of the cross and resurrection has a narrative structure. Faith in the redemption of history and in the new man can, because of the history of human suffering, be translated into dangerously liberating stories, the hearer who is affected by them becoming not simply a hearer, but a doer of the word.⁴³

Hauerwas' ecclesial interpretation of the Bible is in line with his understanding of narrative in terms of cultural-linguistic model and internal history. That is to say, themes like truthfulness and particularity appear here once again. Taking Gabriel Fackre's typology of narrative theology⁴⁴, I would suggest that Hauerwas' so-called "narrative theology" is a form of community story because the narrator, in this case, is neither a specific textmaker nor a personal storyteller, but a faith community. This can be supported from Hauerwas: "the narrative of the Bible

⁴³ J.B.Metz, Faith in History and Society (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), p.212.

⁴⁴ According to Fackre, there are three kinds of story, namely, canonical story, life story and community story. Canonical story makes extensive use of literary analysis of biblical material, life story draws heavily on psycho-social resources in the exploration of personal experience, and community story is shaped by communal lore and the sedimentations of tradition. For details see "Narrative Theology: An Overview." In: Interpretation 37 (1983), pp.340-352.

is to concern where the story is told, namely, in the church; how the story is told, namely, in faithfulness to Scripture; and who tells the story, namely, the whole church through the office of the preacher."⁴⁵

In summary, Hauerwas' use of narrative in theology can be recapitulated in three related perspectives, namely, the description, explanation and justification of the Christian faith. For him, an adequate description of Christianity should not come in terms of imported categories but in terms of the Bible's own narrative and Christians' own autobiographies [i.e. the internal history]. An appropriate explanation of Christianity should not come in terms of external philosophical theories or social-scientific laws but in terms of the internal rules and procedures of its own language game [i.e. the cultural-linguistic model]. Finally, the justification of Christianity should not come in the form of a logical proof that God exists, or Jesus rose from the dead, or that the church serves ends all rational persons ought to desire. Rather it should come in the form of a pragmatic demonstration that this tradition entails a liberating, authentic, and a way of life without self-deception, an appropriate response to God's will towards us [i.e. the moral use of the Bible].

Hauerwas' use of narrative in Christian theology is stimulating, and probably opens a new way of doing theology, but his critics find his approach problematic. Before taking up this critique, it is important to say something about the differences between Hauerwas's theological use of narrative and general use of narrative. First, Hauerwas acknowledges that there is a narrative quality of human experience that is morally significant.⁴⁶ But for Hauerwas, this is not the primary claim that

⁴⁵ S.Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, p.61.

⁴⁶ See pp.168-169.

Christians are concerned to make. Rather the biblical narrative seeks to incorporate all people into God's narrative. Secondly, Hauerwas is not satisfied with the general description of the importance of tradition in the formation of the moral self⁴⁷, but rather he considers that the moral self has to be incorporated into the church, a community of character, so that it is possible to develop the virtues necessary to live truthfully and morally. These differences mark Hauerwas' departure from "natural" and "liberal" theology. Now, let us turn to look at the critique of Hauerwas' usage of narrative in theology.

First, Hauerwas' use of narrative is criticized for the confusion between the matters of truth and truthfulness. His critics would agree, I believe, that Hauerwas' emphasis on internal history is an important direction for theological ethics to take because sacred stories have more to do with human temporality, morality and piety than with the transcendental principles. When we ask whether stories are true or not, we largely mean "are they true to human experience?" and "are they likely to encourage human behaviour?" So it is appropriate to take the pragmatist [and Methodist] route of first turning our attention to the question of the truthfulness of the Christian lives who read the biblical stories. This is what Hauerwas believes that

Christian convictions constitute a narrative, a language, that requires a *transformation of the self* [italics mine] if we are to see, as well as be, truthful.⁴⁸

However, the emphasis on the truthfulness of lives shaped by the Christian story does not solve the problem of truth. Paul Lauritzen, in his article "Is Narrative Really a Panacea?"⁴⁹, clearly illustrates this dilemma. In his study of the use of narrative in

⁴⁷ See pp.174ff.

⁴⁸ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.30.

⁴⁹ P.Lauritzen, "Is Narrative Really a Panacea?" In: The Journal of Religion 67 (1987), pp.322-339.

the work of J.B.Metz and S.Hauerwas, he points out that both Metz and Hauerwas consider the concept of narrative important in theological enquiry, and both claim that the intelligibility and truthfulness of Christian convictions resides in their practical force, but they diverge from their ways of practice; that is, Metz's position is rather "revolutionary", while Hauerwas' position is rather "sectarian". Lauritzen concludes that although there is merit to the suggestion of using narrative in theology, the root problem always is the truth which has to require metaphysical enquiry.⁵⁰

Lauritzen's comment sharply points out the insufficiency of the category of narrative in theology. Nevertheless, we should be aware of the fact that like his use of the concept of character, Hauerwas' stress on the importance of truthfulness is rather a matter of emphasis. He never intends to avoid truth claims, although it is a fact that he refuses to engage in metaphysics qua metaphysics.⁵¹ Rather he adopts a different point of departure to tackle the question of truth; that is to say, truth demands truthfulness. For Hauerwas, both external and internal evidence are important, but an emphasis on narrative is simply "to note the kind of actuality we believe has grasped us in Jesus of Nazareth."⁵² Besides, we have to admit that despite the importance of metaphysical enquiry in theological reflection, it does not necessarily solve the problem of plurality of interpretation because fundamentally any metaphysical enquiry involves narrative. Ronald Thiemann recognizes that

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.339.

⁵¹ See S.Hauerwas, "Why the Truth Demands Truthfulness: An Imperious Engagement with Hartt." In: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.LII (1984), pp.141-147. In his reply to J.Hartt, Hauerwas admits that the Gospels involve "foundational metaphysical beliefs. He agrees that the Gospels require certain facts be true. However, he states that "the kind of truth entailed by the Gospels cannot be separated from the way the story of God we claim as revealed in Jesus' life forces a repositioning of the self vis-a vis reality." For Hauerwas, Christian theology would and should not free from classical metaphysical concerns, but the matter is to know how the truth and truthfulness are to be distinguished without being separated.

⁵² Ibid., p.145.

the interpretations and proposals will differ, but that is to be expected within any living tradition. No single interpretation can ever claim to have discerned *the* Christian narrative, but all strive to be faithful expressions of it. The Christian narrative is a story that can never be fully told, for it is the story of a community that has not yet reached that *telos* for which God intended us.⁵³

Therefore, what we need is not simply a return to the metaphysical approach, but rather a virtue which can endure our differences. Brevard Childs recognizes that

Christians may disagree radically with one another on a particular course of action, and yet both positions may rightly appeal to some biblical warrant.... It is the primary task of the church to hold together the dissenting factions in Christian love.⁵⁴

Therefore, individual Christians ought to be modest about the status of their discernment and to recognize that all human well-doing stands under God's judgment and ultimately must appeal to God's mercy. However, Hauerwas rightly notes that "these interpretations may be quite diverse and controversial even within the community, but are sufficient to provide the individual members with the sense that they are more alike than unlike."⁵⁵

Secondly, Hauerwas' use of narrative is a form of confessionalism which is accused of converting theology into a ghetto language unintelligible to outsiders.⁵⁶ As a result, this not only restricts the missionary task of the church, but also is a great obstacle for ecumenism. Is this critique fair? Fundamentally, I consider the presuppositions of this critique problematic; that is, whether the success of missionary work is mainly dependent on the comprehensibility of the Christian faith, and

⁵³ R.Thiemann, Constructing a Public Theology (Louisville: W/JKP, 1991), p.139.

⁵⁴ B.Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), pp.137.

⁵⁵ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.60.

⁵⁶ See J.Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation." In: Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society 40 (1985), pp.83-94, and see my discussion in pp.100ff.

whether the purpose of theology is to make the Christian faith understandable to the outsiders. Concerning the first presupposition, it seems to suggest that if we skilfully display Christianity, it increases the chance of success in evangelism. It is beyond my ability to assess how true this is, but I know that it is wrong to assume that evangelism basically relates to the matter of reasoning and knowledge. It is unfortunate when theology seeks to offer a universal theoretical justification for the Christian faith because, when theology accepts this role, it inevitably embarks upon a "transcendental" exploration. But Lindbeck tells us that

pagan converts to the catholic mainstream did not for the most part, first understand the faith and then decide to become Christian; rather, the process was reversed: they were first attracted to the Christian community and form of life. They submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction in which they practised new modes of behaviour and learned the stories of Israel and their fulfilment in Christ. Only after they had acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able intelligently and responsibly to profess the faith, to be baptized.⁵⁷

Therefore, an emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Christian faith is not necessary a form of sectarianism, but rather it unmasks the myth of universalism. Universalism

not only results in cultural and social imperialism, but it also distorts the nature of faith itself. For.... in order to sustain the presumed universality of our convictions, the convictions are transformed into general truths about "being human" for which "Christ" becomes a handy symbol. Our universalism is not based on assumed commonalities about mankind; rather it is based on the belief that the God who has made us his own through Jesus Christ is the God of all people.... When the universality of humanity is substituted for our faith in the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, the eschatological dimension of our faith is lost. Christian social ethics then becomes the attempt to do ethics for all people rather than being first of all an ethic for God's eschatological people.⁵⁸

Hauerwas finds the true ethical power of Christianity in its diaspora status as a holy

⁵⁷ G.Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine, p.132.

⁵⁸ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, pp.71-72, 73, 76-77.

community. This may erect a boundary between the Christian community and the outside world, but this boundary is simply to state the fact that the church is an eschatological people which gives witness to the Kingdom on earth.

Besides, an emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Christian faith is nothing to do with its superiority over other religions or ideologies. Rather, it is a matter concerned with one's identity. A true dialogue is possible only when each tradition knows and holds its distinctiveness seriously rather than selling out its identity for the sake of dialogue. The danger always is that when theology attempts to express and reinterpret Christianity in appropriate terms to the times for the sake of not being ignored, it pays the price of losing its identity. Therefore, the most urgent theological issue is not whether there is some common ground between the Christian faith and other religious traditions, theistic or secular, or the question of whether Christianity is superior to other religious traditions. At the same time, the crucial theological issue is not whether the Christian community can find acceptance and understanding in other religious communities. On the contrary, the question is whether the church can rediscover the sense in which it *stands in and lives out of a tradition, reinterpret that tradition* so that it is intelligible in the contemporary world, and offer a clear description of the Christian faith which makes it relevant to the urgent questions and issues of modern society. This is, I believe, what Hauerwas intends to do.

Finally, Hauerwas' confessionalism is also criticized as a form of relativism, as has been previously discussed. Here, I would like to explore Hauerwas' confessionalism from a different perspective, that is, its relation to pluralism. If Hauerwas' confessionalism is a form of relativism, it also acknowledges pluralism. What kind of pluralism does then Hauerwas' confessionalism signify? According to

Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen, there are two main categories of pluralism, namely, normative and descriptive.⁵⁹ In short, the normative pluralism advocates diversity, while the descriptive pluralism acknowledges the existence of diversity as a fact that is worth noting. Mouw and Griffioen go on to suggest that each of these two categories has at least three general types, namely, directional, associational and contextual. Directional pluralism refers to the diversity of visions of the good life that give direction to people's lives. Associational pluralism means the diversity of groups' pattern, and contextual pluralism refers to the diversity which draws upon different racial, ethnic, gender, geographical and class experiences. Obviously, our concern of Hauerwas' confessionalism relates to whether it is a form of "descriptive directional pluralism" which highlights the fact of a plurality of directional perspectives, or a form of "normative directional pluralism" which advocates directional plurality as a good state of affairs. From the preceding discussion of Hauerwas' anthropological and theological use of narrative, we observe that Hauerwas does not contend that it does not matter what the truth is because everyone has his/her story. Rather he argues that Christians have their own story, and they have to be consistent with it. Although Hauerwas rejects the idea of universalism, it does not necessarily mean that he advocates "normative directional pluralism". I consider that his use of narrative is a form of "descriptive directional pluralism" because he simply states a fact that Christians do not have the same story as non-Christians. Therefore, Hauerwas' emphasis on narrative is indeed a form of relativism, but not ultimate relativism. It acknowledges that any notion of rationality, knowledge, reality, goodness or rightness must be seen as itself relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society or culture. This acknowledgement is not to propose that truth does not matter. But truth cannot

⁵⁹ Richard Mouw & Sander Griffioen, Pluralism and Horizons (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp.1-19.

be obtained through objective and rational enquiry. Rather truth can be detected through one's moral life being faithful to and transformed by the story.⁶⁰ Thus, I do not see any threat caused by Hauerwas' emphasis on narrative.

For Hauerwas, his interest in narrative in Christian theology is primarily a concern of Christian identity. On the one hand, he suggests that any search for Christian identity should not be divorced from a community and its tradition. On the other hand, any concern of Christian identity should not escape the process of being transformed. On the contrary, metaphysical enquiry itself is insufficient to provide such a requirement because it strives to be methodologically self-conscious, objective in evaluation and abstracted from the confusing ebb of everyday life. As a result, this brings alienation to the moral self from its tradition. However, this does not necessarily mean that theological assertions should take narrative form, but theologians need to use narrative analysis in order to interpret the stories that form the basis for theological assertions.

⁶⁰ See pp.182-183.

3. NARRATIVE AS A MODEL OF THE KINGDOM

The use of narrative is not a new phenomenon in biblical studies. In the early 1970's, James Barr has noted that biblical scholarship was moving from an older paradigm based upon history towards a newer paradigm based upon literature.¹ Although there are still some reservations about the role of narrative, apart from its literary use, the use of narrative in theology gradually becomes prevalent. George Stroup explains the interest in narrative as a result of

a deep and profound confusion concerning not only what it means to be Christian, but also what it means to be male or female, husband or wife, father or mother. In the midst of this massive confusion about identity and the absence of what were at one time compelling narrative and living traditions, it is hardly surprising that there is both a fascination with and a longing for narrative that recreate an ordered world and provide meaning and direction to personal and communal experience.²

However, he also points out that

narrative theology has no obvious conversation partner in philosophy which can provide it with an epistemology and a methodology. The result has been that the literature on narrative theology continues to grow by leaps and bounds but without direction, or saying precisely, in every conceivable direction.³

No matter how immature the use of narrative in theology may be at the present, no one can ignore its possible impact on future theological development. However, it is not my intention here to assess the use of narrative in theology in general. Rather, I will limit my scope to Hauerwas' use of narrative in relation to the Kingdom of God in the light of the previous section, that is, to see narrative as a model. I hope that through this limited and specific assessment, we can grasp the significance of

¹ J.Barr, The Bible in the Modern World (London: SCM, 1990).

² G.Stroup, "Theology of Narrative or Narrative Theology?" In: Theology Today 47 (1991), p.431.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.424-432.

narrative in theological reflection, and further the exploration of its use.

In order to discuss the use of narrative as a model of the Kingdom, we have to clarify the two "ambiguities" of Hauerwas' use of narrative; that is, what Hauerwas means by narrative, and whether narrative is a bridge to systematic theology or it properly has some role within theology itself, according to Hauerwas. Regarding the first ambiguity of Hauerwas' use of narrative, we have noticed that narrative can refer to either a literary genre, such as what Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg define, or a socio-historical description of human existence, as in Stephen Crites. Apart from these two uses, Hauerwas himself also uses narrative in various ways. For instance, narrative is employed to describe the narrative of the self as constituted in the person's historical particularity, the context of historical communities, the constitution of a tradition and the certain events in the communal history of Israel and the personal history of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴ These different uses complicate, and even may reduce the possible use of narrative as a model of the Kingdom because different uses of narrative may have different degrees of intelligibility towards our understanding of the Kingdom. That is to say, some can function well but some cannot. For instance, if narrative is primarily understood as a quality of human experience, it not only fails to provide existential insight into the Kingdom, but also distorts the truth of the Christian faith because theology then turns to reflect human existence rather than God. Therefore, it is crucial to identify Hauerwas' use of narrative. However, Hauerwas does not explicitly define this. Rather he uses narrative differently in different contexts. Despite this, the purpose of Hauerwas' different uses of narrative is consistent. That is to say, Hauerwas is not primarily interested in narrative as literary genre or a transcendental quality of experience, but

⁴ See my previous discussion on Hauerwas' use of narrative in relation the moral life and theology.

considers that the importance of narrative is its capacity to investigate, analyze, and criticize a way of life, a morality, that is itself story-formed. Thus, for Hauerwas, the meaning of narrative lies on its ethical significance; that is, its descriptive and interpretive functions. In other words, narrative describes the identity of persons and communities which are inseparable from their histories, on the one hand, and explains that life is always a matter of seeing from a particular perspective, on the other. Hauerwas' underlying purpose unifies his different uses of narrative, and at the same time, allows for great flexibility.

Concerning the second ambiguity of Hauerwas' use of narrative, Hauerwas' position seems to be unclear. For instance, he says that narrative is "a concept that helps to clarify the interrelation between the various themes [i.e. character, virtue and vision], he has sought to develop."⁵ In this sense, the function of narrative is like a bridge. However, on another occasion, he writes that "Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition...." He continues: "too often we assume [that] the narrative character of Christian convictions is incidental to those convictions."⁶ For Hauerwas, the narrative mode is neither incidental nor accidental to Christian belief, but rather there is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story. In this sense, Hauerwas suggests that narrative properly has some role within theology itself. However, Hauerwas' two different understandings of the role of narrative does not necessarily discredit my proposal of the concept of narrative as a model because, as I have said in section one, Hauerwas' ambiguity reflects the "is and is not" characteristic of models. That is to say, the content of a model is not intended to be a replica of how an object appears

⁵ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.xxv.

⁶ Ibid., pp.24-25.

or really is, but does intend to provide a way of cognitively dealing with that object.⁷ The notion of narrative provides a way to understand the Kingdom, but at the same time, it reflects the nature of the Kingdom. This is not contradictory, but dialectical.

Having clarified the above two ambiguities, I now turn to see the use of narrative as a model of the Kingdom. Primarily speaking, to use narrative as a model suggests that it is a theoretical model rather than an analogue model, because, although both models involve a change of medium and are guided by the more abstract aim of reproducing the structure of the original by a different material and/or conceptual object, unlike an analogue model, the model of narrative does not share an identical set of features with its original.⁸ Besides, as said in the first section of this chapter, I consider that any consideration of the use of model has to relate to one of two questions, either a question of preference or of reference. In short, a matter of preference is concerned with how we decide which existing biblical model to use, while a matter of reference is concerned with how we can be sure that, if a non-biblical model is used, it is true to the essence of the original revelation recorded in the Bible.⁹ Obviously, the concept of narrative relates to a matter of reference simply because, despite the narrative form of the Bible, the Bible does not explicitly provide the model of narrative for our understanding of the Kingdom. With regard to the criteria for reference in model construction, as against from the criteria for preference in model selection, it should communicate the clearest and deepest

⁷ See my discussion on the methodology of the use of model.

⁸ In short, an analogue model is characterized by its high degree of isomorphic correlation in order to explain some aspects of the object, while a theoretical model is to use as much knowledge and information as possible, and organize them in a comprehensive way in order to communicate the nature of the object to contemporary man. Details see Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, pp.222-223, 226-243.

⁹ See pp.160-162.

understanding of the truth, make the truth of the Bible relevant to our lives, and help us to be more committed to Christ; it also has to illustrate and contend with what ways this non-biblical model, namely, narrative, yields better insight than the existing biblical models.¹⁰

The primary reason why Hauerwas prefers narrative as a model basically relates to his vision of the moral life. In short, Hauerwas considers that the moral life not simply relates to principles and decision making, but is rather concerned with the whole vision of the agent in terms of growth and goodness. But he finds that most of the existing models of the Kingdom which are characterized by either principles or values fail to reveal the appropriate relationship between the Kingdom and the Christian life. That is to say, the Kingdom is always interpreted as normative guidelines to inform a social ethic. But such norms fail to do justice to the eschatological character of the Kingdom.¹¹ However, this does not mean that the practice of the expression or enactment of the Kingdom within the historical context is unnecessary and unimportant. Rather only within the context of narrative is any discussion of norms or value meaningful. For instance, the notion of narrative draws our attention to the story of Jesus without making any attempt to abstract some principles and values from Jesus' history and isolate them from Jesus' history. Furthermore, the notion of narrative demands us to share the whole of Jesus' story rather than one or two characteristics of Jesus' story, and to participate in the reality of God's rule. Such rule is more than a claim that God is lord of this world, but it is the creation of a world through a story that teaches us how such a rule is

¹⁰ See pp.165ff.

¹¹ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.44.

constituted.¹²

To consider the replacement of the primacy of norms to understand the Kingdom, the notion of narrative first retrieves the importance of the experience of individual and the community as the source for theological reflection. It means that it is not enough to understand the Kingdom solely by an exegesis of biblical data about Jesus' story and a study of its historical development. Nor is it sufficient to understand the Kingdom by metaphysical enquiry. Rather it should also rest on the learned ability of the individual and the community to identify the reality of the Kingdom in the life of the Christian community, in the lives of others and in one's own personal life. Hauerwas says that "the only way we learn of Jesus [and the Kingdom] is through his story as we find it in the Gospel and as we see *it lived in the lives of others* [italics mine]."¹³ However, by no means does an emphasis on the importance of the individual's and community's experience detract from the important task of exegesis, historical study and other doctrines of the faith, but rather it does suggest that an equally important systematic question is that of the relation between theology, the church's scripture, and the raw data of experience. I consider that this is an important re-discovery because when, nowadays, theology claims to be more academic, rational and philosophical, it takes the experience of the people of faith less seriously, for this experience is considered as subjective and personal. As a result, the Christian faith becomes abstract and tedious. An emphasis on the importance of the experience of the community of faith reminds us that the task of theology is to convey the message of how God works in our contemporary world, especially his work among his people, and this requires a continuous dialogue with

¹² See my discussion of Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

¹³ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.44.

the community of faith.

Secondly, the notion of narrative suggests that any enquiry into the character of the Kingdom should not be understood apart from the transformation of identity. It means that it is not enough to know what the Kingdom is, for the Kingdom has to interpret and interpret our personal and social existence. Therefore, in the light of the notion of narrative, the Kingdom is never a law-code to be applied casuistically, but rather gives meaning to and new orientation of our existence, not by principles, but through relationship. This is Hauerwas' emphasis, in saying that "we do not need to be freed from narrative, but rather we need to have a narrative which can sustain us to face the reality without distortions."¹⁴ However, the transformative power of the Kingdom is associated with its demand for truthfulness from those who are transformed. This demand is neither a matter of legalism nor a matter of work; rather, we have no way to know the Kingdom, unless we are conformed to the Kingdom, just as we cannot know who Jesus is, except by following him. The significance of the notion of narrative is that it does not, like the fundamentalist view, consider that the Kingdom is understood in terms of principles and values; nor does it give in to any form of idealism by saying that the Kingdom has nothing to do with human life because it is an impossible ideal. Rather the notion of narrative illustrates an appropriate relationship between the Kingdom and our identities. Any attempt to re-interpret the Christian faith should not solely promote better comprehensibility, but also discipleship.

Thirdly, the notion of narrative eliminates any tendency to syncretism. At the time of the advance of technology and of the process of secularization, in order not

¹⁴ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.35.

to be isolated and disdained, theologians consciously or unconsciously look for a relatively "social-understandable and acceptable" way, in the standard of the contemporary world, to display the truth of the Christian faith. So many times, however, this attempt does not reveal the truth of the Christian faith, but accommodates the Christian faith to the standard of the world.¹⁵ To cite one prominent case: in his book God Has Many Names, John Hick expresses the confident expectation that we will someday achieve not merely a synthetic Christian theology, but an even broader "world theology":

[Such] a global theology would consist of theories or hypotheses designed to interpret the religious experience of mankind, as it occurs not only within Christianity, but also within the other great streams of religious life, and indeed in the great non-religious faiths also, Marxism and Maoism and perhaps- according to one's definition of "religion"- Confucianism and certain forms of Buddhism. The project of a global theology is obviously vast, requiring the co-operative labours of many individuals and groups over a period of several generations.¹⁶

Hauerwas' claim of the importance of the notion of narrative is simple, but urgent; that is, to acknowledge the fundamental difference between the Christian faith and secular faith. This difference is a difference of story.

However, I have to admit that to consider the notion of narrative as a model

¹⁵ This does not mean that any attempt to re-interpret the Christian faith is a matter of accommodation. Rather, according to Hauerwas, Christians are too ready to give in to and follow the world's agenda. For instance, "Tillich thought that it was not so much that Christianity was inherently unbelievable, it was that Christianity was burden with too many false intellectual impediments. Who cares, modern theologians asked, whether or not Jesus walked on water, or Moses split the Red Sea, or Christ bodily rose from the dead? The important matter is not these pre-scientific thought forms but the existential reality beneath them. Everything must be translated into existentialism in order to be believed. Today, when existentialism has fallen out of fashion, the modern theologian is more likely to translate everything into Whiteheadian process theology, the latest psychoanalytic account, or Marxist analysis in order to make it believable." For Hauerwas, the theologian's job is not to make the gospel credible to the modern world, but to make the world credible to the gospel. Details see S.Hauerwas, Resident Aliens, chapter 1 and 2.

¹⁶ J.Hick, God Has Many Names (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.8.

is not without difficulty. Although Hauerwas acknowledges that he is not developing a "narrative theology" and his use of narrative is confined to the moral life, his use of narrative primarily relates to the "macro" dimension of the use of model. In other words, the notion of narrative intends to change the whole network of assumptions and concepts of theology rather than confine itself to a particular issue. Therefore, it is no longer a matter whether or not Hauerwas intends to develop a "narrative theology", but rather whether or not his use of narrative provides sufficient epistemological foundation for this theological task of narrative.

Here, I have to admit that I am not equipped to formulate a narrative theology, but rather I just want to highlight what kind of issues narrative theology has to consider in order to display the validity of the use of narrative in theology. According to Michael Goldberg, there are three critical issues which any narrative theology must face:

1. the relationship between stories and experience- the question of truth;
2. the hermeneutic involved for understanding stories rightly- the question of meaning;
3. the charge of moral relativism- the question of rationality.¹⁷

Put differently, the first issue is concerned with the need for theologians wishing to employ narrative with the cultural-linguistic model of religion to rise to the challenge of their critics that they are weak on truth claims. They need to show, not only that their conception of theology allows for strong truth claims, but how truth claims might be defended. The second and the third issues are concerned with the need for narrative theological ethics to show more clearly how and on what basis we are able to choose among the various stories that claim our allegiance or compete for our attention. It needs to deal more forthrightly with the charge that it yields a vicious

¹⁷ M. Goldberg, Theology and Narrative, p.192.

relativism. And it needs to demonstrate how an ethic of virtue and character shaped by narrative can be applied to very specific questions in social ethics. Apart from these, narrative theology has to clarify the relationship between narrative and the "sub-narratives". What I mean is that the "sub-narratives" may represent a distinctive reading of the larger narrative or even a kind of counter-narrative. The examples of the "sub-narrative" are liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology and etc. They argue that the stories of their groups qualify their interpretation of the Christian tradition as a whole. Thus, it seems that narrative analysis has to take this diversity and particularity into account. Obviously, these issues are beyond the scope of this study. Before making any judgment on whether the notion of narrative can be employed as a model, let us turn to see whether it meets the criteria of relevance.

The criteria of relevance can be understood socially and personally. On the social level, I find that the mode of narrative provides us with a significant point of departure to search for communal identity, that is, the meaning of the church. On the personal level, I find that the notion of narrative furthers and deepens the practice of pastoral care. In the following, I will solely emphasize the relevance of the notion of narrative in the personal context because its social relevance has been more or less touched upon in previous sections.

There are many definitions of, and approaches to, pastoral care, but no matter which we may take, pastoral care is basically related to persons' stories. In the following, I try to illustrate how the anthropological and theological use of narrative may be found useful in pastoral care with reference to a particular setting; that is, where patients have AIDS.

Generally speaking, assumptions are made that AIDS always results in death,

and that death is always tortuously painful. When patients learn that they are HIV positive, "why me?" is the impassioned expression of many. This phrase, "why me?", can be an expression of anger, a prelude to confession, and/or a lament about a belief system crumbling.¹⁸ In this situation, narrative provides a suitable vehicle to capture those tragic dimensions of existence because most of the time struggle cannot be reduced to emotions and/or logic, for they do not sufficiently address the felt sense of tragedy.¹⁹ At an earlier stage, their stories may seem discontinuous with the historic sense of self because the patients cannot accept the diagnosis as a reality. But in the telling and retelling the images which convey meaning for them begin to emerge with more clarity and integration. As Hauerwas argues, "What we require is... a narrative that will provide a direction for our character that is appropriate to the tragic aspect of our existence."²⁰

For the carer or counsellor, listening is important as is how we listen. Hauerwas says, "... stories do not illustrate a meaning, they do not symbolize a meaning, but rather the meaning is embodied in the forms of the story itself."²¹ Therefore, the interest is not solely to get to the meaning behind the story, but also to the story behind the meaning. However, this does not mean that the skills of summary and clarification are unimportant in listening, but rather we are no longer driven to elicit or distil some abstractions from a narrative. For those who are carers, it is their ministry to request and allow the patients to construct and retell their

¹⁸ If the patient is able to see his/her disease as a consequence of his/her lifestyle, it is rather easy to cope with because it at least helps make sense of his/her suffering. On the contrary, if the patient is not "responsible" for the disease, he/she finds it hard to cope with because he/she cannot see the "point" of suffering.

¹⁹ See S.Hauerwas, Naming the Silences (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp.1-38.

²⁰ S.Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy, p.5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.77.

narratives.

Nevertheless, if the patients identify themselves with the Christian stories, then the stories form an important part of the symbolic foundation from which they draw identity. The patients may feel a nurturing or a fundamental conflict with some or all of these. Thus, the Christian carer is the one who engages with the patients in the question of the adequacy of the narrative by which they live.²² Besides, he/she symbolizes a community that has taken its primary identification from a set of sacred stories. In addition, he/she seeks to embody the hopeful belief that the God who was active in the formative sacred stories is still alive in the current stories of individuals and community.

Persons who have received the news of a diagnosis of HIV positive have had a dramatic change in the direction of their history. The spiritual task ahead of them is to make sense of it. That does not mean they must be able to explain it scientifically, or to have a neat answer to the mysteries of illness and death. It does mean that they have the task of examining the themes, characters and direction of their living stories, and of weaving this unexpected event into their ongoing story in a meaningful way. It is a moral and religious task no less than a psychological one. Thus, the concept of narrative proves to be relevant here also. It provides a way of expression, challenges existing stories and helps to re-construct an individual's identity.

In summary, I consider that Hauerwas' use of narrative as a model of the

²² Hauerwas says that "the so-called problem of evil is not and cannot be a single problem, for it makes all the difference which god one worships as well as how one thinks that god is known." (Naming the Silences, p.51)

Kingdom is possible and promising because if the Kingdom is always a matter of divine-human relationship, according to Sallie McFague,²³ the notion of narrative successfully displays this character. That is to say, in the light of narrative, the Kingdom is no longer to be considered as a static ideal, but rather is a matter of a claim of God's lordship over all creation, particularly his people. On the other hand, if the Kingdom always has a power of transformation in terms of attitude and behaviour, then the notion of narrative competently demonstrates the proper understanding of the moral life. That is to say, the moral life is a matter of "seeing", and this "seeing" relates to one's mundane and sacred stories. However, incorporating narrative elements does not mean that appeals to a common Christian story will settle every theoretical question. The conclusion of my inquiry is that narrative is necessary but insufficient for us to understand the Kingdom. To describe the Kingdom as an interweaving narrative-dependent and narrative-independent features does not nullify the distinctive contribution of narrative to the texture of the Christian moral life. Therefore, the notion of narrative as a model cannot be isolated from other models, not because theoretically, no model is self-sufficient, but because practically, narrative has a role within theology itself which requires "sub-models". Thus, to advocate the notion of narrative as a model is simply to understand the Kingdom from an appropriate point of departure rather than to consider it as the definitive model.

²³ See p.162.

C. JUSTICE

1. INJUSTICE AS AN EXPERIENCE OF THE PEOPLE

Sobrino is one of the leading Latin American liberation theologians. While it is apparently assumed that he, like other liberation theologians, uses the notion of liberation as a model of the Kingdom, in this study, I propose that Sobrino's main concern is the notion of justice, not only because he uses it fairly extensively in his works, but also because the notion of justice is in accordance with his emphasis on the primacy of the historicity. What then is the relationship between liberation and justice? The main difference between them, I consider, is that the notion of liberation is an all-embracing concept. For instance, according to Gutierrez, there are three levels of liberation- political liberation, the liberation of humans throughout history, liberation from sin and admission to communion with God¹. On the other hand, the notion of justice is mainly concentrated on the socio-political domain, and is concerned about the inter-human relationship in terms of responsibility and solidarity. But the difference between the notions of liberation and justice is not "unbridgable" because the latter is inspired by love in accordance with the grace of God which is expressed in God's liberating act. In the following, I will discuss Sobrino's notion of justice in this sequence. First, I will give a short history of El Salvador where Sobrino develops his theology. A brief survey of this historical context is necessary because without knowing this, we cannot fully understand what the significance of Sobrino's notion of justice is. I will explain this later. Secondly, I will discuss justice as a basic theme in theology with reference to Sobrino's understanding of Jesus as the liberator, and how this understanding inspires his theological reflection of justice in his social context. Finally, I will suggest to what

¹ G.Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp.176-177.

extent Sobrino's notion of justice can be used as a theological model.

Basically, I consider that in order to discuss how Sobrino uses the concept of justice in his theological framework, we have to be aware of the socio-political situation of El Salvador. This is not only because the socio-political context may provide us with a glimpse of what justice [injustice] is, but also because a philosophical approach to justice which fails to take the account of the experience of the victims is abstract and formal. Thus, without having a basic knowledge of what is going on in El Salvador, we cannot rightly comprehend why Sobrino interprets justice in this or that way. The emphasis on the importance of context suggests that justice primarily relates to both "present" and "praxis". Justice relates to "present" because it is a response to the injustice experienced by the people in a particular place and at a particular time. It is always a matter of "death and life" to those people rather than a philosophical theme pursued by philosophers. Without taking one's historical context seriously, we cannot know what justice really is. Besides, justice relates to "praxis" because justice is the cry from and the response to the victims who suffer from injustice. These two characteristics of justice bring us new insights into what justice involves. In the following, I do not attempt to give a precise history of El Salvador; rather, in relation to the theme of this section, I limit my scope to two main spheres, namely economic and political.²

El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America (8260 square miles) with a population of nearly 5.5 million people (1988). Since her independence from Spain in 1838 she has experienced external interventions from Honduras and

² I do admit that my following description is both selective and subjective. That is to say, I have already assumed what justice is and should be. However, my subjective description cannot be considered as one-sided because the El Salvadorean government never denies the following interpretation but simply covers up the facts.

Guatemala, and has suffered internally from inter-party conflicts, assassinations and revolutions. All of these more or less have contributed to the bankruptcy of the economy. It is not easy to say whether the root of the Salvadorean revolution [the civil war in the 1980s] lies in the failure of the Salvadorean economy to provide the majority of the country's people with a means of survival or in political instability. But one thing is clear; the Salvadorean economy today creates misery rather than a means to life. Before turning to see the contemporary economic situation of El Salvador, I consider that it is important to look at briefly its historical background because poverty in El Salvador is a continuous historical-social phenomenon.

Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century a series of changes in El Salvador led to the gradual destruction of the peasant economy and therefore of the ability of the people to meet their basic needs from the land. That is to say, more peasants had lost access to land altogether and became totally dependent on wage labour. This was the result of the fact that in the 1880s the wealthiest landowners took the opportunity of confused legislation and procedures dealing with the land to seize a lot of common lands as their own. Furthermore, the result of the First World War and the consequent dislocation in world trade severely depressed coffee prices. (For instance, in 1901, coffee made up 76% of exports.) This particularly affected the small coffee producers, and, as a result, they had to transfer their lands to the larger landowners. The gap between the rich and the poor gradually became obvious and unmeasurable. A U.S. Army officer visiting El Salvador in 1931 described the country this way:

There appears to be nothing between these high-priced cars and the oxcart with its barefoot attendant. There is practically no middle class..... Thirty or forty families own nearly everything in the country. They live in almost regal style. The rest of the population has almost

nothing.³

This gap between rich and poor finally led to a revolt. This was a peasant revolt.⁴ The immediate cause of this revolt was the world economic crisis which made the lives of the peasants harder and harder. For instance, when the value of El Salvador's coffee exports fell by 70%, the planters tried to shift their losses onto their workers, by cutting food rations and wages. The result was catastrophic for an already impoverished sector of the population. This brought deep resentment among the peasants. The U.S. military attached in Central America, A.R.Harris, reported:

I imagine that the situation in El Salvador today is similar to France before the revolution, Russia before her revolution and Mexico before hers. The situation is ripe for communism and the communists seem to have taken notice of that fact..... It is possible to retard a socialist or communist revolution in this country for a number of years, let's say ten or twenty years, but when it happens it is going to be bloody.⁵

Apart from this immediate cause, the living memory of the expansion of coffee which had dispossessed the peasants of their communal lands and forced them into wage labour, the urban labour movement and the contemporary organized Salvadorean Communist Party also accounted for this revolt. On January 18, 1932, a few days before the proposed date of the armed insurrection by the Communist Party, the government discovered the plan and arrested the leaders. Although the revolt did take place, it had no leader and was quickly crushed by the government. Under the direction of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, about 30000 people were killed,⁶ out of a population of 1 million at that time. Even now, this event is

³ Kenneth J.Grieb, "The United States and the Rise of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez." In: Journal of Latin American Studies, November 1971, p.152.

⁴ See Jenny Pearce, Promised Land (London: Latin America Bureau, 1986), pp.82-86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.83.

⁶ According to the government official report, it said that there was only 1000 people killed in this incident.

still referred to simply as "matanza". It means massacre.

After the massacre, the people in El Salvador were under a military-controlled political system for 50 years. Neither General Hernandez Martinez nor any of the generals or colonels that later ruled the country did anything to alter the desperate circumstances of the rural poor. Within these 50 years, corruption, bribery and inefficiency became the characteristics of the government. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor became unbelievably wide. In the late 1970s, it seemed that this gap between the rich and the poor could only be handled by a radical social transformation. This finally sparked off a decade of civil war [officially, it ended in February, 1992].

The dimension of the poverty of the people in El Salvador can be grasped by considering the following figures: In 1975, 41% of the rural population had no land, an increase from 11.8% in 1950.⁷ The average annual income per landless family (of 6 members) was US\$317. If families with plots of less than 1 to 5 hectares are included, income for 96.13% of rural families was US\$576 per year. The poor in the cities fared little better. The poorest 10% of families in San Salvador had an average annual income of US\$330, the poorest 40%, US\$618. Income distribution was unequally skew. The average income of the wealthiest 10% in the capital in 1975 was greater than the combined average income of the lowest 90%. According to official sources in 1975 a family of six needed an income of US\$704 in order to provide life's basic necessities. But almost 80% of Salvadorean families did not earn that much. Furthermore, about 60% did not earn enough (US\$533) to provide even a minimum diet. In the countryside, 73% of the children suffer from malnutrition;

⁷ See Jenny Pearce, Promised Land, p.26ff.

60 of every 1000 infants dies; more than a quarter million families (39% of the rural population) live in one-room dwellings and only 37% of families have access to potable water.⁸ The most recent report (Ministry of Planning, 1988) place unemployment in urban areas as at least 50% and in rural areas at 71%. But even those with jobs generally cannot afford basic necessities. Since 1980 per capita national income has dropped by 25%, while inflation had raised the cost of living by 360%.⁹ At the other end of the economic scale, in 1961, 6 families (0.0023% of all landowners) in El Salvador held 71923 hectares, or 4.6% of all the land under cultivation. In 1979, the Salvadorean Ministry of Agriculture reported that 0.7% of all property owners held 40% of the land. Even though we may have different interpretations of the above figures, it is an undeniable fact that the land of El Salvador was for many years concentrated in the hands of a minuscule number of owners, while the number of landless people grew; and the incomes of the poorest Salvadoreans stagnated while those of the wealthiest multiplied. Besides, the emphasis on growing crops for export, rather than for domestic consumption, has resulted in extreme poverty for the majority of the people. Perhaps, it is a good idea to use a story to show what poverty actually is. It is a story of Dona Francisca.

I was born in 1950. When I was a little girl, my mother worked as a servant. She had a room in the house where she worked and I lived there with her. I had to stay in the room all day.

My first child, Elvin, was born when I was 15. I made a little money selling food in a jail. That's where I met the father of my last three children- Maria, Yanira and Rigoberto. I've suffered a lot trying to raise them. Maria is sick and lives with me. Yanira goes out with me to sell in order to feed her children. Elvin can't work, but he makes little things to sell. He doesn't like just sitting around doing nothing.

Life is difficult these days. Money hardly buys anything. If I don't

⁸ Tommie Sue Montgomery, Revolution in El Salvador (Boulder: Westview, 1982), pp.27ff.

⁹ Tom Barry, El Salvador (Albuquerque: The Inter-Hemisphere Education Resource Center, 1990), p.75ff.

sell anything, I end up in debt. I owe 150 colones [about US\$30] now. How am I ever going to repay that amount? How will I ever get out of debt? I sell mangoes and toasted yucca outside the schools, but I haven't sold anything today or yesterday. I'm desperate. I sell so that we can eat. No sales, no food. There is no other way to survive. So we keep trying to sell toasted yucca; that's our whole life.

When there is no food, like now, we don't know what to do. Sometimes we help the cooks at the market, running errands for them. When that doesn't work, we wash clothes at the river. Somehow we keep going. Often I feel like crying because I know that my grandchildren Carlitos, Chon, Maria and Paquita are hungry. Poor things. Every morning they ask for bread, but we don't always have any. I ask God to give us food to eat.

I never went to school. With a lot of sacrifice my children completed third grade. It's hard for a mother to see her children suffer. I wonder what my grandchildren would be like if they could go to school. What would it be like if one of them was educated or somehow prepared to make his way in this life?¹⁰

This story is not an extreme example, but is rather a typical experience of many Salvadorans. This disastrous situation in El Salvador can never be simply explained by the misfortune of the people, for it is a result of the "structural violence" carried out by the government against the poor. That is to say, put negatively, the government does not want to anger the rich so that it does not whole-heartedly implement its economic policies, such as, the tax system. Put positively, the government needs the support of the rich in order to survive so that its policies are favoured to the rich. An example can show this ambiguity. In 1988, one of the first acts of the new mayor, Armanda Calderon Sol, was to write to the city's wealthiest residents begging them to pay their property tax bills, which are traditionally discarded. One Salvadorean observer told the New York Times, "To say that his request was ignored is putting it politely."¹¹ Consequently, the poor shoulder the

¹⁰ Scott Wright ed., El Salvador: A Spring Whose Water Never Run Dry (Washington: EPICA, 1990), pp.28-29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.73.

tax burden while many businesses avoid their full tax obligations. Therefore, the government has to be heavily dependent on indirect or consumption taxes, which fall most heavily on the poor. Since the civil war, the state of the economy has become even disastrous because on the one hand, the war itself destroys both agricultures and industries, and on the other hand, for instance, in 1988, the government spent 45% of current government spending budget for defense and security. Is then the FMLN [the guerrillas] solely responsible for the further deterioration of the country's economy? There is no absolute answer to it. But we can say that the civil war is not simply a power struggle such as had happened in the history of El Salvador, but rather is a result of the poor who organize themselves "justly and legally" to escape from poverty. In order to minimize the gap between the rich and the poor, a honest land reform should be introduced.¹² Jenny Pearce rightly makes that point:

only an agrarian reform carried out within a broad process of radical social transformation can possibly pave the way for lasting peace and development in El Salvador. Compromise solutions based on alliances with sectors of the existing ruling class cannot solve the problems which first led to the Salvadorean civil war. Privilege and the repressive force which sustains it can have no place if genuine solutions are sought to the problems of El Salvador's poor majority. A far-reaching agrarian reform will have to tackle ownership of wealth and production throughout Salvadorean society, and the poor majority must participate in its design and implementation in order to guarantee that it meets their needs."¹³

In order to implement the land reform, conflicts between the oppressed and the oppressors are unavoidable. However, conflicts sometimes are necessary for any social transformation.

Now we turn to the political situation in El Salvador. Since the peasant revolt

¹² The government has already noticed the importance of land reform. For instance, in 1980, land reform had been introduced but was completely failure. See Anjali Sundaram, A Decade of War (London: CIIR, 1991), pp.38-57.

¹³ Jenny Pearce, Promised Land, p.303.

in 1932 El Salvador was a military regime until 1984. However, there is no great difference between the military and the civilian governments in their use of force. Violence, assassination, massacre and illegal arrest are not strange to the Salvadoreans: they are part of their daily experiences. Repression against the popular movement began with the ran-sacking of offices of unions, churches and human rights organisations, as well as mass detentions, disappearances and the increasing report of torture. Almost all of these were carried out by the military in order to suppress anyone who sought justice. A report said that since 1980 there are an estimated 50000 civilians who have been killed or "disappeared" by the country's security forces. Amnesty International describes El Salvador as a country where the "ordinary citizen has no protection when threatened with anonymous violence.... as the police or the military themselves carry out death-squad killings."¹⁴ In Sobrino's term, they are the crucified people because they are killed innocently. No one knows the names and even the numbers of those being killed.

Among the most notorious killings were those of the outspoken. For instance, the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, was gunned down while saying mass in March 1980; four North American churchwomen abducted, raped and killed in December 1980; six Jesuits, a woman and her daughter were killed in November 1989. A characteristic feature of human-rights violations in El Salvador is the cover-ups and obstructions of justice that take place when there is any serious attempt to make use of the legal system to punish the perpetrators of abuses. In most of the accusations against the military officers, witnesses are often intimidated, and judges are co-opted. Uncooperative judges are killed, as are human rights workers. Nevertheless, not only the government, but also the FMLN are responsible for the

¹⁴ Tom Barry, El Salvador, p.42.

violence. In October 1987, an amnesty was passed which not only freed most political prisoners accused of FMLIN ties, but also extended to any military officers against whom charges of human rights violation were pending. But it is undeniable that fundamentally the government cannot escape the blame for violence. I consider that it is worthwhile to give an account of one of the many massacres carried out by the military. On December 12, 1981, more than 1000 men, women and children were killed at Mozote, in the department of Morazan. The massacre was committed by the Atlacati Battalion, an elite Army unit trained in counter-insurgency by the U.S. government. The following is the testimony of a 41 year-old woman, the only witness to the massacre.

I believe I am the only survivor of the Mozote massacre. The village was filled with children because the people in the surrounding area had fled their homes to take refuge there. That is why the Army was able to kill so many people.

The soldiers from the Atlacati Battalion came at seven in the morning. They said that they had orders to kill everyone. Nobody was to remain alive. They locked the women in the houses and the men in the church. There were 1100 of us in all. The children were with the women. They kept us locked up all morning.

At ten o'clock the soldiers began to kill the men who were in the church. First they machine-gunned them and then they slit their throats.

By two o'clock the soldiers had finished killing the men and they came for the women. They left the children locked up. They separated me from my eight months old daughter and my oldest son. They took us away to kill us.

"My God!" I prayed, "Almighty God, do not let us die here! You know that we have committed no sin."

As we came to the place where they were going to kill us, I was able to slip away and hid under a small bush, covering myself with the branches. I watched the soldiers line up twenty women and machine-gun them. Then they brought another group. Another rain of bullets. Then another group. And another.

The women screamed and pleaded: "Don't kill us!" "We haven't done

anything!" "Why are you killing us?"

The soldiers replied, "Stop crying! Don't scream, or the devil will come and take you away!" They continued to kill. I was right there at their feet, hiding.

When the soldiers finished killing the people, they sat down and talked. I heard them saying that they had been sent to kill us because we were guerrillas. I watched as they burned all the bodies. When a baby cried out from the midst of the flames, one of the soldiers said to another, "You didn't finish killing him." So the other soldier shot the baby and the crying stopped. When the flames died down, another soldier said, "They're all dead now. Let's go and kill the children."

They killed four of my children: my nine years old, my six years old, my three years old and my eight months old daughter. My husband was killed, too. Only my parents and two of my daughters who lived further away are alive.

I spent seven days and nights alone in the hills with nothing to eat or drink. I couldn't find anyone else; the soldiers had killed everyone.¹⁵

Such violence in El Salvador has produced a steady stream of refugees across the border into neighbouring Honduras, where the United Nations estimates that there are more than 25000 refugees living on the charity of international relief agencies and the hospitality of Honduran peasants who are desperately poor themselves. The political situation in El Salvador can be described as the rule of lawlessness. That is to say, the military appears to decide what is legal and what is not. It clearly feels that it has authority to take whatever actions it pleases whether or not this is judicially sanctioned- and no court ever rules that it has exceeded its authority.

Finally, we turn to see the foreign influence on El Salvador. I do not attempt to discuss this matter in terms of the theory of dependence proposed by some of the

¹⁵ Scott Wright ed., El Salvador: A Spring Whose Waters Never Run Dry (Washington: EPICA, 1990), pp.20-21. See also Narvin E. Gettleman ed., El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War (New York: Grove, 1982), pp.128-151, Joe Fish, El Salvador: Testament of Terror (London: Zed, 1988), and Pablo Galdamez, Faith of a People (London: CIIIR, 1986).

Latin American economists,¹⁶ but rather I will simply portray the extent to which El Salvador is largely dependent on foreign influence. Tom Barry rightly said that the authority of the El Salvadorean government has been severely limited by the nongovernmental forces, namely, the armed forces, the U.S. embassy, and the FMLN guerrillas.¹⁷ From the economic figures, it is undeniable that the El Salvador government is largely dependent on the aid of U.S. For instance, in 1983, El Salvador received aid from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) equivalent to almost a third of the country's export income. In 1987, the foreign aid from the U.S. government represented 105% of the El Salvador government's own revenues. However, this large amount of aid does not change the bankruptcy economy of El Salvador because on the one hand, much of the aid is lost to corruption, and on the other hand, nearly 75% of the U.S. aid program is for war-related expenditures. Besides, the U.S. government does not have a long-term or a precise plan to help to recover the economy of El Salvador. Its philosophy is simply to stabilize the country for the sake of discouraging the leftists rather than of building up a sound economy. As a result, this stabilization assistance has not provided the

¹⁶ Generally speaking, the theory of dependence is to set against developmentalism. Modern theories of development are concerned with self-sustained and rapid economic growth. This is what ultimately will enable a country to maximize production, broaden the distribution of wealth and services, democratize the political realm, distribute power more equitably, integrate different sectors of society, and affirm and develop the nation's heritage. Thus, development is seen as entailing a process of continuous transformation within a harmonious movement of social differentiation and reintegration of functions. On the contrary, radical social change is seen as both economically and politically inefficient and costly. On the other hand, dependence theory is the Latin American contribution toward an understanding of the reality of the underdevelopment which these nations experience. According to the theory, in order to understand the phenomenon of underdevelopment we must place it in the context of the emergence, growth and consolidation of the capitalist world economic system. Dependence is defined as a situation in which the economy of a given country is conditioned by the development and expansion of the economy of another country to which it is subjected. What is unique to the Latin American experience is that these nations were born as dependent nations. Thus their internal structure has been formed as that of dependent capitalist nations. A good summary details be found in Ismael Garcia, Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), pp.32-77, and also Robert V. Andelson, From Wasteland to Promised Land (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), pp.42-48.

¹⁷ Tom Barry, El Salvador, p.11.

foundation for economic progress. Instead, the country has grown increasingly dependent on the injections of stabilization funds. More importantly, the U.S. government does not object to the aid being used for the building up of an army.

From the above very brief survey of El Salvador, we can conclude that Salvadoreans are not simply born as poor, but are the victims of "structural violence".¹⁸ By "structural violence" I mean a social order that by necessity allows the few to appropriate the fruits of the many, thus forming the basis for political instability and powerlessness for most of the people that live within the system. Such a social order makes use of overt violence as a necessary means for preserving, but not transforming the status quo. A social structure is intrinsically violent when it generates and perpetuates extreme inequalities. Jose Miranda notes that

no one would say that the workers freely accept the national system of contracts and transactions in virtue of which they are kept in a state of perpetual disempowerment and the capitalists in a perpetual situation of privilege. What forces them to capitulate before the system is the prevailing institutional violence which encircles them with hunger.¹⁹

Nelson Mandela has made a very powerful point, saying that "the white man makes all the laws, he drags us before his courts and accuses us, and he sits in judgment over us."²⁰

This "structural violence" is sin. The moral dimension of sin, according to Reinhold Niebuhr, is an unwillingness to value the claims of the other's or to see one's own claims as equal but not superior to the other's. The root of injustice is

¹⁸ See Medellin Conference, in Between Christ and Ceasar, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp.137-143.

¹⁹ Jose Miranda, Marx and the Bible (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974), p.7&11.

²⁰ Karen Lebacqz, Justice in an Unjust World (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), p.24.

exploitation: "exploiting, enslaving, or taking advantage of other lives."²¹ Therefore, "structural violence" needs structural conversion. However, this structural conversion does not mean that it itself can become the Kingdom of God, but rather it needs constantly to be challenged and directed in the light of the Kingdom of God.

²¹ R.Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Seabury, 1935), p.90.

2. JUSTICE AS A BASIC THEME IN THEOLOGY

a. *Jesus Christ, The Way of the Son*

In chapter one, I have already discussed how Sobrino interprets christology, namely, as historical, ecclesial and trinitarian. However, my previous study mainly emphasized "following" the historical Jesus. In this section, I will concentrate on Sobrino's interpretation of christology. Apart from the historical, ecclesial and trinitarian hypotheses, Sobrino's interpretation of christology is also restricted to two other related working hypotheses, namely, contextual and revelational. First, for Sobrino, the New Testament presents a variety of christologies, each developed by a community trying to explain Jesus in terms of its experience; the community likewise draws its meaning from its experience of Jesus. Christology has always been done from the culture-bound perspective of specific individual communities. Some of these have come to be viewed by the church as normative and others have been rejected. Without denying the validity of such normative understandings, Sobrino aims at presenting a new and different christology relevant to the Latin American scene and to the situation of oppressed people elsewhere.¹ L.Newbigin agrees that

neither at the beginning, nor at any subsequent time, is there or can be a gospel that is not embodied in a culturally conditioned form of word.... Every statement of the gospel in words is conditioned by the culture of which those words are a part, and every style of life that claims to embody the truth of the gospel is a culturally conditioned style of life. There can never be a culture-free gospel.²

J.Moltmann further affirms that

theology cannot be timeless and without location. It must often forgo correctness in order to be concrete. It cannot afford balance, but must take sides and speak one-sidedly. Its intention is not to satisfy itself, but to make a contribution to the healing of everything in church,

¹ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.xv.

² L.Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, p.4.

culture and creation.³

Various different christologies reflect the varieties of experience of different Christian communities, but amid this plurality a unifying factor must be found. For Sobrino, this is the historical Jesus. The context in which Sobrino develops his christology is characterized by injustice, poverty and persecution.⁴ This is also the context in which his christology is primarily intended to address.

Sobrino's revelational hypothesis considers that if Jesus is the way of the Son to the Father [God], then Christians have to follow Jesus' way in order to become sons and daughters of the Father. For Sobrino, Jesus is both "Son" and "brother". Jesus is the "Son" because he *becomes* the Son of God rather than he simply *is* the Son of God. He is a "brother" because he opens the pathway of faith for others to traverse.⁵ Thus, for Sobrino, the difference between Jesus and his sisters and brothers is historical rather than ontological. This hypothesis has at least two important implications on the interpretation of christology. That is to say, it allows Jesus to define "divinity" rather than vice versa, and discipleship, following the historical Jesus, acknowledges that Jesus has revealed himself as the Son of God, and this revelation is the revelation of the way to God, of the way to become a child of God. Obviously, the emphasis on Jesus as the way of the Son relates closely to Sobrino's emphasis on the primacy of the "historical" Jesus.

In the following, I will examine how Sobrino's interpretation of christology is under the above working hypotheses. Themes like the Kingdom of God, Jesus'

³ R.Bauckham, Moltmann (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1987), p.viii.

⁴ See my discussion on the section of the injustice in El Salvador.

⁵ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.105-108.

faith, Jesus' death and resurrection, and their implications on the meaning of the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Lord will be discussed.

Sobrinho agrees with modern New Testament scholarship that Jesus' own preaching focused on the Kingdom of God. On the one hand, Jesus did not preach about himself. On the other hand, he did not simply talk about God: he talked about the Kingdom of God.⁶ In chapter one, I have already discussed how we can know the Kingdom through its addressee, that is, the poor. In the following, I will examine how we can understand the Kingdom from the notion itself and Jesus' practice. Regarding the notion of the Kingdom, Israel recognized God's lordship over history because of God's liberating acts toward Israel. Thus, the Kingdom of God has two key connotations. First, God rules history through dynamic acts, and secondly, the purpose of God's rule is to modify the present order of things and to establish a determinate order.⁷ This dynamic element becomes more important when viewed in the light of Israel's history from the destruction of the two kingdoms. This history caused a crisis of faith because it was incompatible with Israel's experience of God. It gave rise to the eschatological hope for a change in Israel's situation. Israel began to look for the Messiah and authentic liberation. Apart from this, apocalypticism played a role in the development of Israel's perception of the Kingdom. Not only did it evoke hope for a new creation. It also signalled the end of history. For Sobrinho, the political history and apocalyptic hope suggest that the Kingdom, first of all, is a historical reality. It corresponds to a hope in history. Besides, the Kingdom is that God's action impinges directly on the transformation of the whole of society. There is no separation between personal and social transformation. More

⁶ J.Sobrinho, Jesus, The Liberator, pp.67-70.

⁷ J.Sobrinho, Jesus in Latin America, p.86.

importantly, the Kingdom appears as good news in the midst of bad things, in the midst of the anti-Kingdom.⁸

We now turn to Jesus' praxis in terms of how his view of the Kingdom is informed by the Israelites' view of the Kingdom, on the one hand, and how his praxis "revolutionizes" the notion of the Kingdom, on the other. For Jesus, the Kingdom relates not only to a reality, but also to praxis. It is because a hope for the Kingdom could not be mere expectation of the coming of the Kingdom without doing anything practical about it. Therefore, we can primarily discern the meaning of the Kingdom from Jesus' particular praxis in relation to the Kingdom. According to Sobrino, they are: Jesus' miracles, casting out devils, welcoming sinners, speaking about parables of the Kingdom and celebration of the Kingdom.⁹ For Sobrino, Jesus' miracles are "signs" of the closeness of the Kingdom. In order to establish this thesis, Sobrino contends that in the biblical usage, miracles are not primarily important for any supernatural element but for their share in the powerful saving action of God. This is why in the Gospel accounts they are never described by the Greek word *teras*, which denotes the extraordinary aspect of an incomprehensible event, nor by *thauma*, which would be the Greek word of miracle. Rather the Gospels use *semcia* (signs, by which the happening attributed to God), *dynameis* (acts of power), and *erga* (Works, those carried out by Jesus).¹⁰ By "signs" Sobrino means that miracles do not make the Kingdom real as structural transformation of reality, but they are like calls for it, pointing in the direction of what the Kingdom

⁸ This is the characteristic of Sobrino. That is to say, he always understand the "YES" of God dialectically in terms of its "NO". Therefore, if the Kingdom is good news, then it has to be against the anti-Kingdom.

⁹ J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, pp.87-104.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.88.

will be when it comes. Therefore, miracles are not only "beneficent" signs, but also "liberating" signs. Put differently, Jesus' miracles not only stress on their beneficent aspect for someone, but also their liberating aspect against someone or from something. If miracles are "liberating" signs, then Jesus' miracles should not only be understood from the Kingdom, but also from the anti-Kingdom. Thus, Jesus' miracles not only generates joy, but also hope, because they show that oppressive forces can be routed.

Apart from this, Jesus' miracles reveal his basic motivation; that is, his pity. The miracles not only demonstrate Jesus' powers as healer whatever they may have been, but rather his reaction to the sorrows of the poor and weak. Jesus appears as someone deeply moved by the suffering of others, reacting to this in a saving way and making this reaction something first and last for him. Jesus sees the suffering of others as something final that can only be reacted to adequately with finality. Jesus' pity was not just a feeling, but a reaction to the suffering of others. Pity is therefore not just another virtue in Jesus, but a basic attitude and practice. For Jesus, pity has to do with the ultimate, and therefore with God. Then, Jesus' miracles are the consequences of his praxis of love.¹¹

In accordance with Sobrino's revelational hypothesis, Jesus' miracles reveals the way to the Father instead of the divinity of Jesus from human being. Jesus' miracles are not just works of mercy, beneficent aid, but they are at the same time works that arouse hope in the possibility of liberation. Thus, this means that present-day miracles have to be performed in the presence of and against some oppressive power. Sobrino says that "if miracles do not arouse hope that is possible for the

¹¹ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of following the historical Jesus.

Kingdom of God to come- not just that individual wants will be alleviated- and if they produce no sort of conflict, then they cannot be compared to the miracles of Jesus."¹²

Jesus' praxis is also characterized by his casting out devils. Sobrino considers that the evil at work is not the isolated actions of individual devils, but something that permeates everything. It is the negative power of creation, which destroys it and makes it capable of destroying, the power that was expressed in history and society as the anti-Kingdom.¹³ Evil has great power and makes that people feel helpless and impotent in the face of it. Jesus transforms the demonological world-view by stating that these powers, stronger than human beings, are not higher than God, but the reverse. Jesus' casting out devils signifies that slavery to the Evil One is not the final human destiny; liberation is possible. However, Sobrino contends that Jesus is not a great exorcist, but rather his casting out devils is an expression of the approach of the Kingdom because God cannot be tolerant evil. If the Kingdom of God represents God, then the anti-Kingdom represents evil. They are exclusive, and antagonistic realities. This implies that the Kingdom has to actively struggle against the anti-Kingdom.

Jesus' praxis shows that he welcomes sinners. According to Sobrino, sinners can be categorized into two groups, namely, oppressors and the oppressed.¹⁴ For the oppressors, their basic sin consist in oppressing, placing intolerable burdens on others, acting unjustly and so on. On the other hand, there are those who sin from weakness

¹² J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.92.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.96.

or those legally considered as sinners according to the dominant religious view. Jesus takes a vast different approach to each group. He offers salvation to all, and makes demands of all, but in a very different way. He directly demands a radical conversion of the first group, an active cessation from oppressing. For them, the coming of the Kingdom is above all a radical need to stop being oppressors, although Jesus also offers them the possibility of being saved. Jesus requires a different type of conversion from the second group: acceptance of the fact that God is not like the image they have introjected from their oppressors, and the ruling religious culture, but true love. The God's coming is a loving God who seeks to welcome all those who think themselves unworthy to approach because of their sinfulness.

Sobrino explains that Jesus' act of welcome expresses liberation of sinners from their own inner principle of enslavement. It is grace because this love is what achieves that neither pure moral demands, nor threat, nor social stigma can achieve. It is liberating because it gives those despised and cast out by society back their dignity. But Jesus' welcome to sinners is offered against the criteria sanctioned by religion because Jesus has not come to seek out the just, but sinners. More importantly, his welcome of sinners unmask what lies behind who are true sinners and who are not. Jesus' act reveals the partiality and gratuitousness of God to sinners.¹⁵

Apart from Jesus' deeds, his parables intend to say something about what the Kingdom is. For Sobrino, the central passage is that the Kingdom of God is for the poor. He contends that

Jesus often introduces and contrasts two types of person (two brothers, a Pharisee and a publican, a rich man and a poor man,.....) and his

¹⁵ Ibid., p.98.

adversaries tend to identify with one of them: the orthodox one, the just one.... Jesus then works a reversal that is also a strong criticism of his audience: the one whom you take to be "just" is not just, and therefore you are not just either. You, he tells them, are like the son who said he would go and work, but did not go (Mt.21:28-31). Jesus ends the parable with these terrible words: "I tell you the tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the Kingdom ahead of you."¹⁶

Jesus unmasks the hypocrisy of his adversaries and so, his parables are strongly critical. Jesus' parables not only intend to illustrate what the Kingdom is, but also demand an appropriate response. That is to say, in the face of the coming Kingdom, Christians must be merciful to the needy and do things for them. On the other hand, the parables generate hope because the Kingdom is already active, and so, we must put our trust in it.

Finally, for Jesus, the Kingdom is not an utopian, because the Kingdom has already arrived. Jesus not only hopes for the Kingdom of God, but he affirms that it is at hand, that its arrival is imminent, that the Kingdom should not be only an object of hope, but of certainty. Jesus' celebration of the Kingdom is particularly illustrated in his common table. In regard to the people in Latin American, Sobrino notes that the poor are experts in sufferings without end, but many of them do not give way to sadness. They have the capacity to celebrate what beneficent and liberating signs there are. And they celebrate it in community, like Jesus, around a table. The shared table is still the great sign of the Kingdom of God.

The close relationship between the Kingdom and Jesus' praxis shows that if the God of Jesus is actively involved in the liberation and reconciliation of human being, then access to God is possible only if one's praxis is based upon following Jesus' own praxis. If God, the Kingdom of God, and Jesus' own person cannot be

¹⁶ Ibid., p.101.

known solely through orthodoxy; knowledge must be coupled with action. Jesus is the way to the Father and others have access to that way by self-denial and discipleship.

We now turn to Sobrino's interpretation of "the faith of Jesus". Jesus' own faith is not usually a part of christology, probably due to the influence of a christology "from above". The Christ-event begins with the Incarnation, with God's becoming human. Jesus' words and deeds are a call to repent and accept God's salvation. Jesus himself does not exhibit faith in God because he is the object of faith. Thus, the emphasis is upon Jesus' divinity rather than his humanity. In order to establish the thesis of that the historical Jesus is the key to christology, Sobrino posits three guidelines to aid in interpreting and understanding the faith of Jesus:

1. Every human action in history... is guided by certain values as basically good at the start... Hence the historical course of a person must entail the concretion of those values which triggered that course.
2. Change and conflict are part of every movement in history. Historical concretion, then, is a dialectical process carried out in the presence of opposing, negative factors that must be overcome....
3. In the historical process we find a dialectical interplay between fashioning reality and fashioning oneself as an active subject.¹⁷

To be sure, these points are self-evident in a general way; everyone wrestle with individuation in the maturation process. Sobrino intends to paint a picture of Jesus' faith based upon the embodiment of his relationship to the Kingdom of God and to the God of the Kingdom.

Sobrino divided the history of Jesus' faith into two stages, before and after the so-called Galilean crisis. In the first stage, Jesus did not differ significantly from

¹⁷ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.85.

other rabbis. His teachings are grounded in Jewish orthodoxy. He is not against "the Law and the Prophets". He does, however, bring a new slant to them via his relationship to God's Kingdom. The Kingdom represents the possibility of human "filiation with the Father."¹⁸ Therefore, Jesus advocates doing deeds that effect human reconciliation, which is the ultimate goal of the Kingdom.

The transition between the two stages occurs in several interdependent ways. The religious leaders do not accept Jesus or his message. The people reject his radicalization of the Kingdom as the reference point for living a life faithful to God. These two rejections reveal that God and God's Kingdom are not getting any closer. Jesus had failed in his mission as he first conceived it.¹⁹

The second stage begins when Jesus leaves Galilee for Caesarea Philippi and the town of the Decapolis. The geographical break is the outward expression of an internal re-evaluation of his faith and mission. Jesus now begins to talk about his death. He begins to concentrate upon his disciples. Discipleship is re-defined in terms of self-sacrifice. God's Kingdom remains Jesus' historical point, but he no longer sees the Kingdom as imminent. Serving the Kingdom means placing his life on the line, even to the point of accepting his death as part of that service. The power he now wields is the power of love in suffering. But Jesus' faith in God becomes a "trust against trust"; he cannot base his trust upon historical circumstances. Faithfulness to God's mission is viewed in the light of the possibility of Jesus' imminent death rather than the imminent establishment of God's Kingdom. Jesus' attitude toward sin also changes in the light of the different relationships that he now

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.91-92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.93.

has with God and the Kingdom. Instead of prophetic denunciation, Jesus must bear the burden of sin itself; he must feel its power and be led to the cross. Discipleship is not only the proclamation of the Kingdom by words and deeds, but also an invitation to take up one's cross as did Jesus. In other words, the elements of Jesus' faith, God, the Kingdom of God and discipleship remain the same in both stages, but what has changed is Jesus' relationship to, and understanding of, those elements.²⁰

Sobrinio continues to explain that faith is a process, an ongoing search for God and God's Kingdom. Since the process is historical, it entails temptation and ignorance. These two possibilities form what Sobrinio calls the "human condition of Jesus' faith", for this is the environment in which human beings live. For Jesus, temptation was a constant companion. He was faced continually with the option of defining his person by surrendering to God or by rejecting God; to live for himself or to live for others. The Gospel writers telescoped this aspect of Jesus' life into his wilderness temptations. Their placement is important because it sets between Jesus' baptism and his starting on this mission.²¹

Sobrinio argues that ignorance as an anthropological dimension in Jesus does not present too great an obstacle. He bases this conclusion on Luke 2:52. Growth and maturation involve learning, which implies that one lacks knowledge. Therefore, Jesus had to learn, to speak, to work and to relate to others and so on. In the light of this, ignorance is not opposed to the perfection, or maturation, of one's being- not even for Jesus. Sobrinio explains that "it is not that Jesus did not know about God,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

²¹ J.Sobrinio, *Jesus, The Liberator*, pp.148-150.

but that his human understanding could not embrace everything in God."²² An example of this is Jesus ignorant vis-a-vis, the Kingdom of God [Matt.16:28, Lk.9:27). He does not know when it will arrive, but says some of his followers will see it. This shows Jesus not merely not knowing, but making a mistake. From a Greek perspective, this is the height of imperfection. How could Jesus, God incarnate, be mistaken about the timing of God's Kingdom? Sobrino contends that this is not a problem for biblical faith; in fact, it is the essence of faith because it lets God be God. By trusting in God, in spite of his ignorance concerning the Kingdom, Jesus reveals his true humanity and his sonship as the firstborn of faith.

The significance of Jesus' faith for christology is evident in three ways. First, the faith of Jesus reformulates the concept of his divinity. For Sobrino, Jesus' divinity derives from his relationship to the Father rather than to be Logos. The relational character of Jesus' divinity entails a dynamic conception of "divine nature" because it is dependent upon Jesus' fidelity to his mission to proclaim and actualize God's Kingdom. Secondly, Jesus' faith means that he is the revelation of the Son of God and of the way one becomes a child of God; thus, Jesus is the firstborn of faith. Sobrino revives this concept because it signifies Jesus' relationship to both God and humanity; Jesus is both "Son" and "brother". If "brotherliness" is not a part of Jesus' divinity, then Jesus is not the Son". Thirdly, faith is a dialectic between actively participating in actualizing the Kingdom and passively being defined by it. However, my difficulty of Sobrino's interpretation of Jesus' faith is not whether Jesus has faith or not, but rather in what ways the Gospels can provide Sobrino sufficient material to establish his thesis of Jesus' faith because if the Gospels are not the historical account of Jesus, then how Sobrino can heavily rely on them as an

²² Ibid., p.153.

interpretation of the historical development of Jesus' faith. More importantly, in order to establish the thesis of the faith of Jesus, I consider that Sobrino needs to provide a more solid anthropological and psychological foundation.

I now turn to Sobrino's interpretation of the death of Jesus. The cross has always been central to the Christian understanding of Jesus and his mission. Sobrino recognizes the soteriological statements of the New Testament as valid and true, but objects that they tell us God loves us without saying "how" he does so. The "how" explains God's solidarity with humans. Sobrino considers that Christians must go beyond church dogma about Jesus' death because it has tended to privatize salvation. That is to say, the church offers pardon for sin, but this deals only with the relation between God and the individual, ignoring the root cause. The cross must be explained in terms of society, social injustice and oppression. Otherwise, once the cross was dehistoricized, worship replaced the actual following of Jesus.

The cross is the historical consequence of Jesus' life. Jesus proclaimed God's coming Kingdom in a historical situation pervaded by sin. This sinfulness was not merely internal or individualistic, but also had an external embodiment that gave structure to personal sin. Thus, Jesus' proclamation brought him into conflict with the political and religious leaders of his day because he challenged their conception of God. That is to say, God was not found in "privileged locales", but among the poor and the oppressed. The religious leaders of his day realized that Jesus was offering the people a choice: the God of Jesus or the God of the scribes and Pharisees.²³ There was also a political aspect to Jesus' death, for he was crucified as a political agitator. Sobrino notes that both Jesus and the Zealots wanted to

²³ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.204-209.

establish God's Kingdom; both felt that the Kingdom was imminent. Jesus did not, however, espouse Zealot orthodoxy uncritically, for his conception of God differed from theirs: God would come in grace, not via armed revolution. This means love is political; it must take sides. Since God's love is being incarnated in a world pervaded by sin, "it can unfold and develop only by confronting the oppressive weight of power."²⁴ Since love is political, it must desacralize political power by taking the side of the oppressed.

The cross as the historical consequence of Jesus' life affects his call to discipleship. First, those answering his call must embody in their lives of Jesus' own defense of the poor and prophetic denunciation of oppressive power structures. Second, by doing so, they will be enduring Christian suffering, for only the suffering that comes from following Jesus is Christian suffering. The cross reveals God's unconditional love within the bounds of history. The follower of Jesus is extended the invitation to be a co-actor with God in history by mediating God's love in a sinful situation. To be saved by the cross means to participate in God's history of concretizing suffering love in history. This is not an explanation of how the cross effects salvation; rather, it is an invitation to "experience history as salvation".²⁵ Salvation is meaningless if it is not historicized.

The raising of Jesus out of death is not, strictly speaking, a historical event, for no one witnessed it. Nor can one appeal to the empty tomb and "apparitions" of Jesus, for then historicity is based upon inference. Sobrino concludes this that the resurrection is an "eschatological event" narrated as a "historical event". The

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.214.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp.226-227.

resurrection is an eschatological event because

the revelation of God effected in Christ's resurrection is a promise..... because it is not a possibility in the world and in history but a possibility for the world and for history.²⁶

As a promise, the resurrection is not something to be historically verified, but a mission to be carried out. Therefore, the resurrection is not something to be proven, but an event to be understood and lived.

Sobrino posits three basic requisites for understanding the resurrection. They are a radical hope in the future, a historical consciousness that grasps the meaning of history as a promise, and a specific praxis which is nothing else but following of Jesus.²⁷ The first point is based upon the Jewish apocalyptic expectation of the end of time and of the re-creation of reality. This ultimate hope was expressed in the hope for the resurrection of the dead, for resurrection implied a radically new situation that would be superior to the old one. Its core was not merely concerned with the end of time or with hope; it also included God's coming in grace. The hermeneutic for understanding the resurrection is not only hope, but also the search for justice. The difficulty in understanding the resurrection does not lie in how it occurred, but in whether or not God and the Kingdom of God are like Jesus said they were. In other words, will justice triumph over injustice?

The second point follows from the first. If hope is evoked by the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, the future must be seen as a promise; more specifically, it is the definitive promise of God. It is more than the recognition of the open-endedness of history; it is a promise that the destiny of Jesus is the destiny of history and of all

²⁶ Ibid., p.252.

²⁷ Ibid., p.256.

creation. As such, the resurrection is unfinished in regard to its saving efficacy. This means that the hope evoked by God's promise in Jesus' resurrection entails a mission.

The third point is the explication of that mission. Sobrino explains that "the resurrection sets in motion a life of service designed to implement in reality the eschatological ideals of justice, peace and human solidarity."²⁸ This life must be concretized in the lives of the crucified peoples of history. That is to say, Christians are to proclaim, by word and deed, the good news of God's Kingdom to the oppressed. When this is done, the resurrection will be a revelation of God's response to injustice. Thus, the resurrection symbolizes indirectly the ultimate triumph of justice.

In the light of Sobrino's interpretation of christology, we turn to see how this effects his understanding of Jesus as "Messiah" and as Lord. In the Gospels, Jesus never clearly proclaimed himself as the "Messiah". Rather, until his resurrection, in the light of the Easter experience and in expectation of the approaching of the end, his disciples elevated the expression- "Jesus is the Messiah"- to a confession. However, this early church's confession had nothing to do with its contemporary Jewish understanding of Messiah as a political figure. But rather it is as Eduard Schweizer says

when members of the early church confessed "Jesus-Christ" it did not mean that they knew in advance what the term "Christ" meant and then attached to it to Jesus because he fulfilled all the qualifications of that title. It means rather that in the ministry of Jesus, most of all in his death and his resurrection, they had come to understand for the first time what this term "Christ" really means.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., p.255.

²⁹ Eduard Schweizer, Jesus Christ (London: SCM, 1989), p.52.

Sobrino admits that the new meaning of Messiah given by the early church does successfully remove the narrowness of the Jewish idea of a political Messiah-king.³⁰ Nevertheless, he criticizes that this contributes to the "de-messianization" of the Messiah.³¹

The major consequence of "de-messianization" is, according to Sobrino, that salvation is being privatized.³² First, it is privatized in the sense that the hope of salvation in history is being replaced by transcendent salvation. That is to say, salvation is concentrated on the forgiveness of personal sins and inner salvation, and the socio-political dimension of salvation has been given up. However, this does not mean that the New Testament no longer gives any importance to earthly realities- its moral demands, with their call to charity, care for the weak- but all these are now seen more as ethical requirements than as the central fact of Jesus by virtue of his messiahship. Secondly, salvation is reduced to an individual and personal level. The correlative of messianic hopes is no longer the people with their collective hopes, but the individual. This does not mean that the idea of collectivity has disappeared from the New Testament, since what develops out of faith in Christ is precisely a community. But on the other hand, it is true that the concrete hopes of the people have disappeared- what we call their social and political hopes. And finally, a privatisation of salvation overlooks the fact that the Messiah within the prophetic

³⁰ The Jewish conception of Messiah can be summarized as follows: 1]. The Messiah fulfils his task in a purely earthly setting. 2]. No matter whether he introduces his Kingdom in the end time or an interim period, he appears is no longer the present one. 3]. Whether it is of peaceful or warlike character, the work of the Jewish Messiah is that of a political king of Israel. He is the national king of the Jews. 4]. The Jewish Messiah is of royal lineage, a descendant of David. Details see Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (London: SCM, 1963), pp.113-117.

³¹ J.Sobrino, "Messiahs and Messianisms: Reflections from El Salvador." In: Concilium, 1993, p.115.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.116f.

tradition of the Old Testament is the direct correlative of messianic hopes: the poor within the people. It is they who hope for the Messiah who will bring justice to the orphans and widows and who will be partial on their side. Sobrino comments that under the "de-messianization",

the mediator becomes understood more in his relation to the person of God than in his relation to the Kingdom of God, as implied in the title Messiah.

The New Testament rejects the concept of Messiah as political and warrior king, but it would be tragic to convert Christ into the Messiah of a purely spiritual Kingdom without incarnation, into a universal Messiah without preference for the poor, without mercy towards the sufferings, without demands for justice from their oppressors.³³

Therefore, Sobrino calls for the "re-messianization" of Christ; that is, to place him in relation to the hopes of the poor. Nevertheless, Sobrino holds that this "re-messianization" is not to "politicize" the Christian faith, for it intends to recover the socio-political meaning of the messianic idea. This recovery is to hold a balance between the fact that, on the one hand, Jesus did not seek to be a political Messiah and, on the other, Jesus' refusal does not mean that he did not seek to shape society. Even though his power was not military, his power of truth (proclamation of the utopia of the Kingdom, denunciation and exposure of the anti-Kingdom), his power of love (with its concrete expressions in mercy and justice) and his power of witness (his faithfulness even to the cross) testified that the meaning of Messiah cannot be understood purely spiritually or inwardly. Because of this, Sobrino notes critically that the mistake of the denial of the political aspect of the Messiah ascribed to Jesus by the early church is not its rejection of the idea of a nationalistic warrior king and his spurning of a theocratic kingdom, but is its removing the concept of Messiah from the oppressions and hopes of human beings in society.³⁴

³³ Ibid., p.118.

³⁴ Ibid., p.120.

Sobrino insists that Jesus expresses the central concerns of the messianic hopes of the poor in the Old Testament, but he profoundly changes its theocratic, nationalistic, exclusive and military connotations. For Sobrino, the messianic character of Jesus is best understood in relation to the Kingdom of God, which we have already discussed. This is because the messianic hope was not directed, in the first place, towards a specific and particular figure, but rather toward the coming of the Kingdom of God.³⁵ Nevertheless, Sobrino's emphasis on the socio-political messianic idea of Jesus does not reduce Jesus as a mediator [that is, Jesus himself is reconciliation] to Jesus as a mediation [that is, Jesus is a bringer of reconciliation]. Sobrino himself always maintains that "the mediator is not just Messiah but Son also, that Jesus has a basic relationship not only with the Kingdom of God, but also with the Father."³⁶ Therefore, the "re-messianization" of Christ is not to return to something like a nationalistic, theocratic and warrior king, but rather is to emphasize that the one who was sent by God will have his eyes fixed on the poor of this world, with their slaveries and their hopes. Thus, the messianic hope is best to be described as a hope of liberation and deliverance, and then Jesus is best to be understood as liberator.

Personally, I find that Sobrino's emphasis on the necessity of the "re-messianization" is convincing and illuminating. Sobrino is right that Jesus did not identify himself with the Jewish idea of Messiah, but it is wrong to eliminate the socio-political dimension of Jesus' messianship. An example is that when John the Baptist questioned Jesus' messianic identity, Jesus answered his question by pointing to this liberating praxis on behalf of the poor: "The blind see, the lame walk, the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p.122.

lepers are cleaned, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Mt.11:4; Lk.7:22) It is right that we should not reduce Jesus and his significance to "purely" political domain; at the same time, we should not reduce Jesus by means of excluding the political dimension of his life and fate.

When Sobrino talks about Jesus as Lord, he refers not as much to the exalted status of a person as to the superiority of a person's service to the Kingdom of God. He claims that the title "lord" refers not only to Jesus' divinity but to his glorified humanity in light of the resurrection:

The New Testament proclaims Jesus as the eschatological Lord. This poses a double question, what is meant by lordship, and how does one come to the Lord? The New Testament asserts that it is in virtue of his glorified humanity, and not only his divinity, that Christ is now the one to whom God has subjected all things and that he has been constituted Lord because of his abasement even to the cross.³⁷

In analyzing the biblical concept of lordship, Sobrino emphasizes the inter-relationship of the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. The latter must not overwhelm the former so that the Lord becomes an ahistorical being, a construct of faith.

The main category through which Sobrino understands Jesus as Lord is power. Jesus' lordship is grasped in terms of the power that "mediates God and helps to construct a better society."³⁸ The power of Jesus involves prophetic praxis that communicates God's love for the poor; this power is love expressed in the historical Jesus' self-surrender and service in the transformation of social reality into the Kingdom of God. Jesus' power is truth spoken in prophecy, and love communicated

³⁷ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin American, pp.37-38.

³⁸ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.297.

in the praxis in responding to the cries of society's oppressed. The power possessed by the Lord Jesus is not an arbitrary power that dominates and enslaves people but "a power embodied in truth and love, in proclamation and denunciation."³⁹ The kind of power Jesus wields is service, not imposition. Jesus' lordship is expressed in his kingly service of the lowly. In his service, Jesus mediates the God of life.

Sobrino discusses the cosmic aspect of Jesus' lordship in terms of the biblical image of the Kingdom of God. The cosmic lordship of Jesus receives its direction and content from the concrete renewal brought about by Jesus in the human condition. It refers mainly to the liberation of the cosmos from false divinities. Jesus' lordship empowers the progressive coming-to-be the Kingdom of God in social reality. Lordship is liberation from the gods of oppression throughout the cosmos. Jesus' cosmic lordship unfolds concretely in the exercise of political power for the transformation of social structures and patterns of behaviour that enslave the poor. His lordship entails the liberating transformation of a bad situation, the overcoming of an oppressive situation and regeneration of the world for the sake of the poor whom the historical Jesus served and sought to liberate.⁴⁰ By restructuring social reality for the benefit of the poor, Jesus uses political power to realize the reign of God in history and to effect an eschatological transformation of the cosmos into a new heaven and a new earth. In his use of power to transmute social reality, Jesus is eschatological Lord of the cosmos.

The human dimension of Jesus' lordship focus on the renewal of the believer's personal freedom. Jesus' lordship frees the believer for an encounter with

³⁹ Ibid., p.383.

⁴⁰ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, pp.38-39.

him in discipleship. His lordship is not exercised simply in the acknowledgment of his dominion by believers, but is exercised through the liberating praxis of believers. The following of Jesus takes the form of a constant humanization in a specific way. The meaning of Jesus' supreme authority cannot be restricted to personal and prayerful acknowledgement of his lordship over the cosmos and the church. By insisting on praxis as an epistemological source for understanding Jesus' lordship, Sobrino focuses attention on the socio-political ramifications of Jesus' saving activity. The nature of the lordship of Christ can be understood fully only when it is grasped in connection with the praxis of the historical Jesus and the praxis of disciples. Through his praxis, Jesus mediates God's liberating love, which occasions the renewal of the believer's personal freedom and ultimately the transformation of social realities. Jesus' lordship entails more than his dominion over individuals and their personal salvation. Furthermore, Jesus creates a community that follows him in trying to make the Kingdom of God a reality within history. In short, the church actualize the political power of its Lord by building the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed in word and deed. It involves conflict because sin holds a destructive power in history and takes the form of oppression. The church of the poor is a community that struggles against the divinities of death that prevent establishment of a kingdom of justice and peace for everyone.

In summary, Sobrino's concept of Jesus' lordship is functional; it is understood in terms of the superiority of Jesus' action in realizing God's reign in history.

Sobrino has much to offer to the study of christology. In short, first, Jesus' whole life is a revelation. It cannot be cut into pieces and still have the same meaning. This is a corrective to the traditional emphasis upon Jesus' death and

resurrection as the revelation of God. For Sobrino, this two-sided event is meaningless, if it is separated from the life that preceded it. Secondly, the distinction between doxological statements and historical statements is another contribution Sobrino makes. Too often faith is defined as belief. But if the traditional understanding of "faith in Jesus" as a call to discipleship is true, then this world and its history are important. Thus, doxological statements, such as, "God is love" and "Jesus is the Son of God" must be lived out and made credible within history. Thirdly, 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, but it involves also living life as he lived it by offering oneself in service to the Kingdom. 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. Fourthly, for Sobrino, God is acting in history in order to transform it into a community of brothers and sisters. The essence of the Kingdom is grace; it is based upon God's initiative for the betterment of humankind. This dynamic view broadens the concept of sin to include both the vertical and horizontal natures of human being. If one sins against God, one sins against people. Likewise, if one sins against another person, one sins against God. Finally, Jesus defines what divinity is rather than being defined by an abstract, a prior conception of divinity. Therefore, Jesus' suffering and death must be seen as essential to God's nature. For the belief that "God is love" to be credible to humanity, God's love must be situated in a world pervaded by sin. The cross reveals the final consequence of this action. God's power in the resurrection inspires the hope that justice will triumph over injustice.

However, as previously stated, Sobrino's interpretation is not without problem. For instance, Sobrino uses the Scripture selectively to support his conclusions, almost

as if he formulated his christology and then sought out texts to support it. Apart from his methodological difficulty in using the Scripture, he over-emphasizes the external reality of sin. Nowhere does he say, "I am part of the problem because I'm a sinner in bondage to my own sinful nature." If sin is merely external bondage, then a political-economic liberator suffices. If sin infects the very heart of human existence, more powerful and radical measures are needed. I consider that the strength and weakness of Sobrino's christology is his working hypothesis of contextuality. That is to say, Sobrino is right that christology has to be relevant to a specific historical situation before it can be applied to other situations, but he fails to control his use of contextuality which as a result easily leads to accommodate the gospel to the world. Despite it, I agree with L.Boff's words

the real question is not whether a particular kind of christology is partisan or engaged, but to whom and to what this particular kind of christology is committed and engaged.⁴¹

⁴¹ L.Boff, Faith on the Edge, p.120.

b. *A Theological Reflection of Justice*

In this section, I will examine how Sobrino uses the concept of justice in his theological reflection in the light of the previous study of the historical context of El Salvador and christology. For Sobrino, the Christian understanding of justice is not primarily dependent upon philosophical reasoning. But rather it must be constructed in the light of one's socio-political context.¹ Accordingly, social sciences are considered as necessary tools to analyze what is happening and to locate the present injustices.² This does not mean that philosophical reasoning has nothing to contribute, but rather it is secondary in helping to locate the nature of injustice. However, no matter how objective it may be, the result which is obtained from the analysis by social sciences itself is inadequate for us to understand what justice is because it may be interpreted that the rich have to pity those who are unlucky, and this demands no change of the status quo. Therefore, Sobrino considers that this analysis should be seen from a partisan perspective, that is, the history of Jesus which signifies a perspective from below, from the standpoint of wretchedness and oppression. In this way, injustice is revealed, and the poverty of the people is no longer considered as their misfortune, but rather they are the victims of structural injustice. Here we find that Sobrino's point of departure- historical realities and the preferential option for the poor- parallels Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza's approach to justice, that is, a combination of historical consciousness and biblical remembrance.³

¹ See J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.50.

² *Ibid.*, pp.18-19. Sobrino writes that "if the concern is the liberation of the real world from its wretched state, theology will turn spontaneously to the social sciences. For they analyze the concrete misery of the real world, the mechanisms that create it, and consider possible models of liberation from it." However, throughout his works, Sobrino does not particularly connect social sciences with Marxism. In other words, he does not implicitly or explicitly favour any one of the social theories.

³ Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, Bread not Stone (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), pp.141f.

According to Schussler-Fiorenza, the proper starting point for a theory of justice is the juxtaposition of historical consciousness that hears the voices of the oppressed, and biblical remembrance that recaptures the meaning of the Scripture as understood by the oppressed. This is exactly what I attempted in the last two previous parts. Part 1 of this section offers some historical consciousness, consisting of both personal stories and the socio-economic data. Part 2a of this section emphasizes that the history of Jesus is a history of liberation. Nevertheless, to assume that such a juxtaposition is valid is not to assume that direct parallels can be found between the history of Jesus and the contemporary world. But it does mean that an appropriate understanding of the history of Jesus may illuminate the contemporary situation, and that the contemporary situation may illuminate our reading of the history of Jesus.⁴ For instance, the injustice in El Salvador awakens Sobrino to interpret the history of Jesus "historically", and the liberating message of the history of Jesus helps Sobrino to see the world as it is and as it should not be.⁵ Thus, historical consciousness illuminates biblical remembrance, and biblical remembrance in turn illuminates historical consciousness.

Before turning to discuss how Sobrino understands justice, I would like to point out three important presuppositions in his understanding of justice which may not be very obvious in his approach. They are that justice is experiential before it

⁴ In his book, Prophecy and Praxis, Robin Gill discusses this relationship in terms of the social context of theology and the social significance of theology. According to Gill, the social context of theology suggests that theology does not work in a vacuum, but that theologians tend to make claims about the society or culture within which they operate and then incorporate these claims into their theology. The social significance of theology means that theology is both socially constructed and a social reality. It may also act as an independent variable and influence its society. A summary can be found in Robin Gill ed., Theology and Sociology (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), pp.147-148.

⁵ See J.Sobrino, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity." In: The Christian Century, April 3, 1991, pp.364-370.

is theoretical because it begins from historical realities; that justice begins with narrative because we are asked to recall and participate in the history of Jesus; and that Jesus is the way of the Son to the Father, and Jesus' way reveals what justice is and how we may be involved in it. Regarding the first presupposition, we will discern more fully later that Sobrino's understanding of justice is a response to the experience of the reality of injustice. His concern for justice is not for the sake of developing a theory which can help the world run smoothly, but rather is for the sake of recovering the humanity of those whose lives are threatened and deprived. Therefore, Sobrino's approach to justice is contextual. Because of this, Sobrino would not be satisfied with the utilitarian understanding of justice represented by John Stuart Mill which is concerned about the "greater good" of society⁶, for this theory is detached from the existential experience of the people in El Salvador. It does not intend to liberate the poor and the oppressed. On the contrary, it is sometimes used as an ideology to defend the interest of the ruling classes. Sobrino would also not completely agree with John Rawl's understanding of justice as fairness⁷ because it is not radical enough in a situation where injustice is already rampant, and rationality itself is distorted by human sin. Does this then mean that the contextual approach to justice is itself relative? To say that the corrections of injustice will be contextual is not to say that they will be relative. They are demanded by circumstances, in accord with a vision of the Kingdom of God. However, we admit a basic fact that there are various interpretations of the Kingdom. The diversity of interpretation does not necessarily imply that it is invalid to base our understanding of justice on the notion of the Kingdom, but rather its diversity is to affirm a theological truth that the Kingdom is more than and beyond what we

⁶ A summary of Mill's view can be found in Six Theories of Justice (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), pp.15-32, by Karen Lebacqz.

⁷ Ibid., pp.33-50.

understand. Furthermore, in the Bible, justice is always related to a demand of practising justice rather than a concept of what it is. In other words, it is a demand of correcting what is unjust. Therefore, although we cannot fully grasp what the Kingdom is, our vision of the Kingdom cannot be completely denied because we have had a foretaste of what it is, and more importantly, we are all already in the Kingdom. The Kingdom then offers us a window through which we might glimpse injustice and justice [though our glimpses are partial].

With respect to my suggestion that justice begins with narrative, Sobrino himself does not explicitly say much about this. He perhaps disagrees with it. Nevertheless, I suggest this because Sobrino does not base his understanding of justice on natural law; on the contrary, he takes the history of Jesus as the point of departure, not because functionally it can provide us with a theory of justice, but because theologically in Sobrino's words, "we are the continuation of the history of Jesus."⁸ In other words, we are a storied people. We are not only called to recall Jesus' story, but we are also requested to shape our stories in accordance with his story. The narrative nature of justice is best summarized in Duncan B. Forrester's words:

this story [God's dealing with his people] shows how God's people have come to know what justice is through their often disturbing and confusing dealings with the God of justice..... Only through the experience and the memory do we know what love and justice are, and we are enabled to love and to do justice by our past and present experience of God.

The story and the experience and the memory of God's dealings are prior to our understandings of justice and our endeavours to act justly and secure structures of justice, and to reason about justice. The story of God who is love and justice disturbs our tidy certainties. It does not easily produce a theory of justice, but enlarges our understanding

⁸ J. Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p.

of, and commitment to, justice.⁹

I will refer to the narrative nature of justice again in due course.

Finally, Sobrino's understanding of justice is derived from his interpretation of Jesus as the way of the Son. That is to say, Jesus' way is the revelation of the way to God, of the way to become a child of God. In the preceding section, we have already examined how Sobrino interprets christology. For Sobrino, Jesus' way as the way of the Son to the Father is characterized by his commitment to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God as good news and the denunciation of all anti-Kingdom values which take the form of oppression. According to Sobrino, the Kingdom of God is not utopian, but a reality. It embraces both socio-political and personal dimensions. Therefore, discipleship is solidarity with the poor by proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom, by defending their cause, by struggling against injustice, and by accepting the consequences of that advocacy. However, this should not misinterpret Sobrino by saying that we can deduce the theory of justice from the historical Jesus. But what Sobrino intends to say is that Jesus as the way of the Son reveals to us how justice is done and understood, and that doing justice is the essence of faith. We have to concretize what justice means in our particular situation. Jesus reveals the way, not the blueprint. In the following, although I will not explicitly relate Sobrino's understanding of justice point to point to his interpretation of christology, it is obvious that his understanding of justice is christologically grounded.

Sobrino does not develop a systematic theory of justice, nor does he provide a comprehensive definition of justice. Rather he understands the notion of justice in

⁹ Duncan B. Forrester, "Political Justice and Christian Theology." In: Studies in Christian Ethics, 1990, p.13.

relation to other concepts, that is, sin, love and humanization. We can now try to see how these concepts clarify what Sobrino means by justice.

When Sobrino talks about justice, he always understands it in relation to sin [the anti-Kingdom]. He avoids any metaphysical discourse concerning the existential nature of sin, and rather emphasizes sin as a historical phenomenon. This emphasis makes the ontological interpretation of sin become historical; and the individualistic interpretation become collective. In other words, sin is no longer merely understood as a characteristic of the weakness of individuals, but it is a structuring power which dominates society and its people. Put another way, sin is injustice. Sobrino writes that

sin is not just something inside a person. It cannot be described adequately if we simply see it as an interior offense against God. Sin has an external embodiment that gives shapes and structure to the overall situation.¹⁰

The various anathemas condemn not only sinful conduct in itself, but also the sinful behaviour of one social group toward another. Sin is condemned in the name of the good news not only as the personal failure of the person in his or her relationship with God, but also as something preventing the Kingdom of God from becoming a reality for the poor.¹¹

This socio-structural interpretation of sin brings a new orientation to Christian theology. It suggests that not only an individual needs to be saved, but also the world as well. We are not only liberated from sin through the act of conversion, but we are also liberated to make a historical difference as witnesses to God's kingdom. This interpretation recovers the socio-political dimension of the biblical understanding of salvation which prevents any tendency towards the privatisation of the Christian faith. Thus, for Sobrino, a concern for justice is not simply a humanitarian concern,

¹⁰ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroad, p.203.

¹¹ J.Sobrino, Jesus in Latin America, pp.133-134.

but is profoundly and theologically rooted in the doctrine of sin. However, we should not misinterpret Sobrino's view that the Kingdom of God can be historically fulfilled by socio-structural liberation. For him, the Kingdom is always eschatological.¹² Sin cannot be eradicated from outside ourselves by opposing its destructive force with force of our own. Despite this, Sobrino holds that we can and are called to overcome particular manifestations of human sinfulness.

Parallel to what the Scripture says about the consequence of sin, the consequence of socio-structural sin is also death. This death is not simply a spiritual death, but a physical death. Sobrino said that "sin is what dealt death to the Son of God, and sin is what continues to deal death to the sons and daughters of God."¹³ In Latin America, sin is concretized in terms of poverty and violence because they deny life. Sobrino reminds us that "if sin reveals itself in the death of human beings, then grace reveals itself in the human life that is God's first and basic gift to us."¹⁴ In this sense, the grace of God comes upon those whose lives are deprived. Therefore, a call for justice is not simply a concern of just distribution, but rather a commitment to protect life.

For Sobrino, justice relates to both a correction of human sinfulness and a manifestation of God's grace. Thus, justice is not only a condemnation of the sinful social structures which dehumanize humanity, but is also an affirmation to those whose lives are deprived that God is with them. Accordingly, God's grace is not in contrast to his justice, but rather God's grace is what defines his justice. Justice is

¹² Ibid., pp.94-97.

¹³ J.Sobrino, "Awakening from the Sleep of Inhumanity." p.366.

¹⁴ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.166.

no longer a "purely" human affair, but rather is rooted in the dialectical nature of God's grace; that is, his "YES" and "NO".

Among other Christian ethicists who take the doctrine of sin as a point of departure for understanding justice, the views of Reinhold Niebuhr are particularly significant and provide insights that enhance an understanding of Sobrino's view.¹⁵ One of Niebuhr's best known epigrams is: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."¹⁶ The first clause is based on his theological understanding of human nature as made in the image of God; the second, on his understanding of sin. Therefore, we may say that Niebuhr's theory of justice, if there is any, is basically for the sake of minimizing the influence of human sinfulness. Niebuhr uses the term, "original sin", to describe an inevitable fact of human existence, but it is not understood in the sense of an inherited corruption. He argues that "if original sin is inherited corruption, its inheritance destroys the freedom and therefore the responsibility which is basic to the conception of sin. The orthodox doctrine is therefore self-destructive."¹⁷ For him, the original sin of humankind is characterized by a search for security which has led to the misappropriation of power and the egotism of pride. As a result, the misuse of power by humankind leads them to injustice and their pride makes them forget that they are creatures of nature. This pride of power is revealed by the disordered responses of those who seek to overcome their physical insecurity at the expenses of others. Singled out for

¹⁵ In fact, Niebuhr's analysis of human sin was developed out of the context of his concern to make relevant the insights of the Christian faith to the decisions and structures of our social life.

¹⁶ R.Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (New York: Scribner's, 1944), p.xiii.

¹⁷ R.Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (London: SCM, 1936), p.100. See also The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol.1 (London: Nisbet & Co., 1941), pp.256-280.

particular emphasis are the illusions of self-sufficiency, and the various forms of greed and exploitation that inevitably make for injustice. In order to minimize the impact of the sinfulness of a person on another person, Niebuhr suggests that a more realistic goal would be to organize a system of restraints designed to stabilize a balance of power in the hopes of minimizing the inordinate expressions of "pride of power". He concludes that "justice is basically dependent upon a balance of power."¹⁸

Both Sobrino and Niebuhr agree that the doctrine of sin is their theological point of departure (foundation) for understanding justice. Furthermore, they also agree that sin, no matter whether it is understood personally and structurally, causes injustice to others. Finally, they agree that sin has to be tackled, not only through conversion to Christ, but also through the implementation of social policies. Nevertheless, their agreements should not overshadow their differences which lie in their different emphases on sin. That is to say, Sobrino emphasizes the socio-structural dimension, while Niebuhr emphasizes the personal dimension. This difference inevitably brings a different theological orientation to their understanding of justice. I do not intend to discuss their different theological orientations arising from their different emphases on sin because it involves the whole system of their thoughts. Rather, I am interested to see how Sobrino's understanding of justice can benefit from Niebuhr's insights. First of all, Sobrino's account of sin has a relatively more optimistic view on humankind than Niebuhr's. This optimism sometimes tends to "idealize" the poor. In other words, the poor are one-sidedly seen as victims without referring to the fact that they may be oppressors as well. Therefore, Niebuhr's insights on personal sin remind Sobrino that justice should not only be

¹⁸ R.Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics (New York: Scribner's 1940), p.26.

understood in two social classes, namely, the rich and the poor, but also within each social class. Secondly, Sobrino's account of sin suggests that humankind is more socially-determined than Niebuhr's, and therefore, he tends to tackle sin on a "historical" level. The danger here is in the temptation to provide an illusionary optimism that once the social injustice has gone away, humankind would live in harmony. In this way, Niebuhr's insights remind Sobrino that no matter how successfully we may overcome social sin, social injustice is still there because we are still sinners.

Apart from the use of sin in relation to justice, Sobrino also combines justice and love together in his writings. He writes that

by justice, I mean the kind of love that seeks effectively to humanize, to give life in abundance to the poor and oppressed majorities of the human race. Justice is thus a concrete form of love in which account is taken of the quantitative fact that its recipients form majorities and of the qualitative fact that they are poor and oppressed.¹⁹

From his writings, we can discern how justice is clarified in terms of three different uses of love. First, justice is more than a concern for maintaining an objective theory which suits all situations but rather it has to be involved with the spirituality of the one who seeks justice.²⁰ In other words, the practice of justice cannot be separated from the one who practises justice. Thus, justice is related to a spirituality of love.

The necessity of love in justice is because justice, according to Emil Brunner, is that

when we are just, and deal justly, we render to the other what is his due. Justice makes no free gift; it gives precisely what is due to the other, no more or no less. Its basis is strictly realistic, sober and rational..... Justice is rational because it views man in a rational system..... It is sober and realistic in so far as it is impersonal..... It does not regard the person as person..... Justice does not even then say, "Thou." It knows no "thou"; it knows only the intellectual value, the

¹⁹ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.47.

²⁰ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, pp.34-35.

intellectual thing- the dignity of man.²¹

We may not necessary totally agree with Brunner's description, but he does point out something important. That is to say, in order to be fair, justice seeks to be rational, impersonal and objective. But the paradox is that the more rational and objective the demand of justice, the more it may dehumanize humanity. This is especially true when the practice of justice becomes a legalism. Paul Lehmann remarks: "Justice is the foundation and the criterion of law; law is not the foundation and criterion of justice."²² Jose Miguez Bonino also agrees that "justice (the objective basis) and love (the motivating force) together offer a hermeneutical key that enables us to discern God's active presence in history and to determine our Christian praxis accordingly."²³ For Sobrino, this motivating force is characterized by "de-centering" ourselves because a liberating love for the poor demands radical dedication. Thus, the pain of the poor becomes our pain, and the liberation of the poor becomes ours. In other words, the liberation of the poor radicalizes the eccentricity of love to the point of radical forgetfulness of self. Sobrino said that

[the liberation of the poor] calls for that love with a radicality unattainable from a point of departure in either a mere loving intention or a mere practice as such. The latter provides the setting. But the actualization of love is, once again, a question of spirit.²⁴

It is this love which leads us to be persecuted among the poor without complaints. Sobrino says that the defence of the life of the poor at the price of our own life is love to the limit, love with ultimacy. This is the meaning of the cross of Jesus. Besides, in Jesus' teaching on the love for God, he puts love for one's neighbour

²¹ See Emil Brunner, Justice and the Social Order (London: Lutterworth, 1946), pp.114-118.

²² P.Lehmann, The Transfiguration of Politics (London: SCM, 1975), pp.250f.

²³ Jose M.Bonino, Toward a Christian Political Ethics (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p.82.

²⁴ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.33.

parallel to it. G.Gutierrez writes that

the neighbour is not an occasion, an instrument for becoming closer to God..... love for God is expressed in a true love for man himself.²⁵

Therefore, justice is no longer a question of imposing a cold and abstract principle which would restore the balance of a reality done violence to,²⁶ but rather it is a question of love for others with the intention of attending to their needs. Justice should be done in a loving fashion. The justice of the Scripture must not be thought of as merely a distributive arrangement, allocating goods of various sorts among people and groups. The manner in which justice is done, the attitude and motivation, matters. In this way, love is a broader and more comprehensive category than justice. Still, commitment to justice, that dimension of love that calls us to provide for the majority which is poor and oppressed with what they need to achieve a life worthy of the name human, is necessary for us to grasp the fullness of God's loving grace. In other words, love may require more, but never less, than justice does.

The second use of love in relation to justice, according to Sobrino, is that love should not be limited to a level of inter-personal relationships, but goes beyond it to the socio-structural dimension. This is what Sobrino calls "political love".²⁷ Political love seeks to transform the situation of the poor, and so must denounce oppression and unmask its structural causes. In Charles Villa-Vicencio's term, love should have a "universal vision".²⁸ He said that "to love one's neighbour requires relating to those in one's immediate environment in a loving, caring and socially

²⁵ G.Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation, p.202.

²⁶ J.Sobrino, "Latin America: Place of Sin and Place of Forgiveness." In: Concilium, 1986, p.49.

²⁷ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, pp.81-82.

²⁸ Charles Villa-Vicencio, A Theology of Reconstruction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.174-177.

responsible manner."²⁹ In this sense, to love today demands that we become engaged in a transforming praxis, seeking to create a more just social order. The neighbour in need today is not just an individual but also collectives, social classes and nations. Therefore, love can never be individualized, but is an attempt to provide fullness of life and the experience of community to the poor and oppressed who have been kept marginal. This attempt is not easy because it may bring conflict. But we should know that this conflict is unavoidable because our love towards the poor demands us to struggle for justice without compromise. This is revealed in Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders as a result of his uncompromising stand for the Kingdom of God. If one's death results from service rendered to the poor, one's death is analogous to the death of Jesus. In this way one shares in crucifixion and, consequently, in the hope of resurrection. "Love without justice is in danger of becoming sentimental and irrelevant; justice without love easily becomes judgmental and uncaring."³⁰ The relationship between justice and love means, not only that the two are mutually supportive so that we cannot have one without the other, but also that we should expect each to favour the other.

Thirdly, according to Sobrino, love is characterized by forgiveness. In a context marked by serious injustice and unjust killing, love and justice can be one-sidedly understood as a defending of the poor against the oppressors. In the conflict, the poor are easily identified with "God's people", while the oppressors are identified with "devils". This dualism deepens the hatred between the oppressors and the oppressed, the rich and the poor. On the other hand, this dualism also encourages a kind of self-righteous mentality among the poor, and leads to a danger of hubris.

²⁹ Ibid., p.174.

³⁰ Ducau B.Forrester ed., Just Sharing (London: Epworth, 1988), p.78.

If this is so, it totally distorts the deepest meaning of liberation. Therefore, forgiveness is important in the struggle for justice, not only because it helps to recover the meaning of liberation, but it is also the deepest expression of love. Sobrino carefully defines forgiveness in two ways, namely, to forgive reality and to forgive sinners. According to him, to forgive the sin of reality means "converting it, setting up instead of the anti-Kingdom God's Kingdom, instead of injustice justice, instead of oppression freedom, instead of selfishness love, instead of death life."³¹ To forgive sinner means that "through love we have to be prepared to welcome the sinner and forgive him; and we have to be prepared to make it impossible for him to continue with his deeds which dehumanize others and himself."³² Reinhold Niebuhr also made such a distinction. He said that

one of the most important results of a spiritual discipline against resentment in a social dispute is that it leads to an effort to discriminate between the evils of a social system and situation and the individuals who are involved in it. Individuals are never as immoral as the social situations in which they are involved and which they symbolize.³³

Liberation and justice are neither to seek enemies nor to provoke hatred, but rather to learn to forgive and to be forgiven. However, forgiveness is possible only if the eradication of the sin is taken seriously. It also demands us to build new structures of justice. Sobrino argues that "Jesus loves the oppressed by being with them and loves the oppressors by being against them."³⁴ Therefore, an emphasis on forgiveness as gratuitous love is an important way of remaining true to what is at the origin of liberation movements- love and not vengeance or mere retaliation.

³¹ J.Sobrino, "Latin America: Place of Sin and Place of Forgiveness." In: Concilium, 1986, p.48.

³² Ibid., p.52.

³³ R.Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p.248.

³⁴ J.Sobrino, "Latin America: Place of Sin and Place of Forgiveness." p.53.

If the notions of sin and love help us to realize what injustice is, and to understand justice correctly, then the notion of humanization specifies what the process of justice involves. According to Sobrino, humanization should be taken in three independent but related levels. They are as follows:

- 1]. on the historical level, which takes in the basic fact that the human being is a material and spiritual being, a personal and social being, partly the product of history and partly a positive shaper of history;
- 2]. on the transcendental level, which takes in the fact that the human being is referred to something prior and greater than itself, in whom it finds its fulfilment;
- 3]. on the symbolic or liturgical level, which takes in the fact that the human being expresses the inner depths of the historical realm and, in Christian terms, does so from the standpoint and for the sake of the transcendent.³⁵

Like his understanding of christology, Sobrino takes the historical level as the point of departure for his understanding of justice. However, an emphasis on this priority is not to depreciate the importance of the other two levels, but rather Sobrino believes that the fullness of transcendental life is related to the fullness of historical life. The historical level has to be seen in two areas, namely, social structures and the nature of human being. First, on the structural level, it means that the structures of society have to be humanized so that human beings live in the direction of the Kingdom of God. It must try to ensure that they foster the satisfying of primary needs, the basic equality of human beings, inter-human solidarity and a fair sharing of power.³⁶ In El Salvador, it especially means that on the one hand, it has to defend the right to life³⁷, which is the defence of the life of the poor. This right is not centred on

³⁵ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.188.

³⁷ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.106. Since 1970, in ecumenical circles, the catalog of basic human rights begins with the right to life which includes the means to make continued living possible. This shift makes economic and social rights the primary concern, while the civil and political rights become secondary. A historical summary of this shift of emphases on human right can

individual liberty and dignity, what we call civil rights, but rather the right to life and other rights are necessary if life is to be sustained. In this sense, justice is a struggle against threats to the life of the poor. Therefore, it is not enough to possess a doctrine of human rights: structural change in all social, economic and political levels has to be demanded. On the other hand, in a decade of civil war, justice has to be related to the humanization of the conflict.³⁸ Sobrino considers that the church's role is not just to pass judgment on the conflict and decide which side is right, but its role is also to humanize the conflict from within so that life-fostering values are generated and more life results from the resolution of the conflict.

The second area of the historical level of humanization is to transform human beings in the direction of the "new human being". Sobrino writes that

new human beings are those wise enough to learn, to change, to undergo conversion, and to be honest with themselves. They are human beings whose values are those of the Sermon on the Mount. New human beings are clear of eyes and pure of heart, a thirst for justice and willing to run the risks entailed. They prefer peace to unnecessary elements of strife. They are like Jesus, finding more joy in giving than receiving and prepared to offer the greatest proof of love. Generous in victory, new human beings are ready to forgive an enemy and offer still another chance to a foe. Finally, they are ready to celebrate life gratefully, for they believe in life and keep up hope.³⁹

Sobrino's view of the "new human being" is very substantial indeed. It embraces the Christian understandings of conversion, sanctification and discipleship. Perhaps Sobrino's view of the "new human being" is best understood in terms of "conscientization", which is widely used by Latin American liberation theologians. In short, conscientization means "to awaken in individuals and communities,

be found in J.Moltmann, On Human Dignity (London: SCM, 1984), pp.3-18.

³⁸ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.189.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.188.

principally through the mass media, a living awareness of justice, infusing in them a dynamic sense of responsibility and solidarity."⁴⁰ In other words, it is concerned with empowerment. This empowerment is nothing other than the affirmation of human dignity and human responsibility. Nevertheless, Sobrino himself does not develop a full concept of conscientization.

In the light of the notions of sin, love and humanization, how is Sobrino's understanding of justice related to two basic Christian concepts or ideals, namely, reconciliation and peace?

Justice is a concern for reconciliation because it intends to restore a proper relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed. This is why forgiveness plays an important role in Sobrino's theological reflection. In other words, forgiveness is an indication to check how far justice is away from its origin- that is, reconciliation. Besides, Sobrino always says that love of the oppressed requires us to identify with them against the oppressors in order that they may advance to human wholeness, while love of the oppressors is shown by struggling against them to save them from themselves and from the structures they subserve. A confrontation between the oppressors and the oppressed is based on love rather than hatred. The practice of justice therefore has to take place before reconciliation of the two sides is possible. "Without liberation there is not reconciliation but conciliation."⁴¹ In short, reconciliation means the bringing again into a harmonious relationship after estrangement, while conciliation refers to the gaining of good will by acts which

⁴⁰ Dennis P. McCann, Christian Realism and Liberation Theology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982), p.140. A good summary of conscientization can be found in pp.164-181. Also see Medellin Document 1968, in Joseph Grenillion, The Gospel of Justice and Peace (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980), pp.452-254.

⁴¹ J.G.Davies, Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution, p.184.

induce friendly feeling. The result of conciliation is often that things remain more or less as they were before. When reconciliation is misunderstood as conciliation, then, it is resurrection without the cross. Reconciliation is a process that is initiated by the victims. The victim, not the oppressor, is the proper subject of reconciliation. For the victim, "truth" and "voice" are fundamental to reconciliation. Sobrino's account of justice shows us that reconciliation is not to be secured without a price. Reconciliation is no cheap option. The cross of Jesus shows that there is no simple way of reconciliation. Jesus was the reconciler precisely because he identified himself fully with humankind. As a reconciler, he was no third, neutral party mediating between two opponents. Jesus' liberating action was also his act of reconciliation because he was identified with those whom he came to set free. To this extent Jesus was partisan. Therefore, the preferential option for the poor is not for the sake of provoking further conflict, but this is the only possible way to make reconciliation possible.

Since the late 1960s we have been strongly advised that peace cannot be understood apart from justice.⁴² The prophet, Jeremiah, reminded us that although Judah was for the time being free from open violence, it was a nation without integrity. He states it,

For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain..... They have healed the wound of my people lightly saying, "Peace, peace." When there is no peace. [Jer.6:13-14]

Therefore, peace has to be accompanied with justice because "poverty is not just a denial of life; it is a denial of peace."⁴³ Peace is not merely cessation of strife, but

⁴² See Konrad Raiser, "Reflections about Social Justice within the Ecumenical Movement." In: Justice and Righteousness, pp.154-162. It is interesting to note that during the last four decades, the first world often understood peace as the absence of conflicts and wars because they are threatened by the nuclear war, while the third world often understood peace as economic and social injustice.

⁴³ J.Sobrino, "Unjust and Violent Poverty in Latin America." In: Conciltum, 1989, p.56.

a positive quality of individual and social life. Michael Elliott puts it in this way:

Its dynamic is to create within the community those conditions in which people may grow. The quest for peace is therefore the positive implementation of conditions and structures which are life-enhancing and conversely, the eradication of all those features which are destructive of life.⁴⁴

If we understand peace affirmatively as wholeness rather than negatively as the absence of war, then in some circumstances the greater threat to peace might come not from those who were trying to stir up some conflict but from those who supinely acquiesced in the existing state of affairs. We are called to be peacemakers, not peace avoiders. As I said earlier, justice may bring conflict and sometimes even war. This conflict may even destroy the "stability" of society. But this does not necessarily mean that it brings chaos rather than peace. John Macquarrie writes that

if peace is indeed finally wholeness, then there can be no rest until the possibility of wholeness and fulfillment has been opened up for all men; and obviously there will have to be a lot of conflict of one kind or another before that can happen.⁴⁵

Peace is not something waiting for an infallible definition, but rather is a process of action to make conflicting parties dissociate and associate for common good. In summary, reconciliation and peace are the goals of justice, and justice is the concrete manifestation of what reconciliation and peace are.

Coming near to the end of our discussion of justice, we may be astonished that Sobrino does not appear to have spelled out a theory of justice at all. He talks about how justice should be practised in love, but not about how justice should be practically operated in the political and economic spheres. His account of justice remains vague. It does not offer us a guideline for practising justice in our concrete

⁴⁴ Michael C. Elliott, Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture (London: SCM, 1990), p.67.

⁴⁵ J. Macquarrie, The Concept of Peace (London: SCM, 1973), p.33.

situation. In other words, he says nothing about how power should be balanced, and how wealth should be distributed. Does this mean that his account of justice is completely contrary to his emphasis on the importance of historical approach? However, Sobrino's "failure" can be explained from two perspectives, namely, theological and ethical.

Theologically speaking, Sobrino is not interested in developing a systematic theory of justice because, basically, his theological reflection emphasizes on praxis over theory. In other words, justice is not a matter of applying a theory of justice to a particular situation, but is first related to a matter of doing. Then, our practice informs our understanding of justice. However, such an explanation does not solve a basic question. That is to say, an emphasis on praxis does need a basic understanding of what justice is. Otherwise, praxis is never possible. For Sobrino, the Kingdom of God provides us with a vision of justice, but this vision is not a theory. This vision informs and directs our praxis. For instance, when the Kingdom of God reveals to us that God is life, this insight or vision governs our understanding of justice which can extend to a further meaning such as that justice should embrace freedom, participation, and fair distribution. Therefore, for Sobrino, justice is a value instead of a principle. Because of the fact that it is a value, it demands the agent's character being conformed to this value.

Ethically speaking, justice can be understood from either an extensional approach or an intentional approach.⁴⁶ According to C.Frey, an extensional approach would try to define justice with reference to some general norm such that

⁴⁶ Christofer Frey, "The Impact of the Biblical Idea of Justice on Present Discussions of Social Justice." In: Justice and Righteousness, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow (Sheffield: JSOTS, 1992), p.93.

all relevant cases would seem to be covered by it, while an intentional approach concentrates on specification and attempts to deepen our understanding of justice by offering a special case for consideration. Therefore, the extensional approach to justice is concerned to determine the limits of the concept of justice and the sorts of cases which may be subsumed under it, while the intentional approach tends to rely on a particular case which sets our understanding of justice in relief. As a result, the extensional one is rather objective, while the intentional one is rather subjective. Here, I suggest that Sobrino adopts an intentional approach to understand justice because he does not have any attempt to formulate an universal definition of what justice is, but rather understands it in his social context. This is why he contends the preferential option for the poor. Clearly, both the extensional and intentional approaches to justice are necessary and each complements the other. For the extensional approach, the insight of the intentional approach is needed because justice has no meaning without a very exact analysis of the actual situation. I argued at the beginning of this section that justice has to be contextual. At the same time, for the intentional approach, the insight of the extensional approach is needed because justice has to have an objective basis. Therefore, it is a mistake to stress that justice has only to be understood from the extensional approach or that the extensional approach has a priority over the intentional approach. I agree with what J.G.Davies says that

justice is not primarily a legal term at all. Of course, a legislator, when forming a law, should, as a moral agent, take into account whether or not the proposal is in accordance with justice, but his or her appreciation of justice will not derive from the law itself but from ethical consideration.⁴⁷

For Sobrino, justice is both a vision and a concept. It is a vision because it has an eschatological character. It belongs to the end, to the fulfilled goal of

⁴⁷ J.G.Davies, Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution (London: SCM, 1976), p.80.

salvation. On the other hand, it is a concept because it makes contact with our actual situation or has real purchases on our present policies of action. However, Sobrino's account of justice is not tied up with the question of the distribution of resources. But rather he makes a claim that economic activities cannot be immune from ethical and moral considerations. Otherwise, humans are simply reduced to "things".

3. JUSTICE AS A MODEL OF THE KINGDOM

From the previous discussion, we have seen how historical consciousness and biblical remembrance weave together in Sobrino's account of justice. Now, it is time for us to assess to what extent justice can be used as a theological model of the Kingdom. However, I have to admit that Sobrino never intended to make use of justice as a theological model. He therefore never systematically worked out how justice can be used as a model. But this does not mean that justice is simply a superfluous concept in his theology. On the contrary, it is important and central. Sobrino considers that faith and justice are inter-connected.¹ Faith requires justice because faith is not simply a response to the love shown by God, but also a conformity to this love. At the same time, justice requires faith because all human relationships must be judged in terms of the Kingdom of God. My task here then is not to make a critique of whether Sobrino's use of justice as a theological model is valid or not, but rather to discern the possibility of the use of justice as a theological model in the light of our previous exploration of his view.

From what I have said at the beginning of this chapter, I consider that any use of model has to refer to one of these questions; that is, either a question of preference or reference. In short, a matter of preference is concerned with how we shall decide which existing biblical model to use, while a matter of reference is concerned with how we can be sure that, if a non-biblical model is used, the contemporary model will remain true to its essence in revelation without distorting the truth of Scripture. It is obvious that the issue of whether justice can be used as a theological model of the Kingdom is more related to a matter of preference, because in the Bible, justice

¹ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.69f.

is used to describe the nature of God.²

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne. [Ps.89:14; of Deut.32:4; Job 34:4, 12; Isa.5:16; Zeph.3:5; etc.]

Therefore, my task below is to see how justice can be used as a theological model, on the one hand, and to discern how justice can be regarded as a preferential model in comparison with other models, such as, love, reconciliation and peace, on the other. According to what I have said earlier, a preferential model should meet four criteria. They are: 1]. it should correlate a high proportion of the related biblical material; 2]. it should communicate the clearest and deepest understanding of the truth; 3]. it should make the truth of the Scripture relevant to our lives; and 4]. finally, it should lead us to have a fresh commitment to Christ. Now, let us take the criteria one by one.

Obviously, the first criterion of a model relates to the use of the Bible. Christofer Frey remarks that there are four possible ways of seeing the Bible in relation to ethics. They are:

1]. The isolated critical way which deals with fragments of the biblical text by observing the most stringent scholarly methods.

2]. The cumulative interpretation, in which connection especially Jewish exegesis, a tradition of many centuries, provides a masterful example. It presupposes a hidden systematic hermeneutics, one which, however, is hardly ever seen.

3]. The eclectic approach which has historically characterized Protestantism in particular, and which is currently popular; it entails the constant repetition of the metaphor of the exodus.

4]. The theological way, that is, an attempt to express the core of the biblical message; this is not confined to isolated verses, but seeks

² J.Arthur Baird considers that the phrase, justice of God, is used 389 times in the Old Testament. This notion is related to other concepts like the judging God, the righteousness of God, the love of God and the wrath of God. See The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: SCM, 1963), pp.35-50.

rather to express a tendency inherent in the biblical message which could point the direction for today's decisions.³

Frey's clarification draws our attention to a basic fact that our understanding of justice should not be wholly dependent upon the study of its appearance in Scripture because this provides us only with a partial understanding of what justice is.⁴ But justice should be rather understood in a wider context; that is, the relationship between God and his people. This is what Frey calls the "theological way".

Sobrinó's account of justice is basically Christo-centric; more precisely, his account is based on the history of Jesus. That is to say, the history of Jesus defines what justice is and should be, and how justice should be done. On the other hand, justice is the key to unlock the praxis of Jesus. In the light of Jesus' praxis, Sobrinó concludes that first, justice does not merely refer to the proper execution of justice, but rather it is bound up with mercy and kindness. In other words, it is a praxis of love. Secondly, justice does not merely mean that the judges should judge accurately, but it primarily means that the officials and landowners should act on behalf of the poor. It refers salvation to judicial process. This is why Sobrinó considers that the preferential option for the poor is the hermeneutical point of departure to understand Scripture. Thirdly, justice is the necessary element in order to have peace and reconciliation among people. For Sobrinó, justice is a concept of real relation between two parties and not the relationship of an object under the consideration to an idea.

Sobrinó holds firmly that, because Jesus is God's fullest revelation, his praxis

³ C.Frey, "The Impact of the Biblical Idea of Justice on Present Discussions of Social Justice." p.92.

⁴ For instance, in 2 Sam.12:1-15, the word justice does not appear, but this passage is an important story for us to understand justice.

discloses the justice of God to us. We are commanded to execute justice because God, after whom we in grace and love pattern our lives, executes justice. And our justice should correspond to God's justice, and our love to God's love, because we are called to be perfect as is God.

Basically, I have no serious question about Sobrino's insights into justice drawn from Jesus' praxis; that is, justice versus sin, justice as the praxis of love, and justice as humanization. But my question is whether our theological understanding of justice is to be solely dependent on the praxis of Jesus. I am not suggesting that the history of Jesus is inadequate for us to understand what justice is, but rather an over-emphasis on the "praxis" of Jesus may give us a distorted meaning of justice because justice is primarily seen as the way to the Father rather than as in the first place about how God's justice comes upon us. In other words, when we talk about justice, it is not enough to know what justice is about and how we should practise justice, but it is also important for us to experience what justice is. This experience is vital in our understanding of justice because we learn to do justice by being justified just like we learn to forgive by being forgiven. Therefore, I suggest that justice should be understood in the context of the covenant between God and humankind. In this context, Jesus' praxis is God's fullest expression of his covenant with humankind, on the one hand, and, it is an example of humankind's response to their covenant with God, on the other. I do not mean that Sobrino ignores this aspect, but he assumes rather than analyzes it. In the following, I try to explore how the context of covenant illuminates our understanding of justice.

In the Old Testament, the word, justice [*mispat*] is associated with the word, righteousness [*tsedeq*]. For instance,

But let justice roll down like waters,

And righteousness like a perennial stream. [Amos 5:24]

Give the king thy justice, O God,
And thy righteousness to the King's son.
That he may judge thy people with right,
And thine afflicted with justice!
May the mountains bring the people peace,
And the hills righteousness
May he judge the afflicted of the people,
And give deliverance to the poor,
And crush the oppressor. [Ps.72:1-4]

Therefore, our understanding of justice cannot be isolated from God's righteousness. God's righteousness is not primarily used in Scripture to speak of God's punishment for sin⁵, but rather refers to God's positive actions in creating and preserving community, particularly on behalf of marginal members. Peter Stuhlmacher says:

God's righteousness that is more and intends more than merely the carrying out of punishment; it wants to offer and create new life.⁶

Besides, the word, justice, is not primarily concerned about the judicial institution. But it principally means the deliverance of God's people and the oppressed from oppression. *Mispat* is the defence of the weak, the liberation of the oppressed, doing justice to the poor.⁷ In contemporary use, this is called liberation.

Literally, righteousness and justice, in the Scripture, mean the fulfillment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with humans or with God. Each person is set within a multitude of relationships: king with people, judge with complainants, priests with worshippers, individual with family, community with resident alien and poor, all with God. When God, or a person, fulfils the conditions

⁵ Stephen Charles Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.63.

⁶ Peter Stuhlmacher, Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), p.80.

⁷ Jose Porfirio Miranda, Marx and the Bible (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974), pp.111f.

imposed upon him/her by a relationship, she/he is righteous. For instance, on the social level, in Gen.38:26, Judah acknowledged that Tamar was more righteous than him because he did not fulfil the demands of a social relationship [this righteousness did not have a religious base]. On the religious level, the righteousness of God was manifested in his constant faithfulness to his covenant with Israel. This was exemplified by his steadfast love even though Israel was more often than not unfaithful to him. This particular relationship between God and humankind is called a covenant. Within this covenant relationship the law is given as a guide by God to his covenant people. Its purpose is to make them holy as God is holy. But the law is meaningless outside the relationship, outside the covenant. Whoever receives God's election in faith places their life under God's lordship, also follows the law, because the law is God's guidance within the covenant relationship. The context of the law then, is holiness and lordship. Obedience to the law does not make a person righteous. The relationship to God, the relationship of faith, is primary. And though humankind's righteousness fails, God's endures. He intervenes on behalf of his own, saving them from bondage, forgiving their sin, declaring them to be right before him and all the world. On the human side, we accept the covenant relationship with God by repentance, faith and obedience. Then, righteousness is a matter of our relationship to God, not an ethical state. When we are in a positive relationship to God, through God's act in Christ, we are truly righteous because Christ has, by God's act, reintroduced us into a positive relationship to God. The covenant relationship between God and humankind, which God by his act in Christ restores and upholds, places a demand, as do all relationships, on humankind. This demand is faith. But the restored relationship also includes the creation of a new community among humankind. Therefore, those who share in the new divine-human relationship also share in the new community, and thus the covenant relationship places a demand on us over against our fellow humans. Thus, the righteous are those who have met the

demands towards others which are laid on us by our participation in the covenant relationship. For instance, the demands are: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty and perform other acts of mercy. Because of the fact that the nature of the relationship between humankind is determined by the nature of the relationship between God and humankind, fulfilment of the former is also fulfilment of the demands of the latter.

Within the context of covenant, our understanding of Jesus' praxis in relation to justice would be re-formulated in the following ways. First, for the church, doing justice is not simply an ethical decision, but rather is an existential question of faith. In other words, doing justice is not simply to meet the needs of the poor, but rather is related to our relationship with God. This emphasis does not have any intention to "spiritualize" justice or to use justice as a means for achieving our own righteousness. But rather it is God's graciousness which brings us to realize our responsibility towards our neighbours and to confess our unfaithfulness towards the covenant. Secondly, for the oppressed, God's covenant is a promise that they will be liberated. God intends to restore their rights because God's righteous judgments are saving judgments. Those who are righteous are those who are victims of oppressors [Ps.14:5], of enemies [Ps.69:28], of wicked rulers [Ps.94:21], of violent men [Ps.140:13]. And their hope is the lord because it is he who restores their right. His judgments are always favourable [Ps.146:7-9] for the oppressed and the hungry, the prisoner and the blind, the widow and the fatherless, the alien and the poor [Amos 2:6]. Because his righteousness is his restoration of the right to those from whom it has been taken, it at the same time includes punishment of the evil-doer; the punishment is an integral part of the restoration. Only because God saves does he condemn. "He is a righteous God and a Saviour." [Isa.45:21] Thirdly, for society, the notion of covenant provides us with a fundamental but important concept of

justice. That is to say, justice is concerned with a proper relationship. Both parties should respect and obey the conditions which are the essence of sustaining a proper relationship, otherwise the covenant is broken and justice is needed. Thus, justice is not simply for the sake of making judgment, but rather for the sake of making reconciliation possible.

Basically, my interpretation of justice which lies on God's covenant with us and Sobrino's account of justice which lies on Jesus' praxis have no great difference. However, this does not mean that we can use either of these as a point of departure of understanding justice. I rather consider that God's covenant with us should be the point of departure because within the context of the covenant we experience what justice is, and this experience in return shapes our understanding of justice. Besides, an emphasis on God's covenant with us does not turn Jesus' praxis into a blueprint for our pursuit of justice in our contemporary world, but rather understands it as a sign of God's covenant love. Duncan B. Forrester writes that

this story [God's dealing with his people which I call the covenant] shows how God's people have come to know what justice is through their often disturbing and confusing dealings with the God of justice..... Only through the experience and memory do we know what love and justice are, and we are enabled to love and to do justice by our past and present experience of God.⁸

From Sobrino's account of justice, we realize that justice itself is a very rich concept. It provides a vantage point from which to see that the Kingdom cannot be primarily understood individually and spiritually, but has a public and socio-political dimension. However, a recovery of the public dimension of the Kingdom does not necessarily mean that we "politicize" our Christian faith. We have to make a clear

⁸ D.B. Forrester, "Political Justice and Christian Theology." In: Studies in Christian Ethics, 1990, p.13.

distinction between our involvement in politics and the interpretation of religious values as political values. Our involvement in politics does not imply that the church is a political institution, but rather the Kingdom challenges us to see that the needs of humankind cannot be met individually. Besides, sometimes we may be accused that we are saying the same thing as the secular world does. But in depth, we are different. For instance, Sobrino's account of justice is characterized by a profound spirituality.

As previously said, the validity of a model is largely dependent on its relevance to its social context. However, this emphasis does not mean that the social context itself determines the content of theology, but rather admits that a model is basically constructed so that it has to refer to its social context. Therefore, when we talk about the relevance of a model to its social context, we are talking about our subjective and partial experience. Thus, when I agree with Sobrino's view that justice is a theological model of the Kingdom in El Salvador, I am not saying that justice is the only complete model, because at the same time I realize that other churches may find this model irrelevant.⁹ Does it suggest that we do not have to talk about the criterion of relevance because we cannot find an objective base? Of course not. Through our partiality and dialogue, I believe that we can better understand the truth. In a context marked by injustice and violence, I consider that justice should be given preference as a theological model because first, justice relates to "hope against hope". It encourages us not to give in to a situation but affirms our responsibility to our neighbours. This suggests that God's justification of sinners and

⁹ We may note that there is a growing number of the evangelical churches in El Salvador, especially, the pentecostal churches. This growth is related to the result of the U.S. evangelical movement in El Salvador. More importantly, these churches are characterized by fundamentalism. We can imagine that for them, justice is never a theological model, but rather a narrow-minded understanding of "conversion" is. See Tom Barry, *El Salvador*, pp.114-115.

his grace must not be separated from human systems of justice. Secondly, justice has a sense of both judgment and salvation. On the one hand, this challenges the oppressed authority and, on the other, it reflects the nature of the Gospel; that is, it is good news to the poor. Thirdly, within the context of covenant, justice warns the church not to retreat from the front line despite being persecuted. If it does, the church breaks God's covenant with herself. Finally, justice summarizes the deepest feeling of the people. In addition, it has its secular audience so that it can easily arouse the consciousness of the world.

However, Sobrino reminds us that justice is not only a concept, but also has to be related to our discipleship. This is why he does not begin from a philosophical enquiry of what justice is, but rather praxis is his starting point.

Summing up what we have discussed so far, we have reasons to consider that justice can be used as a model of the Kingdom. This is because it is deeply rooted in the biblical truth- that is, the righteousness of God. For God's righteousness is his acting out of the obligation which he took upon himself in creating the world and in choosing Israel to be his people. And it consists primarily in drawing human persons into the appropriate relationship with himself and in sustaining them in that relationship. Thus, the biblical understanding of righteousness/justice involves two aspect: righteousness, as both horizontal and vertical, as involving responsibility to one's neighbour as part and parcel of one's responsibility towards God. However, we have to be aware of the fact that justice is not "the" definitive model. When the social situation changes, perhaps, justice has to be replaced by other models, such as, reconciliation or reconstruction. But we have to bear in mind that this replacement has nothing to do with the truth of justice. Rather, in different social contexts, different models are needed in order that we can glimpse the Kingdom more clearly

and be faithful to it.

D. ASSESSMENT

After a lengthy explication and discussion of the use of narrative and justice as models of the Kingdom, we realize that although both Hauerwas and Sobrino have no intention of establishing a full account of the uses of narrative and justice as theological models respectively, it is undeniable that their concern is to deliberately reveal the deepest meaning of the Kingdom. That is to say, when we attempt to understand events or objects in our experience, we inevitably do so by seeking some similarity with things already known, by endeavouring to see the new in terms of the old, one thing as another. This is the model. For Hauerwas, the concept of narrative rooted in human experience appropriately displays the relationship between the Kingdom and its agent in terms of vision, virtue and character; while for Sobrino, the concept of justice rooted in human desire signifies the essence of the Kingdom which Jesus' life reveals to us [Lk.4:18-19]. Besides, it is obvious that Hauerwas' notion of narrative is a non-biblical model which deals with a matter of reference, while Sobrino's notion of justice is a biblical model which deals with a matter of preference.

Apparently, Hauerwas' notion of narrative and Sobrino's notion of justice are two completely different notions. Although their use of language and their concern are on a tangent, I still discern common features in their reaction towards the enlightenment, the potentiality of being a "macro" model, and the relationship between narrative and the metaphorical perspective of the Kingdom.

Firstly, interestingly enough, both Hauerwas' notion of narrative and Sobrino's notion of justice are essentially responses to the legacies of the enlightenment. For Hauerwas, the deficiency of the enlightenment is its over-

emphasis on the primacy of universality and objectivity.¹ For example, it reduces ethics to a standard account of morality: ethics is no longer concerned about the moral self, but about what is right. In relation to personhood, it isolates people from their histories and, as a result, people become strangers to one another. Theologically, it accommodates the Gospel to its own criterion; that is, the primacy of objectivity. Theologians attempt to explain the Christian faith in accordance with the world's standard, such as the historical quest of Jesus, and consequently, the Christian faith loses its identity and distinctive meaning. Hauerwas' notion of narrative is a response to this fallacy. To emphasize the narrative-dependent ethic is not to reject the importance of objectivity, but rather objectivity cannot be considered as the ultimate criterion because it distorts the narrative nature of human experience and reality.

For Sobrino, the enlightenment has two phases. According to Sobrino, the first phase is represented by Kant which aimed at the liberation from all authority, while the second phase is represented by Marx which looked to liberation from the wretched conditions of the real world.² These two phases demands two ways of doing theology. Broadly speaking, modern European theology has been oriented to the first phase of enlightenment. Its main characteristic is its emphasis on the philosophical and metaphysical enquiry of the Christian faith. The justification of the faith occurs through the harmony of the faith with some universal truth, with historical truth or with itself. Without minimizing its value, Sobrino criticizes this emphasis for resulting in "dehistorizing" and "philosophize" the Christian faith. On the contrary, Sobrino emphasizes that Latin American theology takes up the challenge

¹ See my discussion on Hauerwas' concept of character, vision and virtue.

² J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.10-16.

represented by the second phase of the enlightenment. He says that

in this theology, the liberating function of theological understanding does not consist in explaining or giving meaning to an existing reality or to the faith as threatened by a particular situation, but in transforming a reality so that it may take on meaning and the lost or threatened of the faith thereby also be recovered.³

Thus, Sobrino's emphasis on the notion of justice is a response to the over-emphasis on the first phase of enlightenment.

Both Hauerwas and Sobrino find that the Christian faith is one way or another distorted by the enlightenment. That is to say, the distinctiveness of the Christian faith has been compromised, and the socio-political dimension of the Christian faith has been ignored. Hauerwas' notion of narrative and Sobrino's notion of justice intend to correct these distortions and recover the real meaning of faith. Thus, it is not a matter of whether Hauerwas can explain the truth more comprehensibly than Sobrino or vice versa, but rather of what kind of issue we want to address. Hauerwas' notion of narrative and Sobrino's notion of justice are two different notions to meet two different issues. Therefore, their proposals are nothing other than complementary of the truth.

Secondly, I have previously pointed out that Hauerwas' notion of narrative can be exercised as a macro model because it can be used as a heuristic category for introducing Christian theology and truth claims. An example of this attempt is Gabriel Fackre's work, The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine.⁴ However, the difficulty of Fackre's work lies in that it is

³ Ibid., p.15.

⁴ G.Fackre, The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), and The Christian Story: A Pastoral Systematics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

unclear whether story refers to a set of narratives in Scripture, a set of doctrines, the experience of Christian individuals or communities, or a combination of some or all of these. Therefore, the practical significance of the notion of narrative remains unresolved.

Regarding the notion of justice, it appears that it primarily refers to one particular issue, that is, discipleship. But in fact, Sobrino's account shows that the notion of justice may lead to the reconstruction of prior beliefs and reinterpretation of previous data in a new framework of thought because the audience is different. G.Gutierrez says that

it seems that a good deal of contemporary theology has begun from the challenge posed by the unbeliever.... But in a continent like Latin America the challenge does not come principally from the non-believer, but from the non-person.... So the question is not so much how to speak of God in a world come of age, as how to proclaim the Father in an inhuman world, the implications of what it means to tell the non-person that he or she is a child of God.⁵

For Sobrino, the difference in context determines the difference in the basis of liberation theology from that of European or North Atlantic theology. Examples of this difference are to be found in liberation theology's emphasis on Jesus as liberator, the church as the church of the poor, the unity of history and salvation.

Consideration the potential function of both the notions of narrative and justice as macro-models reminds us that they are not confined to a particular issue; rather they involve the whole framework of Christian theology.

Finally, in order to discuss the relationship of these two models, I suggest a shift of our attention to consider the models as representations of two perspectives.

⁵ See R.Gibellini, The Liberation Theology Debate (London: SCM, 1987), pp.13-14.

In other words, the concept of narrative, according to Hauerwas, suggests a narrative perspective of the Kingdom, while the concept of justice, according to Sobrino, is a metaphorical perspective of the Kingdom. This shift of emphasis, I believe, does not distort the original meaning of both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's usage, but rather it can better reveal what the Kingdom is.

The narrative perspective of the Kingdom is characterized by its emphasis on the confessional and particular character. It does not see religious understanding as a product of detached observation, but rather a product of a process of risk, decision, self-definition and discovery. This perspective undoubtedly recovers the essence of the Christian faith- that is, to know who Jesus is, is to follow him. However, although the narrative perspective highlights the importance of character formation, the retrieval of this function may be overemphasized. That is to say, it points out the proper relationship between the Kingdom and the agents, but it discusses the process of conformity abstractly. What we need is not only a clear understanding of the relationship, but also how this can be fulfilled in terms of principles and values in a particular situation. It may then be necessary to take the risk of legalism in order to offer an adequate interpretation of responsibility, for we, and others, have to answer for our actions in relation to standards and consequences. An emphasis on the necessity of principles and values is established on both philosophical and theological grounds: "Not only is there a reason-giving capacity; there is also a reason-giving necessity imposed by our responsibility to God, to self, and to others, including the Christian community."⁶ Therefore, I can say that the narrative perspective is necessary, but not sufficient for us to comprehend what the Kingdom is.

⁶ J.Childress, "Scripture and Christian Ethics." p.377.

The metaphorical perspective of the Kingdom is characterized by using a metaphor which is derived from human experience in order to reflect the origin of the object, for instance, God is my shepherd, and God is our Father.⁷ It is undeniable that the use of metaphor, such as shepherd and father, helps us to grasp the image of the original object. But at the same time, when we want to describe something which is dynamic the metaphorical perspective can provide only a fixed image of that reality which sometimes may distort the image of the original object because it focuses upon the immediate moment, but ignores the inevitable historical cultural context. In other words, the metaphorical perspective inevitably highlights some things but in that same moment others will be obscured. For instance, to speak of God as Father has provided a powerful and illuminating picture for our understanding of the divine. However, it has also obscured those dimensions of deity which would be highlighted in naming God our mother. Its limitation is the absence of a sense of history and direction. Nevertheless, this limitation cannot be one-sidedly considered as its weakness, provided that we take its "is and is not"-ness characteristic seriously and appropriately. In other words, the "is-not"-ness of metaphor most adequately guards against absolutizing our theological conceptualizations.

We observe that it is insufficient to understand the Kingdom from either the narrative or metaphorical perspective, because these two perspectives are mutually related. It is a mistake to consider them in an "either-or" position. Therefore, their difference becomes complementary rather than mutually exclusive; what we need is

⁷ I do realize that the notion of justice is another kind of metaphor. However, we cannot know what the metaphor of justice is unless we understand God as liberator, saviour and judge. Therefore, the difference between the metaphor of justice and the metaphors of God as Shepherd and Father is not two different things, but rather the former uses more than one of the latter metaphors to formulate its meaning.

to restore a balance. That is to say, we have a responsibility within the Christian community to direct attention to principles and rules that constitute obligations that may otherwise be overlooked and neglected [a metaphorical perspective]. In addition, we should direct attention to biblical stories, images and narratives that may enable us to recognize obligations [a narrative perspective]. Both foci are necessary for an adequate explication of the Kingdom of God. Put analogically, if the concept of narrative is like a melody, the concept of metaphor then is like a chord. Without either of them, the music cannot be played. An analysis of music cannot be only related to individual chords and notes, but also the whole melody. At the same time, an emphasis on the integrity of the melody should never ignore the importance of each individual chord and note.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the Kingdom of God is understood. This understanding is not primarily about knowledge, but about discipleship. In other words, this understanding is both the result and the beginning of the practice of discipleship. In the next chapter, I will discuss this relationship in terms of the practice of the Kingdom in Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theology.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRACTICE OF THE KINGDOM

A. THEOLOGY AND PRAXIS

J.B.Metz comments that "the so-called historical crisis of identity of Christianity is not a crisis of the contents of faith, but rather a crisis..... of the practical meaning of those contents, the imitation of Christ."¹ Metz's remark is primarily concerned about the role of the practice of discipleship, which embraces both a personal and a social dimension. His call to the imitation of Christ is a call to live out our faith both in our personal moral life and within our socio-political context. On the personal level, it is concerned with the inner animating principle of the Christian life conceived in terms of commitment, following, behaviour, doing and action, while on the socio-political level, it is concerned with the evaluation of societal organization and public policy in the shaping of society. We call the former "spirituality", while the latter "social ethics". These two levels do not compete with one another, but are rather in a dialectical relationship.² Ignoring either distorts the meaning of discipleship. In contemporary term, this living out of our faith is called praxis.³

¹ J.B.Metz, Faith in History and Society, p.165.

² See my discussion on spirituality in chapter one.

³ I use praxis here because the word, "practice", is often understood in the context of the application of theory.

From the previous two chapters, we realize that both Hauerwas and Sobrino basically agree with Metz's viewpoint. For Hauerwas, the Christian faith should involve the agent having a particular character, and a particular way of seeing. For instance, when Hauerwas talks about the truth, he has to refer to the demand of truthfulness because he considers that we can only know the truth by means of being shaped by it. This is not suggesting that the truth itself has no self-evident constituent, but rather "it is impossible to distinguish between "external" and "internal" evidence as the character of Christian belief [which] requires the transformation of the self in order rightly to see the actuality of our world without illusion or self-deception."⁴ On the other hand, for Sobrino, the Christian faith demands our doing justice and practising love. As he sees it, if European theology attempts to meet the first challenge of the enlightenment represented by Kant, then Latin American liberation theology is to meet the second challenge of the enlightenment illustrated by Marx. If the former is characterized by demonstrating the truth of revelation at the bar of reason, then the latter is characterized by its commitment to transforming a reality. Sobrino summarizes the distinctiveness of Latin American theology as follows:

Latin American theology is interested in liberating the real world from its wretched state, since it is this objective situation that has obscured the meaning of the faith. Its task is not primarily to restore meaning to the faith in the presence of the wretched conditions of the real world. It is to transform this real world and at the same time recover the meaning of the faith. The task, therefore, is not to understand the faith differently, but to allow a new faith to spring from a new practice.⁵

⁴ S.Hauerwas, "Why the Truth Demands Truthfulness." p.142. Also see my discussion in pp.

⁵ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.20-21. Details of his comparison between European theology and Latin American theology can be found in this book, pp.7-38. However, Alistair Kee makes a serious criticism of Sobrino's analysis. For instance, Kee said that "If there are some people who merely interpret the world and some who work toward changing it, who could this be but European and Latin American respectively?" "Is liberation theology a theology which liberates, or is it theological reflection on a liberating movement?" Details can be found in A.Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology, pp.189-195. Kee's criticism has truth in it, but we have to realize that, in Sobrino's comment on European theology, he refers particularly to those theologies

Thus, it is obvious that for both Hauerwas and Sobrino, the Christian faith cannot adequately be undertaken and displayed by metaphysical approach and statement respectively, because it relates primarily to a matter of truth in practice- that is, discipleship. However, an emphasis on truth in practice does not mean that the metaphysical approach to truth becomes unimportant, but rather it reformulates the proper relationship between theory and practices, that is, from the primacy of theory to the primacy of praxis. Although both Hauerwas and Sobrino take the "practical" approach as their point of departure for theological reflection, there is a great difference in their understanding of Christian praxis. For Hauerwas, in order to serve the world faithfully, the church first has to be an alternative society, while for Sobrino, in order to be the true church, the church first has to commit itself to the preferential option to the poor. This difference does not necessarily depreciate the validity of the "practical" approach to the Christian faith because the "practical" approach is not primarily concerned with the homogeneity of practice. Rather it is concerned with the belief lying behind the practice- that is, the belief that the Kingdom of God intersects the course of human history and experience. It is realized par excellence neither in the dream world of apocalyptic nor in temple cult, but in personal and community life that is responsive to the call of God. Such intersection promotes a distinctive way of life that has a transcendent horizon and a faith-dynamic.

Here, I suggest using the term "praxis" in order to describe both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's emphasis on the "practical" approach to the Christian faith. In order to clarify the meaning of praxis, I will refer to its secular use, but I will limit myself to a discussion of Aristotle's and Marx's usage because the term was first

which emphasize the primacy of orthodoxy.

systematized by Aristotle and later revolutionized by Marx⁶, and because Hauerwas and Sobrino are obviously influenced by them respectively. According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of knowledge, which are designated by the terms *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*.⁷ In short, *theoria* is directed to the life of contemplation, and as such was regarded by Aristotle as an end in itself. *Praxis*, on the other hand, is concerned with the personal participation of the individual in the life of the *polis*. More specifically, *praxis* is directed to the right ordering of human behaviour in the socio-political world. *Poiesis* is about production or creation: it is the exercise of technical skills by different people. Although Aristotle wanted to keep politics and philosophy, the practical life and the contemplative life, together, he still considered that *theoria* was primary an end in itself. However, it is important to note that for Aristotle, *theoria* was never understood to be the same as the contemporary understanding of theory: a pure intellectual activity. Nor is it equivalent to the medieval mysticism which encouraged some form of withdrawal from the hurly-burly of daily life. Rather it is a form of "practical thinking"⁸, a concern of the agent's moral life. That is to say, a person shows what he/she thinks is a good life by the kind of life he/she actually leads rather than by giving assent to abstract arguments and conclusion. For in leading that life, he/she is constantly rendering a practical judgment upon what may determine such a concept of good living. It is this lived concept, *theoria*, which lies at the centre of a person's practical thinking.⁹

⁶ See Nicholas Lobkowitz, Theory and Practice (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1967).

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.3-15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.75.

⁹ John M.Cooper, Reason and Human Good in Aristotle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp.61-62.

In the light of Hegel's discussion of the concept of *Absolute Spirit*, Marx developed his own peculiar and complex philosophy of praxis. In brief, Marx's theory of praxis is not merely thought drawn from and tested against practice, but also thought that helps practice towards self-cognition and thus contributes to its development.¹⁰ And this is carried out by its concern with the changing of the given structures of the social and political world in which we live out our lives. In the time of Marx, this creative praxis was directed towards changing the social conditions of the working masses with the basic aim of emancipation. Thus, for Marx, praxis must be informed by some critical understanding of the social situation. It must never be merely a blind uncritical praxis.¹¹ Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it", sums up his programme. That is to say, the role of praxis, in unity with a critical understanding of social reality, is to change the world. In this light, knowledge is primarily a practical issue; it is something which originates in praxis. Theory, therefore, is only an approximation of what is actually happening in the world. It is secondary to praxis. Besides, truth cannot be understood simply as some kind of correspondence between mind and reality. Instead truth is a practical issue, available to us in praxis.¹²

From the last two chapters, we can conclude that Sobrino's practical approach to the Christian faith more or less adopts Marx's understanding of praxis, that is, the necessity of and the commitment to social transformation, while Hauerwas' practical

¹⁰ Ernst Fischer, *Marx in His Own Words* (London: Penguin, 1978), pp.152-158.

¹¹ See Nicholas Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice*, pp.419f.

¹² It is clear that my exposition of Marx's usage of praxis is limited within its socio-political significance. However, according to Marx, praxis is also related to his thesis that humans constitute themselves through what they do.

approach to the Christian faith is more or less in line with Aristotle's emphasis on the "practica theoria" rather than praxis, that is, the importance of being virtuous. However, this does not mean that Sobrino uses the notion of praxis in the way in which it would be used among Marxists. It is an idea available to him, both challenging and relevant because of the influence of Marx's thought. Nor does it mean that Hauerwas' use of the notion of theoria is identical with the Aristotelians, but rather it is an insight available to him, both appropriate and stimulating. For Sobrino, only those activities which contribute to the humanization of humanity are praxis in the strong sense of the term. But the causes of human alienation go far beyond the existing system of property-relations, and must include reference to what traditional theology calls "original sin". Marx was right in drawing attention to the influence of social reality upon human consciousness but wrong in insisting that consciousness is restricted by social reality. If that is so, the Christian use of the notion of praxis within the Christian community should be "christianized". That is to say, it should not only be understood exclusively in terms of social praxis, but it should also distinctively embrace the Christian dimension of personal conversion and transformation. This is the contribution of Hauerwas' practical approach to the Christian faith. An emphasis on personal conversion and transformation does not necessarily promote any tendency to privatize the Christian faith because it forms part of the basic structure of theology. In other words, the origin and continued existence of the Christian tradition was and is the outcome of the praxis [both personal and social] of the faith of the community. The praxis of faith is the activity of the human community responding to the gracious action of God mediated by the church and the sacraments. The Christian tradition is always a living tradition supported by the activity of faith. And this activity of faith embraces both social and personal transformation.

If praxis involves both personal and social transformation, what is the relationship between theory and practice in relation to Christian religion? Put directly, is praxis the criterion of truth? Does it suggest a kind of pragmatism, where the validity of an idea is judged by its concrete and external results? Here, I find Clodovis Boff's work Theology and Praxis¹³ illuminating.

At the beginning, Boff clearly points out that theory and praxis basically are two different orders which cannot be compared. Each possesses criteria of truth corresponding to itself. Put theologically, the former relates to *theological criteriology* which is of an *epistemological* order, and is concerned with the rules of the *theoretical* practice of the *theologian*, while the latter relates to *pistic criteriology* [criteriology of faith] which is of an *existential* order, and springs from principles that orientate the *concrete* practice of the *believer*.¹⁴

Firstly, regarding the theological criteriology, Boff considers that "theology is exempted from any wholly external criterion of truth, any jurisdictional *tribunal* having the right to pronounce from without on the validity of its propositions. Theology is a *self-policied* practice."¹⁵ Therefore, the theological criteriology does not intend to establish the truth of revelation, because revelation is entrusted to the believer, who responds to it by faith qua existential decision. Rather theology comes only afterwards, to explain, explicate, and render intelligible, in the measure of its capacities, the order that obtains in the universe of significance opened up by

¹³ C.Boff, Theology and Praxis (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987). Although Boff's explication of the relationship between praxis and theology is for the sake of his support of social praxis, I find it still relevant to my concern here.

¹⁴ All these highlights are Boff's own. See *Ibid.*, p.199.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.199.

revelation. This is the "logical" element of theology, in the sense that it clarifies what is already believed, and is responsible for the internal consistency of theological constructs. Apart from this, theological criteriology also embraces another element, namely, *verificational*, which corresponds to the totality of its material conditions. That is to say, a theological proposition is to be judged and validated by an examination of its conformity with the canon of faith. In relation to scientific knowledge, these two elements of the theological criteriology, logical and verificational, are the logic and experimentation of the constitutive principles of scientific knowledge.

However, according to Boff, the logical element of theological criteriology does not necessarily take the historical and current experience of Christians into account. He contends that

praxis is not what explains, but on the contrary, is what is to be explained in terms of theology. Praxis prepares the agenda, the repertory of questions, that theology is to address. Practices in general are not proofs of theological truth. Otherwise it would be legitimate to ask which practices are proofs of which truth. The case is rather that certain practices are possible signs of faith, in the subjective and objective sense. They are not, then, the discourse of faith, they are its course. They are invitations to theological deciphering, but they are not the deciphering itself. They are on the side of the (objectively theological) real, not on that of its (subjectively theological) knowledge.¹⁶

This explains why there could exist a faith practice accompanied by a very "elementary" theology, and there could be great theological progress without a corresponding increase of love. But this cannot be used as an excuse for seeking to free theological reflection from all these subjective Christian experiences because theological reflection also relates to the need of verification which embraces Christian experience. With this, we turn to Boff's pistis criteriology.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.200-201.

Boff is not satisfied with pragmatism which assigns primacy to practical effectiveness, because we must always assign a moral qualification to an action, even a successful action. Thus, in relation to social praxis, Boff considers that the duty of political theologians is to determine what ethical quality a political practice ought to assume, as well as to evaluate the concrete political action put forward as responding to this ethical quality. This ethical quality can only be derived from faith and all actions stand in need of correct and appropriate examination. Efficacy would not be a pistic criterion. However, faith and practice have a continuous reciprocal relationship, according to which faith measures, criticizes, stimulates, and orientates social transformation; which in turn expresses, realizes and verifies the truth of faith and its values. Thus we do not have "faith in one pocket and transformation in the other."¹⁷ What we do have is a vital connection established between faith and practice, which proves, or confirms the one by the other. Thus, it is obvious that the pistic criteriology is the extension of the verificational element of the theological criteriology.

On this level, praxis is a criterion that judges someone's faith. This criterion is in a way "interior" to faith itself, in the sense that praxis is faith *qua operata- qua lived, realized-* and faith is praxis *qua good works, qua liberating practices*.¹⁸ Thus, theologians who fail to present, beside theoretical titles of credit, the pistic and agapic ones as well, in terms of faith engagement and evangelical witness, place obstacles in the way of theological truth itself, no matter how scientific they may be. Nevertheless, there is no practice possessing absolute self-evidence. All practice must be evaluated.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.203.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.203.

Boff reminds us that there is no immediate and direct term correspondence between the pistic criterion and theological criterion. The latter is not the mirror-image of the former, or its shadow, or its reflex because, in Boff's words, the order of theory is not the same as that of praxis. However, they are not independent from one another because they meet in the verificational process. Therefore, theology is not only to provide public credibility and ecclesial reception of its theses through its logical illustration, but will be judged by its commitments, and what these produce in terms of historical and political action. A good example of this is the South African Apartheid theology displayed by the Dutch Reformed Church. On the one hand, this apartheid theology does not meet the theological criteriology because it does not comprehensively display revealed truth. On the other hand, this theology does not meet the pistic criteriology because the practice proceeding from it does not express and verify the truth of faith and its value.

The strength of Boff's explication lies in its clarification of a "metaphysical" and a practical approach and display of the Christian faith. That is to say, they are two different orders which cannot be compared and confused. An emphasis on the "practical" approach to, and display of, the Christian faith does not have any tendency to depreciate the importance of the "metaphysical" approach to, and display of, the Christian faith. Nor does it consider itself opposed to theory. Rather it states that faith is to be conceived as being substantially a basic life option; then it will have to be said that faith realizes its transcendence only in the order in which it is realized itself- that is, in the existential order. Confession of a creed is more than a simple theoretical expression of truths. It engages the living subject of its enunciation, in and by the very act of enunciation. Thus, apart from praxis, faith is only words. The transcendence of faith is its immanence in history and in the existence of human beings, in the form of realizations ever to be renewed, radicalized, and deepened.

However, although both Hauerwas and Sobrino take the practical approach to the Christian faith, their emphases are different. For instance, they have different views about the relationship between church and state. In order to understand the concrete meaning of their practical approach to the Christian faith and their differences, I will examine Hauerwas' pacifism and Sobrino's practice of evangelization because these two issues can better illustrate the relationship between theory and praxis in their thoughts and also clarify some misreadings about their practice.

B. TWO CASES

1. PACIFISM

Hauerwas' candid confession of his pacifism sometimes makes his stand difficult to defend and unconvincing. However, his conversion to pacifism is rather a gradual process. It is clear that from his early writings, he was not totally convinced of Christian pacifism.¹ At that time, he claimed to be a committed Niebuhrian (Christian realism), but gradually, he was convinced by John Howard Yoder's work that any adequate account of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus requires one to take up the way of non-violence. What makes Hauerwas have such a change? It could have something to do with the horror of the Vietnam war, but Hauerwas does not consider this as the cause of his conversion. Rather it is his existential realization that

Christian pacifism was based upon the belief, not that war could be eliminated, but that as Christians in a world at war we could not be anything other than pacifists. It was not that our commitment to the way of non-violence promised to rid the world of war, but rather that God has given the world an alternative to war through the kind of politics present in the church, where reconciliation triumphs over envy and hate.²

Thus, Hauerwas' pacifism not only denounces the use of violence, but also manifests what real peace is. In this sense, in order to understand Hauerwas' pacifism fairly, we have to understand it in the context of his view of church and society. As this

¹ Hauerwas' early writings refer to "Review Essay of Violence by Jacques Ellul" (In: The American Journal of Jurisprudence, 1973, pp.206-215), "Messianic Pacifism" (In: Worldview, 1973, pp.29-33), and "The Non-Resistance Church: The Theological Ethics of J.H.Yoder (In: Vision and Virtue, 1973, pp.197-221). For instance, in his article on Messianic Pacifism, Hauerwas questioned the validity of pacifism by saying that "even though Yoder clearly does not recommend societal withdrawal, it is not clear how and to what extent the Christian should feel responsible for participating in the concerns of the wider society." (p.33)

² S.Hauerwas, "Pacifism: A Form of Politics." In: Peace Betrayed, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Centre, 1990), p.135.

has been previously discussed³, this section will concentrate solely on Hauerwas' pacifism. Also, it should be made clear that pacifism, in this study, is understood in contrast to war. My concern in this section is not only to explicate Hauerwas' pacifism, but also to see it as an illustration of his "practical" approach to theology. Therefore, in the following, I will discuss Hauerwas' pacifism in three related ways. Firstly, how is his pacifism rooted in christology? Does christology suggest pacifism? Attention will be given to the interaction of views among Paul Ramsey, Sobrino and Hauerwas. Secondly, what are the moral inadequacies of the just war theory, according to Hauerwas? If just war is not the option for Christians, how can pacifists serve their neighbours? Finally, what does Hauerwas' pacifism suggest about the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Unlike John Howard Yoder and Martin Hengel⁴, Hauerwas does not systematically elaborate and contend how christology advocates a pacifist stand even though he considers that this is of fundamental importance. He basically agrees with Yoder's view and explication, and yet he considers that

it is a mistake to assume that pacifism is a position to be found in the New Testament. [Hauerwas] suspects the first Christians had no idea they were "pacifist". They just thought they were following Jesus.⁵

Nevertheless, he does sketch out how christology and pacifism are related. Like Yoder, Hauerwas considers that Christian pacifism is rooted not only in what Jesus taught his disciples about non-violence [Mt.5:38-48], but also in the person and work

³ See my discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

⁴ J.H.Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Philadelphia: Eerdmans, 1972), and M.Hengel, Victory Over Violence (London: SPCK, 1975).

⁵ S.Hauerwas, "Epilogue: A Pacifist Response to the Bishops." In: Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism, by Paul Ramsey (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1988), p.164.

of Christ that finds its clearest expression in the cross, where God decisively dealt with evil, not by responding in kind, but through self-giving, non-violent love. The cross of Christ is not a strategy of God to deal with evil, but rather is the essence of God's agapic love. Jesus responded to violence, not by a return to violence, but by suffering and death. In this sense, the Sermon on the Mount is not simply Jesus' teachings about the moral ideal life, but rather a description of his life. If the cross of Christ reveals how God deals with evil, then the church is asked to follow Christ's way, of non-violence and even self-giving, to confront evil. If the cross of Christ is the demonstration that love seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, but is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience, then social effectiveness should not be the criterion for the church to decide whether it opts for pacifism or just war, but rather obedience and faithfulness to God.⁶ Thus, it is wrong to accuse pacifism of mistaking the ethics of Jesus as a series of absolutes or law, because if the life of Jesus reveals what the life of the Kingdom is, the church has to follow Jesus' way. Pacifism takes seriously obedient witness to Christ.

However, a christological foundation does not necessarily imply a pacifist stand because theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Ramsey who advocate the

⁶ See S.Hauerwas, "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." In: Faith and Philosophy, Vol.2 (1986), p.100. I also find Yoder's comment on this matter useful. Yoder responds to a student's question about effectiveness by saying, "The longer I look at the question of effectiveness, the less I trust that way to put the issue to be of any help. The longer you look, the more you see dimensions of the question that change the definitions of terms, so that it is less clear what you are asking about. Do we mean short range effectiveness or long range effectiveness? Do we mean guaranteeing a certain result, or just contributing to a statistical mix in which the chances of a derived outcome may increase by so much that you might come out with something? The interplay between an ethic which cares only about faithfulness regardless of cost, and another that is purely pragmatic is a caricature that nobody really will stay on one end of for long. The person who says, "You must give up some of your scruples in order to be effective" is still saying that because the goal for the sake of which to be effective is in principle a good goal. So the argument which takes the clothing of principle versus effectiveness really means this principle versus that principle. It really means that goal, for the sake of which I want you to give up other scruples, is so overwhelmingly important than those other things are less important. That is an ethic of principle. It differs only in that the choice of which things you are willing to give up for which other things will change." (See S.Hauerwas, "Epilogue: A Pacifist Response to the Bishops." p.180)

just war theory also take the life and teachings of Jesus with utmost seriousness. An example of this is the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his early career, he considered himself a pacifist. For instance, in 1934, he was a youth secretary of the World Council for International Friendship Work of Churches, and suggested the establishment of an International Christian Peace Council. But in the late 1930s, he participated in the conspiracy to kill Hitler. This plot was unsuccessful, and he was arrested. Finally, he was hanged. Was Bonhoeffer a martyr or a betrayer of faith?⁷ Bonhoeffer's case poses a dilemma to the validity of pacifism. Does obedience and faithfulness to God require us to use force in some circumstances instead of pursuing absolute non-violence? Or does it mean that christology is simply used as an excuse by either side to justify their views rather than as an ultimate to criticize and recommend their views? I have already suggested that these different interpretations should be understood dialectically and complementarily because, for instance, there are four accounts [gospels] of Jesus' ministry. Nevertheless, even though Hauerwas considers that non-violence should be the Christian way, he still maintains that

truth is not given but something that is discovered through our willingness to believe that the voice of the other might just be the voice of God. Therefore, the commitment to non-violence requires the pacifists to respect those who think they must use coercion to protect the goods we hold in common. This does not mean that pacifists are called always to obey those in power; it does mean that we can be open to various political alternatives in the hope that we will discover ways of co-operating that make violence less necessary.⁸

In order not to provide a cheap compromise between the just war theory and pacifism, let us turn to see the causes of their differences. Because of the fact that

⁷ Bonhoeffer's use of violence may be negatively considered as his life inconsistency. However, his friend, Eberhard Bethge, writes that "I think he would have said: Of course, I'm still in your terms pacifist, even in doing this [practising in the conspiracy] and I took the guilt, I took all the consequences of not being on the successful side and being killed for it." (G. Clarke Chapman, "What Would Bonhoeffer Say to Christian Peacemakers Today?" In: Theology, Politics and Peace, 1989, pp.161-175) See also D. Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp.240-241.

⁸ S. Hauerwas, "Pacifism: A Form of Politics." p.140

there are many different forms of just war theory and pacifism, I will take Paul Ramsey as a spokesman of the just war theory⁹, while I take Hauerwas as a spokesman of pacifism. Basically, it appears to me that their different conclusions are not a matter of the abuse of Christology in accordance with their interests, but lie rather in their different degrees of emphasis on Christ's work. That is to say, both Ramsey and Hauerwas agree that Jesus' life is characterized by non-violence, but for Ramsey Christ is primarily seen as saviour and judge; while for Hauerwas, Christ is principally seen as pattern and example.¹⁰ These fundamental different emphases lead them to different conclusions.

For Ramsey, it is a mistake to take Jesus' teachings literally without understanding them in the context of their apocalyptic eschatology¹¹, a belief and an expectation that God will intervene shortly to overcome evil with divine power. Ramsey considers that, in the context of the apocalyptic expectation of God's intervention to defeat the forces of evil, it is understandable why Jesus' teachings were only concerned with human relationship, and also why the followers of Jesus were asked not to resist evil, because the Kingdom would soon be realized. This does not mean that the early Christians had no social ethics, but rather, due to the promptness of the realization of the Kingdom, social ethics were replaced by personal

⁹ I take Ramsey as a spokesman because he had written extensively on the issue of war. He also had a serious dialogue with both Yoder and Hauerwas so that despite his advocacy of just war, he did not ignore the challenge and importance of pacifism. However, I do not intend to fully elaborate Ramsey's position in this study. A critique of his work can be found in David Attwood, Paul Ramsey's Political Ethics (Rowan & Littlefield, 1992).

¹⁰ To consider Christ as saviour and judge does not necessarily mean using violence, but rather it sees that justice and responsibility are prior to non-violence. Therefore, in some circumstances, the use of violence is justifiable. At the same time, to accept Christ as pattern and example does not necessarily imply a lack of concern about justice, but rather that justice should not be one-sidedly over-emphasized. It should be understood in the context of the cross and resurrection of Jesus which displays non-violence.

¹¹ P. Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, pp.27f.

ethics. Ramsey comments that

when considering history and affairs of men it would hardly first occur to the mind of any man to recommend these sayings [non-resisting, unclaiming love, overflowing good even for an enemy, unlimited forgiveness for every offense] as the truth, except with eschatological backing..... [Thus,] the radical content of Jesus' strenuous sayings depends, it seems, on his apocalyptic expectation.¹²

As a result, Ramsey suggests that Christians do not share Jesus' apocalyptic eschatology, not because we do not expect the Kingdom to come, but because our expectation is not of God's early intervention. Therefore, Ramsey suggests that we have to be careful to interpret Jesus' teachings intelligently in a fallen world without danger of serious loss of meaning. For instance, he contends that non-resistance should not have been turned into non-violent resistance, and generalized to fit perhaps any age or circumstance, because Jesus' relation to the Kingdom is not identical to the relation of his followers to the Kingdom. Accordingly, the issue for us today is how to transpose the ethics of Jesus to a non-apocalyptic setting. For Ramsey, this can be bridged by the practice of "neighbour-centered preferential love"¹³ which Jesus reveals to us. This love is not based on the notion of self-defence; on the contrary, it is based on the defending of the innocent. Ramsey said that

for Christian ethics generally self-defense is the worst of all possible excuses for war or any other form of resistance or any sort of pretence among other people.¹⁴

When life conflicts with life, the Christian's duty, out of love, may be to conclude that he/she is necessarily and legitimately required to act violently, even to take life to protect the lives of others. Ramsey concludes that by not sharing Jesus' apocalyptic, we ourselves should interpret love as sometimes requiring us to resist

¹² Ibid., pp.34-35.

¹³ Ibid., p.166-184.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.173.

evil. However, we have to be careful not to suggest that Ramsey is saying that we do not need to take Jesus' teachings seriously. Rather we have to take them seriously by acknowledging that we belong to our own cultural and religious tradition, yet we also do not belong to this tradition because our horizons have changed.

For Hauerwas, through Jesus Christ, Christians have been offered the possibility of a different history. He says that

the old points backward to history before Christ; the new points forward to the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God made fully present in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, each aeon has a social manifestation: the former in the world; the latter in the church.¹⁵

In the old aeon, war is often considered as an unavoidable by-product and phenomenon of human relationship. In order to preserve, sustain and protect each other's "goods", the use of violence is necessary and permissible. Furthermore, Hauerwas says that

wars reaffirm our history by offering us the opportunity to be worthy of our history by making similar sacrifices. We fight wars because our ancestors have fought wars. Wars provide us a way to realize our continuity with our ancestors, to locate ourselves within their continuing saga, and in the process, to give to that saga an otherwise absent coherence over time.¹⁶

This is the belief and the practice of the old aeon. On the other hand, the new aeon, which the church is called to live in, is characterized by love, peace, forgiveness and non-violence. Hauerwas considers that Christians are non-violent not because certain implications may follow from their beliefs, but because the very shape of their beliefs forms them to be non-violent. Pacifism is the form of life that is inherent in the shape of Christian convictions about God and his relation to us. Therefore, non-

¹⁵ S.Hauerwas, "Epilogue: A Pacifist Response to the Bishops." p.159.

¹⁶ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.184.

violence is the character of God which the church has no alternative but to witness to. Apparently, Hauerwas' view suggests a form of dualism. Unlike Luther's doctrine of the two Kingdoms, there is no ultimate conflict between them, for the new aeon in Christ has now taken primacy over the old, explains the meaning of the old, and will finally vanquish the old. But this does not suggest that war will be eliminated through non-violent witness. Rather, what is required is not a belief in some ideal amid the ambiguities of history, but a recognition that Christians have entered a period in which two ages overlap. That is to say, the church is the messianic community which requires a messianic life-style characterized by non-violence. Non-violence is right not because it works, but because it anticipates the triumph of the Lamb that was slain.

Furthermore, Hauerwas insists that the salvation wrought in Jesus is not only about saving individual from sin but also makes present God's eschatological Kingdom as a possibility. He continues to say that

all are called to this salvation as individuals, but the salvation itself is the socially embodied life of a community that knows it lives by forgiveness. Pacifism, therefore, is not some "teaching" about non-violence but rather is a way of talking about a community that has learned to deal with conflicts through truth rather than violence and that truth is no general or universal teaching about agape but the presence of a life.¹⁷

This communal understanding of Christ's salvation sheds light in our understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, which is no longer an ethic for individuals, but signifies that "a new community has been brought into existence that make a new way of life possible."¹⁸ Besides, the Sermon does not generate an ethic of non-violence, but

¹⁷ S.Hauerwas, "Epilogue: A Pacifist Response to the Bishops." pp. 162-163.

¹⁸ S.Hauerwas, "The Sermon on the Mount, Just War and the Quest for Peace." In: Concilium, 195, p.39.

rather demands the existence of a community of non-violence so that the world might know that as God's creatures we are meant to live peaceably with one another. Thus, for Hauerwas, the issue is not how Jesus' so-called one to one personal ethics work in a complex relationship, for it basically distorts the meaning of the doctrine of atonement by individualizing and privatizing salvation. Rather Jesus' ethic, such as non-violence, is the way God which has shown that he deals with the world and it is the way to which he therefore calls us to be faithful.

The differences between Ramsey [a just war advocate] and Hauerwas [a pacifist] now become clear. Firstly, there is a primary difference relating to their different degree of emphasis on eschatology. Ramsey's advocacy of just war leans toward "future" eschatology, while Hauerwas' advocacy of pacifism leans toward "realized" eschatology. This difference is only a matter of comparative emphasis; it is not to suggest that they ignore altogether the "already, not yet" nature of Christian eschatology. In other words, Ramsey emphasizes more its "not yet-ness", while Hauerwas emphasizes more its "already-ness". Thus, for Ramsey, understanding does not consist in placing oneself in the shoes of another; instead it consists in recognizing the claim of the apocalyptic eschatology in its otherness as having a claim upon one's own life-practice. Therefore, to use force is not in contradiction with the ethic which Jesus taught, not only because the eschatological setting of Jesus' life and teachings is different from ours, but also because force is necessary in order to fulfil the concern of Christian love to protect the weak and the unjustly oppressed. It is a matter of tactics. On the other hand, for Hauerwas, "the peace for which Christian hope is one that we know to be already present for we Christians believe we have seen, felt, and live it here and now."¹⁹ Christians pursue non-

¹⁹ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.166.

violence because God has given us the true and just response to all war in the decisive eschatological act- the cross of Christ. God is already present and acting to make the Kingdom of peace a reality for all peoples. Thus Christians already know the end; they are to live now in such a way as to witness to the truth and justice of that peace. In summary, we can say that it is a mistake to accuse Ramsey's just war position of being accommodationalist because just war theory, at least Ramsey's type, is not intended to prolong the Constantinian conviction, but rather it takes the command of the love to neighbour seriously and realistically. At the same time, it is also a mistake to accuse Hauerwas' pacifism of being fundamentalist because pacifism, at least Hauerwas' type, is not first of all a prohibition, but an affirmation that God wills to rule his creation not through violence and coercion but by love.

The second difference between them is in their different degree of emphasis on the relationship between the church and world. Ramsey understands that the church is for the world in terms of engaging itself in the socio-political reality, while Hauerwas understands that this is in terms of being an alternative reality. For Ramsey, the just war theory is not against violence, nor does it seek peace; rather just war seeks the maintenance of ordered justice through which the innocent are protected.²⁰ This is the prophetic role of the church to challenge and to remind the state of its responsibility. At the same time, the just war theory is to restrict the state's use of power from being distorted. Thus, Ramsey considers that the primary motive for Christian participation in war is the same love that earlier impelled Christians to reject the use of armed force. On the other hand, for Hauerwas, the church as an alternative reality is neither sectarian nor withdrawn: but rather this is the best way for the church to serve the world by letting the world realize what it

²⁰ P.Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, pp.157-184.

should be but is not. That is to say, the church's task is to reveal the unreality of those that think justice can be secured through war. In summary, for Ramsey, just war advocates favour the defence of an ordered justice which sometimes may not be consistent with peace, while for Hauerwas, pacifists are in favour of peace, and peace and justice are believed never to conflict. However, Ramsey rightly notes:

Niebuhr's sense of transiency of every human achievement of a somewhat more just order, or the prevention of a worse one, suggests that effective action and witnessing action are not greatly different from one another. The future is radically unpredictable, for pacifist and just war warrior alike. We need to affirm the coeval, equally worthy, irreducible parting of the ways of Christian pacifism and justified war Christians. Neither is able to depend on the consequences in the whole of their activities, or discount the effectiveness of other's witness. All this can be said, I believe, while holding that in the divine economy for this world, just war is the meaning of statecraft, and that pacifism cannot be addressed to states. Still, these are equally Christian discipleship.²¹

Now, we can conclude that both just war advocates and pacifists, at least of Ramsey's and Hauerwas' type, are to be obedient witnesses to Christ. Both are ways of witnessing to Christ; both intend in fundamentally similar ways to be effective, without depending on their effectiveness for justification. Furthermore, they agree that the central action of the Christian faith is an act of non-violent resistance, in the sense that Jesus refused to buy peace by giving up his claim to preach the Kingdom. However, they diverge on the question of the necessity of a defensive form of force to protect the innocent. But this is an issue basically concerning "how" we are to resist which is not about our faithfulness to the figure of Jesus. In other words, the difficulty is how love is to be understood and how its implications are to be displayed when we seem caught between contending values. This does not have a simple solution. But what we can do is to respect our differences, be cautious in our stand

²¹ P. Ramsey, Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism, pp.122-123.

and endeavour to make violence less necessary. Before turning to Hauerwas' critique of just war and his alternative proposal, it may be interesting to examine how Sobrino understands pacifism in terms of violence.

Sobrino's primary concern is not pacifism, but violence. That is to say, he considers that the primary and worst of all types of violence is structural injustice, which generates repressive violence by the state and ultra-right-wing groups to maintain it, and the violence of popular insurrections as a response. According to Sobrino, only when structural violence is first identified and condemned, can we then talk about pacifism. In the Latin American context, Sobrino emphasizes that Christians cannot deduce from Jesus' life and his words what he would say about the legitimacy of an armed insurrectionary struggle, simply because "Jesus offers [as] an alternative to violence the utopia of peace as a goal to achieve and as a means to achieving it."²² Besides, violence, even violence that may be legitimate, is potentially dehumanizing. Interestingly enough, according to his methodology of the interpretation of Jesus as the way of the Son, we should imagine that Sobrino would consider that Christians are pacifists because this is the way revealed by Jesus. But he does not teach such a conclusion. Rather he interprets that the symbols of peace, called for and exemplified by Jesus, as utopian and which cannot be realized in history. Therefore, for Sobrino, it cannot be said that an armed revolution is automatically anti-Christian. But he adds that "this in itself does not tell us what is the most specifically Christian contribution to a revolution."²³ Sobrino's view highlights the ambiguity of the Christian consciousness of the use of violence; that is to say, Christians do not normally give their specific witness through violence.

²² J.Sobrino, Jesus, The Liberator, p.216.

²³ *Ibid.*

However, Sobrino does not consider that this ambiguity can be eliminated by being pacifist. Rather Christians have to learn to live in this ambiguity with faith. Nevertheless, Sobrino considers that

there are different gifts in the church, and different callings from the Spirit. While the personal vocation of each individual must be respected, provided it is genuine, it does not seem audacious or cowardly to claim that the Christian vocation calls for the use of peaceful means, which does not mean less effort, to solve the problem of injustice and violence in the world, rather than violent means, however much these may sometimes be justified.²⁴

Before saying anything about Hauerwas' critique of just war, one important point I would like to emphasize is that Hauerwas' pacifism is fundamentally addressed to the Christian community rather than a general audience. In other words, his critique of just war is to unmask its ambiguity, in order to challenge the presuppositions of the Christian just war advocates because so many times society has absorbed the church's action, using it to its own ends and for its own profit which the church does not realize. Since the Christian community is his audience, Hauerwas does not expect that his view will be completely accepted by the state because the state does not share Christian convictions. But this does not necessarily make us conclude that his analysis is exclusive and sectarian, because this can still be a challenge to those who do not share Christian convictions by asking how they think war became or continues to be susceptible to moral analysis.

The just war theory has been defended by a majority of Christian ethicists, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. Their basic argument is that, although non-violence may be the ideal to which the Gospel points, it cannot deal with the day-to-day need to defend a relatively just order, or the life and property of defenceless and

²⁴ Ibid., p.218.

innocent people against the forces of anarchy, tyranny and injustice, potentially present in all human beings. Nevertheless, most of the just war advocates suggest that in order to be fulfilled for the legitimacy of violence from a Christian point of view, it has to meet the following conditions. They are:

1. that a war be the last resort to be used only after all other means have been exhausted;
2. that a war be clearly an act of redress of rights actually violated or defense against unjust demands backed by the threat of force;
3. that war be openly and legally declared by properly constituted governments;
4. that there be a reasonable prospect for victory;
5. that the means be proportionate to the ends;
6. that a war be waged in such a way as to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants;
7. that the victorious nation not require the utter humiliation of the vanquished.²⁵

These criteria are apparently straightforward and self-explanatory, but in fact they are not, because the just war theory at least assumes, firstly, the existence of universal moral dispositions; secondly, the need for moral judgments of who/what is aggressor/victim, just/unjust, acceptable/unacceptable; and finally, the potential efficacy of moral appeals and arguments to stay the hand of force. These assumptions make the just war theory less objectifiable and justifiable than it sounds to be. These are exactly the grounds on which Hauerwas criticizes the just war theory.

Firstly, Hauerwas considers that questions about the justice of war, for example, the Gulf War in 1991, seem to be a matter of whether "the facts" fit these criteria. Its mistake is that the burden of proof is supposed to be on those who use violence. As a result, these criteria have become a given that can be generated and applied by anyone anywhere from any point of view. It is clear that those who

²⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Epilogue: Continuing Implications of the Just War Tradition." In: Just War Theory, ed. J.B.Elshtain (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992). p.324.

defend a war on just war grounds and those who oppose, on the same ground, are in fact standing on the same ground. In this sense, Hauerwas comments that "just war is not to determine in a legalistic manner what is or what is not a just war, but rather to make war as nearly just as it can be."²⁶ The difficulty is that just war often reveals a bewildering mix of realistic politics. That is to say, it is not always purely fought in a manner to protect the physical survival of a people but rather for the achievement of this or that political advantage.

Secondly, Hauerwas questions whether the just war position is actually determined on an analogy with self-defence or defence of the innocent. The two are not the same, though admittedly a defence of self can possibly be justified as a defence of the innocent. If just war is defended on an analogy of self-defence, according to the Pastoral Letter of the American Roman Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, Hauerwas contends that it betrays the Gospel's message because the Christian is prohibited from killing another in order to secure his/her own survival.²⁷ On the other hand, if just war is defended on the analogy of defence of the innocent, according to Ramsey and Sobrino, then at the very least it would seem that those who use just war to justify resort to violence must not be so quick to assume the legitimacy of a violent response simply because their side is attacked. Or perhaps more accurately put, they need to be much more critical of the assumption that they have a "side".

Thirdly, the just war theory assumes that war is a necessary part of human life given the violent tendencies in human nature displayed particularly in relation

²⁶ Unpublished paper, S.Hauerwas, Whose Just War? Which Peace?, 1991, delivered at the University of Edinburgh.

²⁷ See S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, pp.169-208.

between groups.²⁸ Although war is the result of sin and a tragic remedy for sin in the life of political societies, it can serve moral purposes; that is, to achieve relative justice within this world. Therefore, if we are for justice, we cannot exclude the use of violence and war. Is war the only alternative to resolve conflicts? Or more fundamentally, is just war better understood as a form of state-craft rather than a general theory of the justifiable use of violence? According to Hauerwas, if we assume that just war is better understood as a form of state-craft, we lose the imagination to think of other alternatives to resolve conflicts. But the just war theory fails to clarify this matter. It is assumed rather than analyzed. This ambiguity leaves the validity of the just war theory problematic and unconvincing.

Finally, there is a great gulf between the theoretical and practical understanding of just war. This is not only a matter of how practically we should fight a war, but also of whether the just war theory has a built-in element of not fighting a war. For instance, the principle of discrimination suggests that we should avoid the direct attack on non-combatants. If so, it assumes that there are some things we cannot do in order to win. In other words, war undertaken on just war grounds may require those who pursue it to consider the possibility of surrender rather than to fight a war unjustly. But this possibility becomes impossible when a war is begun. Besides, the principle of proportionality suggests that the damage to be inflicted and the costs incurred by war must be proportionate to the good expected by taking up arms. But this principle hardly applies throughout the conduct of the war as well as to the decision to begin warfare. If these two main principles are hard to put into practice, then the just war theory should not be primarily understood as

²⁸ For instance, Reinhold Niebuhr considers that violence or the threat of violence was an indispensable element in the dynamics of social change. "A responsible relationship to the political order, therefore, makes an unqualified disavowal of violence impossible." (R.Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p.170)

the justification of war but rather as a limitation upon war starting. Therefore, the just war theory also suggests that surrender is preferable to being engaged in an unjust war.

Hauerwas' critique is significant because it does successfully unmask the ambiguities of the just war theory, demonstrating that it cannot determine for us which war is just, but rather is often used as an excuse to justify war. Besides, he presents a challenge to the effect that if Christian love can take the form of violence in the name of preserving ordered liberty, it no longer seems necessary that Jesus ever lived or died. However, the difficulty is that it seems that we cannot avoid the reality of the use of violence if we want to maintain law and order. How does pacifism function in international relations? Does Hauerwas suggest any particular form of government? Or is he an anarchist? Regarding the former question, J.Moltmann rightly says that

love of the enemy is not retaliation, but creative love. Whoever repays evil with good no longer retaliates but creates something new..... In love of the enemy one does not wonder, "How can I protect myself against the enemy and possible attack?" Through love of the enemy we make the enemy part of our own responsibility. We learn to look upon ourselves with the eyes of the other..... In a nuclear age, however, love of the enemy is the only politically realistic alternative. We cannot secure peace today by eliminating or threatening to eliminate all our possible enemies, but alone by reducing hostilities and taking responsibility for our common security and a lasting development..... We must demilitarize public consciousness and political thinking, and apply how we deal with an opponent in a democracy to how we deal with so-called "enemies" in international relations.²⁹

Interestingly enough, Hauerwas never offers any theory of state. For him, Christians need no theory of state to inform or guide their witness in whatever society they

²⁹ J.Moltmann, "Political Theology and the Ethics of Peace." In: Theology, Politics and Peace, ed. Theodore Runyon (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), pp.39-40

happen to find themselves because "the overriding conflict of our time is not that between democracies and totalitarianism..... rather it is the conflict between those that would remain loyal to God's Kingdom and those that would side with the world."³⁰ Therefore, for Hauerwas, it is not the political ideology that matters, but loyalty that matters. However, he defends his pacifism by saying that

I do not think that one needs a theory of legitimacy in order to determine how one will or will not relate to one's social order or government authority. Rather I simply take societies and the state as I find them. As a pacifist I will co-operate in all those activities of the state that contribute to the common good. Put simply, I do not see any in principle reason why I cannot be a good citizen, but much depends on how a particular social order determine what being a citizen entails. If citizenship means that we can only serve others through societal functions if we are willing to kill, then indeed the pacifist cannot be a citizen. But at least that tells us much, for such a state, whether it be democratic or not, must surely deserve to be described as the beast.³¹

Nevertheless, the above discussion may not spell out sufficiently what Christian pacifism is, I will therefore endeavour to further clarify Hauerwas' pacifism. Firstly, it is important to distinguish Christian pacifism from survivalist pacifism. The former is built on the eschatological hope made possible by Jesus, as previously explicated, while the latter is built on the fear caused by the massive destruction of war. Their difference becomes more obvious in relation to their responses to nuclear weapons. For Christian pacifists, nuclear war is no different from any war- except that if war is bad, nuclear war is worse. The survivalists' concern for total nuclear disarmament is because the very existence of such weapons will threaten the existence of the human species. However, they may support conventional war by the just war theory. For Hauerwas, the survivalists' argument

³⁰ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.129.

³¹ S.Hauerwas, "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." In: Faith and Philosophy, vol.2 (1985), p.104.

can never be the reason for Christian pacifism because Christians always know that the world will end and their hope is in the heavenly city. A confusion of this not only distorts the Gospel's message, but also fails to provide an alternative reality to the world. According to Hauerwas, the United Methodist Council of Bishops' statement on nuclear war, *In Defence of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and Just Peace*, is an example of this confusion.³² He comments

the peace which they [Methodist's bishops] mainly speak is not that which comes from being schooled by the cross of Christ, but rather is a peace that seeks survival rather than justice.³³

Against this, Hauerwas insists that "the Christian pacifist agrees that life cannot be an end in and of itself- there are many things for which we should be willing to die rather than lose these goods."³⁴

Secondly, for Hauerwas, Christian pacifism is not a matter of tactics, but is rather a way of life. In other words, the difference between pacifism and non-pacifism is not simply a matter of "how", but of two different ways of life. The pacifist "is someone committed to never facing the question of whether to use or not use violence as a means of securing some good."³⁵ But this distinction is always confused. For instance, Richard Harries' book on Christianity and War in the Nuclear Age is an example of this. According to him, pacifists and non-pacifists unite to affirm the overriding importance of resisting evil. But "their disagreement comes in the *means* [italics mine] which it is morally legitimate to use in so

³² See S.Hauerwas, "A Pacifist Response to In Defense of Creation." In: Asbury Theological Journal, Vol.41 (1986), pp.5-14, and "Epilogue: A Pacifist Response to the Bishops." In: Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism, pp.149-182.

³³ S.Hauerwas, "A Pacifist Response to In Defense of Creation." p.6

³⁴ S.Hauerwas, Against the Nations, p.154.

³⁵ S.Hauerwas, "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." p.101.

resisting."³⁶ Therefore, he contends that claims to be non-violent are violent in one sense; they cause other people to suffer. An example of this is that boycotts and strikes are forms of indirect coercion which can inflict quite severe degrees of hardship on others, as the boycott of Manchester cotton by Gandhi's followers caused the children of Lancashire to suffer. Harries concludes that "there is an important moral distinction to be made but it is not between violence and non-violence. It is between the direct use of force or coercion and indirect coercion."³⁷ Harries' comment may be right *only if* pacifism is, as he said, a tactic. However, if pacifism, as Hauerwas sees it, is a way of life, then Harris' comment misses the point because, although it may be true that non-violence may create longer and harder suffering, pacifism is not basically to avoid the use of force or reduce suffering. Rather it is a way of living which cannot be measured by the criterion of consequence. This does not mean that pacifism does not take into account of the suffering which it may produce into consideration, but this account of the suffering does not justify the necessity of the use of force because pacifism is a way of life, not a tactic. Pacifism as a way of life suggests that we have to consider the kind of persons we ought to be so that certain kinds of decisions are simply excluded from our lives.

Finally, Christian pacifism is often misunderstood as putting sacrificial love before social responsibility, exalting peace over justice, and failing to appreciate the state's legitimate function to secure order. This may be true for the individualistic form of pacifism. However, if we take the whole theological framework of Hauerwas, we realize that these accusations fail to take account of Hauerwas' position. For Hauerwas, the pacifist never makes non-violence more importance than

³⁶ R.Harries, Christianity and War in a Nuclear Age (London: Mowbray, 1986), p.41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.

justice. It is not to give up justice for peace, and vice versa. Rather the alternatives of violence and acceptance of injustice are as false as the assumption that all state action partakes of, or depends on, violence. Christian pacifism is concerned about peace. But this is not a *Pax Romana* which "was the result of the political will of the Roman Emperor and his highest civil servants and was a peace produced and secured by the successful military deployment of his legions."³⁸ On the contrary, it is a *Pax Christi* which is marked by the new relationship with God, and with others, that Jesus has given to human beings through his death and resurrection. Hauerwas believes that this is not carried out by a progressively remodeled, total empirical society, but by creating a new community, that is, the church.³⁹ This new creation is not a monastic society, but rather the visible manifestation in history of a viable society. Therefore, the practice of non-violence is not at all related to giving up love of our neighbours, but is to help the world find the habits of peace, whose absence often makes violence seem the only alternative. Hauerwas says that pacifism is neither easy nor cheap, for no reconciliation is possible unless the wrong is confronted and acknowledged.⁴⁰

I believe that the above explanation is a clear and accurate account of Hauerwas' pacifism, although my discussion is more explanatory than critical. This is because a critique of Hauerwas' pacifism is possible only if we also make a critique of his ecclesiology and christology, and this has been done. Even though my presentation is rather explanatory, it does not mean that my evaluation of Hauerwas' pacifism is partial because I do consider that pacifism is closer than the just war

³⁸ Ulrich Duchrow, *Shalom* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), p.125.

³⁹ See my discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

⁴⁰ See S.Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, pp.89-100.

theory to the Gospel's message. In other words, the major charge against pacifism does not lie in its theological foundation, but rather in its relevance to the contemporary world. My experience of the Tienanmen Square Massacre (Chinese students pro-democracy movement in 1989) convinces me that non-violence is both possible and powerful [although I realize that most of the students may consider non-violence as a tactic rather than a way of life]. Overcoming violence non-violently is possible when we rightly understand that non-violence may require martyrdom. It is powerful because the cross of Christ shows us that suffering has liberating power and can work convincingly in the long term. Nevertheless, I have to admit that in some extreme circumstances [e.g defence of family], I will take up "the sword instead of the plough".⁴¹ I would not need the just war theory to justify my act, but rather I accept what D.Bonhoeffer said about the guilt in responsibility. He said that

if it is responsible action, if it is action which is concerned solely and entirely with the other man, if it arises from selfishness of love for the real man who is our brother, then, precisely because this is so, it cannot wish to shun the fellowship of human guilt..... If any man tries to escape guilt in responsibility he detaches himself from the ultimate reality of human existence..... He sets his own personal innocence above his responsibility for men, and he is blind to the more irredeemable guilt which he incurs precisely in this; he is blind also to the fact that real innocence shows itself precisely in a man's entering into the fellowship of guilt for the sake of other men.⁴²

After this examination of Hauerwas' pacifism, we turn to the last issue of this section; that is, how Hauerwas' pacifism displays his practical approach to theology. In summary, the characteristics of Hauerwas' pacifism are: firstly, an emphasis on the distinctiveness of Christian pacifism, which is rooted in the cross of Christ; secondly,

⁴¹ Here, I am talking about an individual use of force rather than a collective use of force. The main difference between them is that the former is a "free" act, while the latter is not because "the average person is unable to disobey the social system to which he or she belongs." (See Dominique Barbe, A Theology of Conflict, pp.62-71.)

⁴² D.Bonhoeffer, Ethics, p.241.

an emphasis on the possible impossibility of Christian pacifism, which does not give in to idealism; and thirdly, an emphasis on the character formation of Christian pacifism, which demands particular virtues of Christians. Primarily, I consider that Hauerwas' pacifism can be understood as an example of a cultural-linguistic tradition.⁴³ According to this model, meaning and practice are inter-related in order to make a claim about the foundation of knowledge. Theologically put, an intimate relation exists between religious belief and life practices. However, this model considers that we should not examine religious discourse by applying external or philosophical criteria of truth and meaning. Rather we should base such justifications upon principles of framework that define the context in which questions of justification might be raised. Therefore, it does not make sense to ask for grounds for belief and knowledge outside of the shared practices and shared conception of what count as grounds or foundations. Only by participating in a particular language game, its rules and practices, its form of life, and its cultural linguistic framework does one understand that form of life. More importantly, the meaning of these beliefs is exhibited in the shared practices and competences. This model emphasizes the formation of character and the narrative repetition of the community's story.

It is obvious that the whole of Hauerwas' theological framework is associated with this model. For instance, Hauerwas' pacifism is built solely on christological foundation rather than making concession to secular thoughts. Besides, its audience is the Christian community rather than a general audience. More importantly, Hauerwas emphasizes that we cannot but be pacifists if we share the life of Jesus, for pacifism is a way of life. The strength of the model of the cultural-linguistic

⁴³ See Francis Schussler Fiorenza, "Theory and Practice." In: Theological Education, Supplement (1987), pp.115-117, George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine, and also my discussion in pp.195ff.

tradition is not to reduce the religious identity of a community to an abstract symbol system or to a general religious dimension of common human experience. It points to the specific practices, characteristics, and life story of a particular historical religious community. Yet the strength of it also is its weakness. By focusing upon the concrete particularity of a community's life story, character and practice, it tends not to emphasize the need to explicate the public dimension of its religious identity. This position has been labelled by some as fideistic or as the sectarian temptation in theology.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as indicated previously, this weakness should not be over-emphasized because the church as an alternative reality is a witness to the Kingdom. In other words, Christian contribution to society is not solely depended on its social relevance, but also its distinctiveness.

⁴⁴ See Gustafson's critique on Hauerwas, "The Sectarian Temptation." In: Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society, Vol.40, 1985, pp.83-94, and my discussion on pp.96ff.

2. EVANGELIZATION

The birth of liberation theology poses a new challenge to our understanding and practice of evangelization. That is to say, evangelization is inadequately understood primarily in terms of church-planting, soul saving and sending missionaries to evangelize, but rather it should be practised in the context of involvement, of solidarity and in compassion with the poor. In other words, it is inadequate to listen only to the cry of the lost, for the cry of the oppressed must also be heard.¹ Nevertheless, it is not my intention in this section to provide a comprehensive picture of what evangelization is and involves, but rather to spell out the significance of a particular perspective- liberation theology as represented by Sobrino- in our contemporary understanding of evangelization. It is also my purpose here to show how Sobrino's view of evangelization reflects his understanding of the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion. Thus, I will discuss Sobrino's view of evangelization as follows. Firstly, how can we understand evangelization in the light of christology, according to Sobrino? Secondly, how can we understand the central message of evangelization in terms of salvation? [These two issues are closely inter-locked because the former paves the way for the latter, and the latter concretizes the former, although I discuss them separately.] And finally, what is the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to Christianity illustrated by Sobrino's view of evangelization? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

¹ I do not mean that the challenge posed by the liberation theologians is unique and original because, for instance, the social gospel movement in the U.S. had also addressed this issue. Nevertheless, I consider that it is new because unlike the social gospel movement, liberation theology does not work on an assumption of optimistic view of humanity, but rather from the perspective of the poor. Besides, unlike the social gospel movement, liberation theology does not give up the eschatological view of salvation, but rather maintains that transcendence cannot be understood without giving reference to immanence.

Christological evangelization means mission in Christ's way. This concerns how we understand and practise evangelization in terms of Jesus' evangelization. Sobrino writes that "[we] must reproduce Jesus' evangelization in Jesus' own fashion."² In order to understand mission in Christ's way, Sobrino suggests that we have to refer to the central message which dominated Jesus' preaching, and the mentality which Jesus had in response to this. In short, the central message was the Kingdom of God, and Jesus' response to the Kingdom was his unconditional love and commitment to the poor. It was the Kingdom which defined Jesus' mission and whom Jesus served. However, these two aspects have been previously discussed³, and therefore, in the following, I will selectively concentrate on some relevant points and further explicate them.

Centrality to Jesus' mission, was not the preaching of himself, but the Kingdom of God. Besides, Jesus' proclamation was made not only in words, but also in terms of his entire life and actions because he was the Kingdom, too. Therefore, the basic premise of his mission and the central theme of his preaching was not the hope of the coming Kingdom at some predictable date in the future, but the fact that in his own person and work the Kingdom was already present among men and women in great power. In other words, Jesus concretized the Kingdom in his life and took as his main vocation the jubilee year proclamation and its implementation in the person of the Suffering Servant. His whole life, till his death on the cross, is a complete manifestation of God's Kingdom of love. That is to say, God in Christ is showing his passionate concern for the poor; a new eschatological reality is present

² J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.133. Also see the work, The Beatitudes (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), done by Segundo Galilei.

³ The discussion of the centrality of Jesus' mission can be found in , while the discussion of the rationale of Jesus' mission can be found in

in human history affecting human life not only morally and spiritually, but also physically and psychologically, materially and socially. For Jesus, the primary beneficiaries of his proclamation were the poor. The poor were those who were sinned against⁴, victims of both personal and structural sin. In Jesus, God is the defender of the sinned against. In Jesus, we have the Kingdom in action. Furthermore, "for Jesus himself, the Kingdom of God was not a utopian symbol of hope, but a utopia for which something had to be done."⁵ Thus, the Kingdom is a utopia to be anticipated and constructed in opposition to historical realities and historical sin. Therefore, the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom includes an invitation to join the Kingdom, and to participate in its struggle. This participation is the affirmation of the poor as having God's preferential option which is the yardstick of faithfulness in evangelization.

Sobrinó's interpretation of mission in Christ's way in terms of the Kingdom of God clarifies the ambiguous concept of "Missio Dei" because the concept of "Missio Dei" may give way to speak only of God's activities in the world independent of the church and its mission⁶. Also, it is a concept which is primarily used in order to acknowledge God's presence in the world rather than challenging the

⁴ Raymond Fung explains the idea of sinned-againstness in this way: "If we define the human situation in economic and political terms, then of course the answer must also be found in the realm of economics and politics which, we know as Christians, do not suffice. It's not enough. It does not touch the basic reality that we are in as human beings. And so I feel that we should use theological language. That's how I come to use of the term sinned-against. It includes economic and political exploitations, but it is also very much spiritual exploitation." (Evangelistically Yours, Geneva: WCC, 1992, p.107)

⁵ J.Sobrinó, Spirituality of Liberation, p.123.

⁶ For instance, see J.C.Hoekendijk, The Church Inside Out (Geneva: WCC, 1964). In this book, "Missio Dei" was explicated by a theory about the transformation of the world and of history not through evangelization and church-planting, but by means of a divinely guided immanent historical process, somewhat analogous to deistic views of the Enlightenment. However, Christians who would avoid the temptation to equate their religion with God by making it absolute and final, who desire to be open to signs of the working of God's Spirit among others without denying their own mandate to mission, will find the "Missio Dei" concept of continuing value.

world to be conformed to God's will. On the contrary, the concept of the Kingdom of God signifies God's rule and presence. It is both a spiritual and an earthly reality. It is a spiritual reality because it is established primarily by the death-resurrection of Jesus, when he became irreversibly God's Kingdom. The proclamation of Jesus Christ is, at the same time, the proclamation of God's Kingdom and its values. He teaches all to let God's will rule over their hearts and become God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom must be born in the hearts of individuals. The Kingdom is also an earthly reality because it finds its expression in the values of justice, peace, freedom and human dignity for all. The promotion of the Kingdom and its values here on earth is an essential part of evangelization. Without it, our proclamation would lose its credibility. Such values are not only symbols, but the beginnings of the Kingdom itself. Human activities in all their variety and extension are vital to the mission of the church in its service to the Kingdom. However, J. Verkuyl comments that

a Kingdom-centered theology worthy of the name is concerned with every aspect of life and society. Often in the history of the church and theology Jesus has been- and in some cases continues to be- proclaimed *without* His Kingdom. In the face of that kind of proclamation, it should not come as a surprise to discover people attempting to find the Kingdom and salvation without *Christ*.⁷

Is Sobrino's interpretation of mission in Christ's way a Kingdom-centred theology without Christ? Does his interpretation betray people with false expectations? Does his interpretation deliver people into the hands of demonic powers, for whenever a particular political programme is identified with the Kingdom of God, those who follow become the victims of forces that they cannot control?

It cannot be denied that throughout his writings, Sobrino emphasizes the necessity and the importance of the earthly reality of the Kingdom in relation to

⁷ J. Verkuyl, "Test of Validity for Theology of Religion." In: The Good News of the Kingdom (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), p.72.

evangelization. For instance, he understands the witness of the church in two related ways, namely, objective and subjective. The objective way entails involvement in the struggle against injustice, while the subjective way is the holiness of the church in terms of its support to the objective way.⁸ But it is unfair to accuse Sobrino of ignoring the indispensability of a personal relationship to God, the need for forgiveness and faith and the longing for eternal life, because evangelization in a context marked by extreme injustice and poverty may demand a different entry point. Emilio Castro quotes that

there are historical priorities according to which salvation is anticipated in one dimension first, be it the personal, the political or the economic dimension.⁹

Faith for Sobrino is not understood in a "spiritual" or "religious" manner, but is practised in real life. Therefore, his emphasis on the earthly reality of the Kingdom does not necessarily mean that it finds the Kingdom without Christ; on the contrary, it is to counter the temptation of pursuing Christ without the Kingdom. But does Sobrino's emphasis allow for the "eschatological proviso" (the proviso or reservation that the coming eschaton sets against any and every human achievement)? In the First World, "eschatological proviso" means that despite the economic and social achievements of affluent societies in which the basic problems of human subsistence have been resolved, these societies are still not the Kingdom of God. Yet Sobrino contends that in the Third World, the situation is completely different because "the Kingdom of God has not yet come in its fullness, but this Kingdom is formally denied." He exclaims that "we have a long way to go before the problem of the eschatological proviso becomes relevant in Latin America as it is in the First

⁸ J.Sobrino, "The Witness of the Church in Latin America." In: The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), pp.161-188.

⁹ Emilio Castro, Sent Free (Geneva: WCC, 1985), p.23.

World."¹⁰ Despite it, the church in the Third World should be careful not to see any particular political ideology, such as Marxism, as the way leading to full humanisation, and not to identify the Kingdom as equivalent to socio-economic development and progress.

While the Kingdom of God is the central message of Jesus, mission in Christ's way is also concerned with how Jesus served the Kingdom. According to Sobrino, there are at least three characteristics of Jesus' approach. Firstly, Jesus' way of mission displays a dialectical nature of evangelization in terms of its universality and particularity¹¹ because on the one hand, Jesus came to save all human, and on the other, he proclaimed the good news to the poor. The universality of evangelization embraces two dimensions: it is to be directed to all human beings, and it is to evangelize the whole reality, both the religious reality of the person and the socio-political structures. These two dimensions illustrate that God's plan of salvation is to be proclaimed not only through that which is religious, but also through any and every human reality, for God is love, and wishes to re-create every area of creation. Therefore, evangelization cannot be exclusively understood as a matter of personal salvation, but also involves social liberation. Concerning the particularity of evangelization, Sobrino argues that Jesus' message always begins concretely with the needy and the poor. The poor are not only the addressees of evangelization, but also its privileged addressees. Furthermore, the poor are "also the condition for the possibility of evangelization."¹² That is to say, it is in the poor that we perceive the nature of God: not a Being detached from our miseries, but a

¹⁰ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.279.

¹¹ See my discussion on Sobrino's ecclesiology and also J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.289-299.

¹² J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.293.

God who hears the cry of the oppressed, a God who acts in history, and constructs the reign for men and women in freedom. Thus, evangelization is no longer understood as a one-way process from the evangelizer to the evangelized, but rather both the evangelizer and the evangelized are the addressees of evangelization. Is then the particularity of evangelization (good news to the poor) opposed to its universality? Is the partiality of evangelization a form of reductionism? Does the partiality of evangelization idealize the poor? These issues have been discussed previously, so I do not intend to repeat them here¹³. However, an emphasis on the particularity of evangelization [good news to the poor] does not reject the gospel for the rich, but rather through God's particularity, the message for the rich is a call to be poor, and to be in solidarity with those who are outcasts.

Secondly, Jesus' way of mission is an illustration of the unification of faith and practice in evangelization. This unification is neither a belief that norms for human action come from theoretical knowledge nor a belief that theory is secondary to practice. Rather Sobrino states that "faith provides the ultimate Christian meaning of action; action is the Christian practice of this ultimate meaning."¹⁴ According to Sobrino, the preaching of Jesus is not only a "pure" proclamation which demands a response of faith from his hearers, but is also something that by its nature has to be done, put into practice. Jesus' way of mission is accomplished by both preaching and signs, for Jesus did not evangelize only through a verbal communication of the good news, but also through his activity, his historical situation and his destiny. In other words, if what Jesus proclaims in his preaching is the love of God, then Jesus can credibly speak this message only if he also puts it into practice. Therefore, his cures,

¹³ See my discussion on Sobrino's ecclesiology.

¹⁴ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.280.

miracles, and exorcisms; his prophetic gestures in the temple, eating with the oppressed and breaking social barriers make it possible for him to give verbal expression to the ultimate reality of God. Jesus' preaching of faith in God and his accompanying action are in this way interconnected. L.Newbiggin agrees with Sobrino's view by saying that

why should people believe our preaching that the Kingdom of God has come near in Jesus if they see no sign that anything is happening as a result, if they can see no evidence that disease and ignorance and cruelty and injustice are being challenged and overcome? Why should they believe our words if there is nothing happening to authenticate them?¹⁵

The unification of faith and practice in evangelization is not to suggest that social effectiveness is the criterion of faith, but that our faith is mere empty words if it does not have with it a costly engagement with the powers of evil which rob men and women of their humanity, and if it does not call men and women to share in the same costly engagement. This is what Bonhoeffer said about costly and cheap grace. Sobrino seems to give more weight to the urgency of practice than to the urgency of faith, but this does not necessarily propose ortho-practice against ortho-doxy, for Sobrino's emphasis is a consequence of his historical urgency. More importantly, a relative emphasis on the urgency of practice is a passage from an "abstract" orthodoxy to a "concrete" orthodoxy.¹⁶ If faith is described as unconditional hope in God and the Father of Jesus, then practice is the making real of the content of this. Therefore, the importance of the unification of faith and practice, I consider, in our understanding of evangelization, is that in order to evangelize faithfully we must have experienced liberation from the power of sin and death, communion with God and neighbours, be earnestly and passionately involved in the search for justice and peace

¹⁵ Lesslie Newbiggin, Mission in Christ's Way (Geneva: WCC, 1987), p.11.

¹⁶ See J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.21-24.

among the nations and their inhabitants. Evangelization is concerned with both personal and public, spiritual and historical, present and future.

Finally, mission in Christ's way involves the proclamation of the good news, the witness of one's life, and the implanting of the Kingdom. The last two ways have previously been discussed, therefore I will concentrate on the first way. In Sobrino's writing, it appears that he almost ignores the importance of proclamation in evangelization. His efforts are primarily concentrated on the implanting of the Kingdom. Does this distort Jesus' evangelization? In order to clarify this, we have to understand the meaning of proclamation. Among fundamentalists, proclamation is often one-sidedly interpreted as a verbal activity to communicate the gospel in order that humankind can be saved. This is both true and important, yet it is also inadequate, because Sobrino points out that proclamation cannot be isolated from denunciation. If proclamation is concerned with the good news, then denunciation is concerned with all that hinders this good news. This does not mean that proclamation is a positive act, while denunciation a negative act, but that both are positive acts because people may grasp the point of proclamation by seeing its opposite. Sobrino states their relationship in this way:

for those who have been dehumanized by wretched poverty and oppression the good news begins as a word of hope..... For those who have been dehumanized by their own wrongful use of oppressive power the good news begins as a call to conversion.¹⁷

Therefore, Sobrino's engagement in fighting against injustice does not have any tendency to neglect the importance of proclamation, but he does take a different point of departure, because for him, proclamation can never be divorced from denunciation. Otherwise, the gospel is incomplete.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.273.

From the above, it is clear that mission in Christ's way, according to Sobrino, is concerned about both demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel. Evangelization, then, is not only primarily understood as a matter of preaching the Kingdom, but also as building up the Kingdom; not only concerned with our spiritual salvation, but also with the salvation of the whole created order. Obviously, Sobrino emphasizes the latter. Before moving to the other related theme, it may be interesting to see how Hauerwas understands evangelization.

I have to point out that Hauerwas does not write anything in particular about evangelization, but I consider that we can discern his view from his theological framework, that is, the concepts of character and narrative. I consider that for Hauerwas, evangelization means inviting people into the Christian story as the definitional story of the life of the proclaimers, and thereby encouraging people to give up, abandon, and renounce other stories that have shaped their lives in false or distorting ways. Put differently, evangelization is when the Christian story, with its core character, permitting people to notice the shallowness of the stories people have embraced elsewhere. If my interpretation of Hauerwas' view is correct, then we realize that there is a great difference of emphasis between Sobrino and Hauerwas. For the former, evangelization is more concerned about building God's Kingdom in terms of social action; while for Hauerwas, it is more concerned about "evangelism" in terms of building the people of God. Nevertheless, it is unnecessary to make a dichotomy between "evangelism" and "social action" because if the gospel concerns changed governance, then that changed governance concerns all of life. For the victory of God over death is not a victory in some selected zones of life, but over all creation and against every threat of chaos. Besides, in a society which denies the right to live of some people, as the church we are to speak what we know, evoke resistance and yearning, permit alternative, authorized newness. Then, no matter

whether we are liberal or conservative, we can settle for a shared acknowledgment that the church bears witness to the good news in the face of all brands of fear and ideology.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have discussed what is involved in evangelization, and how it is done. However, evangelization, for some, is primarily about the proclamation of God's salvation. In the following, I intend to discuss evangelization in this term. John Stott considers that salvation is exclusively referred to the forgiveness of sin and personal spiritual redemption which has nothing related to the socio-political transformation¹⁸. He comments that

[for] the salvation offered in the gospel of Christ concerns persons rather than structures. It is deliverance from another kind of yoke than political and economic oppressions.

We can have no objection to the use of the word, "salvation", in a political sense, provided it is clear that we are not talking theologically about God's salvation in and through Christ.¹⁹

Nevertheless, he calls those works aiming at the creation of a better society the mission of God. Is salvation exclusively concerned with personal salvation? Is it right to distinguish God's salvation and God's mission? I hope that my following discussion of Sobrino's view of salvation in terms of the personal and historical level will clarify these issues.

¹⁸ For instance, regarding Lk.4:18, he contends that "here three categories of people are mentioned, the poor, the captives, and blind. It is true that during his ministry, Jesus opened those eyes of the blind, and certainly the blind should arouse our Christian compassion today. But Christ's miraculous restoration of sight was a sign that he was the light of the world..... Jesus also ministered the poor and had some disconcerting things to say to the rich. Yet it is well known that the poor in the Old Testament were not just the needy, but the pious whose hope and trust were in God. The first Beatitude cannot possibly be understood as making material poverty a condition for receiving God's Kingdom..... There is no evidence that Jesus literally emptied the prison of Palestine. On the contrary, John the Baptist was left in prison and was executed. What Jesus did do, however, was to deliver people from the spiritual bondage of sin and satan, and to promise that the truth would set his disciples free." (Christian Mission in the Modern World, Downers Grove: IVP, 1975, pp.98-99)

¹⁹ J.Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World, p.95 & 98.

On the personal level, Sobrino's understanding is closely related to Roman Catholic tradition and teaching about salvation. We may be tempted to over-simplify this by singling out the trade in Indulgences in the fifteenth century which brought Luther into the fray in his protest against it. It is not my purpose here to examine this event in detail, but Hans Kung, in his book Justification, contends that the Roman Catholic teaching has never stated that justification came partly from God and partly from man. Rather it has been sufficiently emphasized that the sinner can do nothing without the grace of Jesus Christ. In his letter to Kung, Karl Barth wrote that "if what you have presented in Part Two of this book [Justification] is actually the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, then I must certainly admit that my view of justification agrees with the Roman Catholic view; if only for the reason that the Roman Catholic teaching would then be the most strikingly in accord with mine."²⁰ Yet we have to admit that Kung's exposition may not really represent the Roman Catholic teaching, but this does not mean that we can ignore his work in our attempt to understand the Roman Catholic teaching on salvation, because his work was done in 1957 far before he was excommunicated in 1979. Besides, he was charged with "contempt for the magisterium of the Church" on the issue of papal infallibility instead of his view of justification. Nevertheless, at the same time, I also refer to the official statement of the Roman Catholic Church; that is, An Agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic Internal Commission about Salvation and the Church²¹, made in 1988.

According to this statement, both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant teaching fundamentally agree that "the act of God in bringing salvation to the human

²⁰ Hans Kung, Justification (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), p.xl.

²¹ Salvation and the Church with Commentary and Study Guide (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1989).

race and summoning individuals into a community to serve him is due solely to the mercy and grace of God, mediated and manifested through Jesus Christ in his ministry, atoning death and rising again.²² However, it also highlights the differences between them in regard to the matter of how divine grace related to human response. They are, firstly, the understanding of faith through which we are justified; secondly, the understanding of justification and the associated concepts of, righteousness and justice; and finally, the bearing of good works on salvation.

Firstly, faith, according to the Roman Catholic, is the human response to God's initiative which is itself a gift of grace. But our response to this costly grace is itself a gift while remaining a genuine personal acceptance of Christ. Salvation is the gift of grace; it is by faith that it is appropriated. However, Kung points out that

the sinner is justified through faith alone, but not through a faith which stands opposed to works done in a living community of will with Christ or out of love grounded in faith and all other virtues. Love is not missing in justification and it cannot be so. The faith through which man is justified is indeed faith in the full sense of the word. It is a living faith. It does not insist upon acts of love since it wants to receive everything from God. But faith, even "dead" faith, has the seed of love in it.²³

Obviously, an emphasis on the importance of love in faith does not exclude the assurance of faith in the decisive, saving work of the cross and resurrection. But rather it is a balance not to give way to the too extreme emphasis on assurance which may encourage a neglect of the need for justification to issue in holiness of life. Thus, faith is no mere inner feeling, but involves both understanding and intimate trust. It is a living faith because it involves commitment of our will to God in repentance and obedience to his call. Kung says that

²² Ibid., p.12.

²³ H.Kung, Justification, p.256.

living faith, which alone justifies, does not exclude but rather includes sorrow for sin. It does not bring about any works in order to justify itself. Justification through living faith in no sense means justification by faith and works. But it wants to be active in works, "faith working through love" (Gal.5:6) How should it be otherwise? For "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1Cor.13:2)²⁴

Therefore, living faith is inseparable from love, issues in good works, and grows deeper in the course of a life of holiness.

Secondly, salvation is an act of both justification and sanctification because God promises the removal of our condemnation and gives us a new standing before him. Thus justification is indissolubly linked with God's sanctifying recreation of us in grace. The *Agreement* states that "sanctification is that work of God which actualizes in believers the righteousness and holiness without which no one may see the Lord..... justification speaks of a divine declaration of acquittal, of the love of God manifested to an alienated and lost humanity prior to any entitlement on our part."²⁵ However, this clarification does not clearly bridge the relationship between justification and sanctification. Kung rightly points out that the Roman Catholic understands by sanctification primarily the objective and ontological holiness [heiligkeit] achieved in humans by God, while the Protestant emphasizes the subjective and ethical sanctification [heiligung] brought about by humans. This is why the Roman Catholic understanding is mistaken as a primary activity of humans. As justification occurs through faith alone, and not through works of humans, it is not identical with sanctification [in the strictly objective and ethical sense]. Otherwise, divine justification would become the self-justification of humans. In this

²⁴ Ibid., pp.256-257.

²⁵ Salvation and the Church, p.24.

sense sanctification follows justification. But at the same time, justification considered as the efficacious divine just judgment, making humans really just or holy, is identical with sanctification (in the sense of an objective and ontological making holy brought about by God). Otherwise, divine justification would be an empty, purely verbal assertion. Thus, he concludes that

justice or holiness given to man through the justification of God is the necessary foundation for any moral sanctification of man and vice versa. Sanctification is holiness as established through justification becoming operative and real. Human sanctification without the holiness given by God is worthless- for the former is based on the latter. God-given holiness without grace-inspired human sanctification is sterile. As faith must be operative in love, so justification must be operative in sanctification.²⁶

Nevertheless, Kung does not mention that the inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification is also basically related to the Latin translation, "iustificare", of the Greek verb, "dikaion". The former signifies "to make righteous", while the latter signifies "to pronounce righteous". Therefore, Roman Catholic understanding of justification tends to include elements of salvation which Protestant would describe as belonging to sanctification rather than justification.

Finally, we turn to the issue of the relationship between salvation and good works. According to Roman Catholic teaching, the good works of justified Christians are the fruits of the Spirit, and do not themselves earn a claim on God. Faith is no merely private and interior disposition. Rather our liberation commits us to an order of social existence in which the individual finds fulfilment in relationship with others. Thus, freedom in Christ does not imply an isolated life, but rather one lived in a community governed by mutual obligations. Life in Christ sets us free from the demonic forces manifested not only in individuals, but also in social egoism.

²⁶ H.Kung, Justification, p.269.

Therefore, Christian good works are not individualistic but inevitably social because we are committed to each other in Christ. The historical life of Jesus helps us to see how true it is. However, regarding good works, Roman Catholic teaching introduces a concept of reward. The agreement states that

the works of the righteous performed in Christian freedom and in the love of God which the Holy Spirit gives us are the object of God's commendation and receive his reward (Matt.6:4; 2Tim.4:8; Heb.10:35, 11:6). In accordance with God's promise, those who have responded to the grace of God and consequently borne fruit for the Kingdom will be granted a place in that Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing.²⁷

Does the concept of reward suggest an idea of merit which may be in contrast to the primacy of the grace of God? Kung contends that the thought of reward cannot be eliminated from the Bible, but should not be understood in terms of the morality of merit which was represented by the Pharisee. The Pharisee boasted of his merit and spoke before God and humans, but he did not return home justified. Christ spoke out sharply against the Pharisaic morality of merit. Kung quotes the work of J.Schmid saying that

the distinctions between the teaching of Jesus Christ and Jewish thinking on merit are: a]. in Jesus merit is thought of in an eschatological way; b]. what counts is not the works but the intention with which they are done; c]. man confronts God not as a partner with equal contractual rights, but always as an unworthy servant who receives from God a reward of grace [reward not as a legal claim but as promise]; d]. there is no equality between reward and achievement; e]. the thought of reward is not the major ethical motive, but is subordinated to motives of obedience and especially love, gratitude, and the imitation of God.²⁸

Therefore, as Christians, we give the glory to God for our reward, since his grace enables us, so that we boast only in the Lord rather than in our good works.

²⁷ Salvation and The Church with Commentary and Study Guide, p.31.

²⁸ H.Kung, Justification, p.271.

In summary, although Roman Catholic teaching emphasizes the importance of "works" in salvation, it does not deny a fundamental belief in the total incapacity of humans for any kind of self-justification. In justification the sinner can give nothing which he/she does not receive by God's grace. However, justification by faith alone should not be set against good works because we cannot have faith without love, and vice versa. In the light of this, we have a better vantage point to understand Sobrino's view of evangelization, which is cloaked with a sense of "works". An obvious example is his interpretation of spirituality. Spirituality is primarily understood for the sake of liberation. Does Sobrino suggest that we can earn our salvation? This emphasis does not necessarily promote any tendency to ignore God's grace. Rather it is rooted in the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation. That is to say, this is co-operation not in the sense of collaboration, but of participation by means of being responsible. Works are asked from those already justified. Those yet to be justified are called upon to co-operate in faith. It means getting oneself involved in what God alone has put into execution. The God who justifies in Christ remains, even in justification, the God of covenant- wants a true partner, not a robot or a puppet, but a human responding to him with a personal, responsible, active and heartfelt "Yes". Therefore, an emphasis on our responsibility in liberation does not mean that grace is secondary, but rather that the understanding of faith as solely equivalent to the imputation to human being of the righteousness of Christ, which leaves the essential sinfulness of the individual unchanged, distorts the meaning of salvation. However, this emphasis does not necessarily support a thesis that evangelization should have a historical significance in the sense of being worked in history. With this, we come to Sobrino's view of salvation in its relation to history.

Evangelization is to proclaim God's redemption for human salvation. And

this salvation takes place here and now. Therefore, in order to proclaim God's plan of salvation faithfully, we should take the relationship between salvation history and secular history seriously²⁹. According to James M. Connolly, there are two extremes of understanding their relationship. The incarnationists [those who emphasize the continuity of salvation and secular history] concentrate their gaze upon the person of Christ, upon his mission, and upon the church. They may tend to accentuate the importance and the relevance of human achievements here and now in the divine plan: they emphasize and accentuate not only the Pauline notion of the building up of the church, but also the essential goodness and value of the world as the creation of God. When they face the question of the culmination of this period in the parousia, they insist upon the transformation of the world, not its destruction. On the other hand, the eschatologists [those who emphasize the discontinuity] focus on the process of salvation history and, therefore, the essential transitoriness of this stage in which we live. The Kingdom of God in its final perfection is not anticipated by a gradual mastery by Christ of the present world, but by the glorious return of Christ.³⁰

Sobrinó's theological emphases have much in common with the incarnationist's approach. For instance, he sees liberation and the building up of the Kingdom as the task of Christians. Furthermore, he may even be inclined toward humanism [i.e. Marxism] and the values of this world. But it is wrong to assume that he sees the spread of Christianity in terms of scientific progress- the expected

²⁹ Karl Barth distinguished between the two German words for history, *Historie* and *Geschichte*. *Historie* is that which is perceptible to humanity, the series of created events that can be represented as related created events; *Geschichte* is the salvific activity of God, His mighty acts by which He accomplishes His eternal economy.'

³⁰ J.M. Connolly, Human History and the Word of God (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp.155-200.

advance of humanity towards the final form of the Kingdom of God. Ironically Sobrino considers the relationship between salvation history and secular history in a dialectical manner in terms of their continuity and discontinuity. He writes that

the two histories [salvation history and secular history] are also related in the understanding of the transcendent as the end of history. It is clear that history has not yet reached its fulfilment. This fulfilment is a utopia and as such cannot be adequately analyzed by human reason but can only be grasped through hope. At the same time, faith tells us that the present is not simply a time of trial in preparation for a future destiny as though there were no continuity between present and future. As a matter of fact, the present "trial" consists in making present under the conditions of history that which we await in hope as the ultimate fulfilment: the Kingdom of God. The "trial" consists in making real the love, justice and unity among human beings that are symbols used to describe the fullness of the end time. Therefore, even though this fullness is a free gift brought about by God, and in this sense is discontinuous with present history, a profound continuity does exist.

Regarding their relation to evangelization, he says that

when the evangelists proclaim the transcendent in the twofold sense of absolute future and absolute meaning of the present, they cannot oppose the transcendent to the historical nor can they be satisfied with presenting them as parallel. Because we are dealing not with evangelization in some vague sense but with Christian evangelization, emphasis must be placed on the unity of the two histories, the two good news. They are phases of a single reality, the one good news being lived in the conditions of historical existence, the other being lived under the conditions of the eschaton and therefore able to be grasped only in hope.³¹

Although throughout his writings Sobrino principally emphasizes the continuity of salvation history and secular history, rather than their discontinuity, this emphasis does not suggest that the continuity is more important than discontinuity. Since theological reflection is not an abstract activity, but is rooted in a specific context, a relative emphasis is not only justifiable, but also necessary. More importantly, Sobrino's concern for the transformation of the world and the continuity of these two histories is related to his emphasis on the doctrine of creation. He says that "the

³¹ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.277-278.

Spirit signifies the incorporation of human beings to the history of God and the immersion of God in the history of human beings. The trinitarian God cannot be what he is without continuing to create history and not simply interpret it.³² The doctrine of creation rejects the idea of the total discontinuity of two histories represented by the one-sided emphasis on the doctrine of redemption. In terms of social significance, the doctrine of redemption considers that there is no relation between the justice of the Kingdom of God and the justice of power structures. The two worlds are separated by an unbridgable gap. But in the light of the doctrine of creation, the shortcomings of the one sided emphasis on the doctrine of redemption are that it contrasts the salvation of the individual with the transformation of the historical group and the universe, contrasts the realm of salvation with the realm of creation, interprets the symbol of the Kingdom of God as a static supernatural order into which individuals enter after their death instead of understanding it as a dynamic power on earth, and excludes cultures as well as nature from the saving processes in history. However, it is a mistake to assume that there is no doctrine of redemption in Sobrino's theology. Rather in the process of "historicalization", the doctrine of redemption is considered as equivalent to liberation.³³ By liberation, it means that

of its very nature, liberation necessarily tends towards its own totalization, both in its ultimate goal and in the partial liberations undertaken in the process of achieving that ultimate goal.... The liberation process must become open to utopia and transcendence. Only in the utopian ideal do we glimpse, in the distance, the fulfilling reconciliation of all the disparate elements of historical liberations, elements so difficult to reconcile in history: the personal and the structural; a genuine struggle and the longing for peace; justice and forgiveness; triumph and reconciliation.³⁴

³² Ibid., p.224.

³³ Ibid., p.10.

³⁴ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.28.

According to Sobrino, the continuity and discontinuity of salvation history, the relationship between the doctrine of creation and redemption converging at the concept of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom has an inner-historical and a transhistorical dimension. As inner-historical, it participates in the dynamic of history; as transhistorical, it answers the questions implied in the ambiguities of the dynamic of history. Put precisely, the characteristics of the Kingdom are political, social, personal and universal. It is political because the Kingdom announces God's lordship over the cosmic. It is social because it includes the ideas of peace and justice. It is personal because it gives eternal meaning to the individual person. Finally, it is universal because it is a Kingdom not only of humanity, but also involves the fulfilment of life in all its dimensions. The Kingdom of God reveals that God is the lord of history and that the whole of history, and its details, proceeds under the fatherly care of God the creator, whose will is done.

Thus, salvation should not ignore the necessity of the liberation of people from the political oppression which enslaves them and makes them less than human. Yet it is equally true again that political freedom, of itself, does not ensure a fully humane and happy society. However, Emilio Castro reminds us that there are certain priorities, and we must use our freedom to discern them. There are historical priorities, dimensions, particular gifts which are entry points into the dynamic of the Kingdom and the reality of salvation. He points out that "we should not forget the other dimensions that will complete the picture, but we need to enter by a particular door if we want to be concrete in our missionary obedience."³⁵

If God's salvation cannot be isolated from history, the church has to take the

³⁵ E. Castro, Sent Free (Geneva: WCC, 1985), p.24.

risk of interpreting history because commitment always implies a decision in favour of something and against something else. Also, conscious human life is always interpreting. As responsible human beings we can never avoid it. Thus, Christians are obliged to take the risk of interpreting their historical situations to the extent that this is necessary for their commitment. Their interpretation may be confirmed or negated. In either case, faith in God's guidance remains unshaken, for the Christian faith is independent of interpretations. At the same time, in its encounter with the ambiguities and decisions of life, it makes interpretations. God calls Christians to make their decisions in the light of his coming Kingdom, against hunger, suffering, poverty and oppression. The Christian has to know where the forces of the Spirit are at work, in order that to join them; and where the forces of darkness are at work, in order to resist them. The church has no guarantee against mistakes in making interpretations, but through repentance we are called to partake in God's saving history. Thus, Sobrino takes the risk of interpreting history in order to evangelize.

In the light of the above discussion, we can say, first of all, that salvation implies obedience to the Kingdom of God. It is not the condition for salvation, but it is the content of salvation. It is part and parcel of that salvation. Secondly, salvation means justification and liberation. The justification that comes through faith in Christ frees sinners from their guilty conscience and from their state of death. However, it is not just a personal spiritual experience, because as evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner, and in social and political justice. Although salvation is eschatological, we do not have to wait for the consummation of the Kingdom in order to discern its justice in the social and political sphere and the presence of its liberating power in social structures. Every movement that promotes equitable economic relations, and every movement that

encourages solidarity among individuals and peoples can be said to be a manifestation [though partial] of the saving power of the gospel. Finally, salvation aims at bringing communion and reconciliation. In Christ, we are reconciled to God, to our neighbours, and to nations, but we still await the final reconciliation of all creation. This hope impels us to commitment. Hope of the final reconciliation of all things through Christ finds its concrete expression in the search for the unity of the people of God as well as for a more fraternal world community. Concern and commitment to a more humane life, a more just society, are not foreign to the experience and hope of salvation.

We now turn to the final concern of this study- the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion illustrated by Sobrino's view of evangelization. I consider that it belongs to the model of the Marxist tradition. In short, on the one hand, the Marxist appeal to practice is a critique of a contemplative oriented philosophy and a purely theoretical view of reality; it orders theory to action. On the other hand, the concept of practice is related to the Marxist thesis that humans constitute themselves through what they do. Practice is not only the goal of knowledge but also its condition. Therefore, the Marxist concept has two elements: the practical ordering of theory to the transformation of the world and the conditioning of knowledge through the practical conditions of life. Both elements have been more or less adopted and contextualized by Sobrino. Obviously, Sobrino's view of evangelization reveals to us that to evangelize is to transform our sinful world. He says that

the very word of proclamation is already a "doing", but that word must also be consciously ordained to other "doings"- deeds through which women and men may be able to grasp that truly there is good news of God, good news that, because it is God's, is not only communicated, but effective, capable of transforming the misery of personal and

historical reality.³⁶

Furthermore, Sobrino considers that

the Church of the poor is in its structure the true way of being a church in Jesus; that it provides the structural means of approximating ever more closely to the Church of faith.³⁷

In other words, the preferential option for the poor and solidarity with the poor, expressed in the practical conditions of life, open a new dimension for the understanding of the Christian faith. The strengths of the model in the context of Marxist tradition are that it gives practice a very strong societal orientation rather than a personal or individual orientation, and it provides a hermeneutical privilege, criterion and standpoint, by which one can test the interpretation of the Christian tradition. However, its weakness, if political relevance is the only criterion for the verification of theology, relates to the truth content of a liberation theology, which in a communist context (for instance, China where I come from) is rendered totally unable to bring about the liberation of the poor and the oppressed.

³⁶ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, p.135.

³⁷ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.124.

C. REFLECTION

Both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that the Christian faith is primarily related to praxis. For them, we cannot know Christ unless we follow him. Discipleship is the key to their theological reflection. However, when we go into details to see the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion, we discern that there is difference between Hauerwas' and Sobrino's approach. For Hauerwas, Christian practice is understood in the context of a cultural-linguistic tradition, while for Sobrino, Christian practice is understood in the context of Marxist tradition. Put differently, Hauerwas' praxis is primarily concerned about Christian identity, while Sobrino's praxis is principally concerned about the social relevance of the Christian faith. Obviously, each of their approaches and concerns has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is not necessary for us to determine which one of the approaches is closer to our Christian faith, because we simply need both. In other words, an over-emphasis on the distinctiveness of Christian identity makes the Christian faith remain incomprehensible and hence socially irrelevant in the modern world. On the other hand, an over-emphasis on the social relevance makes the Christian faith inevitably lose its distinctiveness. However, I am not suggesting that Hauerwas' praxis has no social relevance, or Sobrino's praxis loses Christian identity. Rather I realize that they want to make the Christian faith socially relevant, and both are adamant that it retains its distinctiveness. But they take different points of departure. That is to say, for Hauerwas, the social relevance of the Christian faith can only be achieved by the affirmation of the distinctiveness of the Christian identity; while for Sobrino, the Christian identity can only be found in its social relevance. In the following, I attempt to highlight their insights through dialogue in order to shed light on the relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion.

Firstly, both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's approaches illustrate a new relationship between theory and praxis in relation to the Christian religion; that is, a critical praxis correlation.¹ This suggests that practice grounds theory because God is not intrinsically related to theory, but mainly to practice as in creation, incarnation, and salvation. Practice is the foundation in fact as well as the fundamental subject matter and goal of theory. For instance, both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that christology can never be fully understood from a doctrinal perspective because its essence is basically a matter of practice, following Jesus. Therefore, they suggest that in order to appreciate the value and the importance of dogma [theory] in our Christian faith, we have to be aware that the aim of dogma [theory's task] is to serve practice. Thus, theory as critical theory is the self-understanding of practice, explicating and thematizing its own foundations in practice, and corrected in the light of that practice. Theory, then, is a "self-corrective process of reflection for action"² where action and its consequences dictate changes in theory and theory directs actions. However, this emphasis does not necessarily submit theory to practice because, at the same time, theory directs action. If we recall what we have discussed about Clodovis Boff's view of theology and praxis, we can say that Hauerwas' and Sobrino's model of critical praxis correlation is primarily concerned with the pistie criteriologie. Theology does not only have to meet its logical criterion, but also its verificational criterion, because the Christian faith is a way of life- yet not any way of life, but one informed by the word of God. Thus, when both Hauerwas and Sobrino take practice instead of theory as their point of departure to understand the relationship between theory and praxis, it is clear that they are speaking about pistie criteriologie instead of theological criteriologie. Then, when Hauerwas says that

¹ See Matthew Lamb, "The Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies." In: Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings, Vol.31, 1976, pp.149-178.

² *Ibid.*, p.173.

"ethics provides a fruitful territory in which to explore these issues because the sense in which the language of Christians is true is similar to the sense in which lives are true,"³ he should not be mistaken to be ignoring the importance of a metaphysical reflection on the ontological structures of human experience. Or when Sobrino considers that the transformation of this wretched world is a fundamental part of the Christian witness to the God of life, he should not be misunderstood as regarding the theoretical issues confronting theology [here, philosophy] as unimportant. But rather, in Boff's words, the theological criteriology and pistic criteriology are inter-related, but not to be confused. For both Hauerwas and Sobrino, doing the truth is not equivalent to making the truth through praxis, but to practising the truth, which has been given to us through revelation.

Secondly, shifting the point of departure from theory to praxis also signifies a change of the hermeneutical circle. For both Hauerwas and Sobrino, the hermeneutical theory should not stop at the author's original subjective intention or at meaning within the original historical context, but rather should go beyond these to explore the relationship between the past and present. For Hauerwas, this can be done only by a re-orientation of the presupposition of the hermeneutical theory; that is, to see Scripture from the perspective of the community. In other words, the interpretation of Scripture requires a corresponding community [the church] which is capable of living a distinctive way of life in accordance with Scripture. This does not simply mean a concern to put the Scripture [theory] into practice, but rather that without that community, the very idea of Scripture makes no sense. In order to establish his thesis about the role of the church in the hermeneutical circle, Hauerwas refers to the idea of the moral authority of Scripture. He contends that

³ S.Hauerwas, "The Ethicist as Theologian." In: The Christian Century, April 23, 1975, p.408.

the necessity of authority grows from the fact that morality unavoidably involves judgments that by their nature are particular and contingent- that is, they could be otherwise. Tradition is but the history of a community's sharing of such judgments as they have been tested through generations. Authority is not an external force that commands against our will; rather it proceeds from a common life made possible by tradition.⁴

Therefore, he suggests that authority requires community, but it is equally true that community must have authority. If Scripture has to be understood in relation to the church, then the hermeneutical issue is not only questions about fact or accuracy, but rather about what kind of community it must be. Furthermore, this hermeneutic should be done by a community whose life has been shaped by the narratives of the Scripture. In terms of his pacifism, the role of the community in Hauerwas' hermeneutical circle becomes obvious. For instance, Hauerwas considers that the Sermon on the Mount cannot be understood as a "revealed morality". Otherwise, it gives the impression that Scripture can be known and used apart from a community which confesses Jesus as its Lord. This makes no difference between those who believe in Christ and those who do not. Ironically, the Sermon can only be understood in relation to its community, the church, because the Scripture provides the resources necessary for the church to be a community sufficiently truthful. Hauerwas says that

the issue is not just one of interpretation but of what kind of people can remember the past and yet know how to go in a changed world.⁵

This is the practice understood in the context of cultural-linguistic tradition.

For Sobrino, the starting point of the hermeneutical theory cannot be taken from the perspective of some overarching theoretical or practical systems, but rather

⁴ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.62.

⁵ Ibid., p.67.

through a careful analysis of the concrete structures of domination in church and society. He suggests that, first of all, we have to see and experience the reality because it directly affects our hermeneutical skill and praxis.⁶ This experience will lead us to ideological suspicion. In order to see the reality, Sobrino considers that theologians have to turn to social sciences, because "they analyze the concrete misery of the real world, the mechanisms that create it, and consider possible models of liberation from it."⁷ Then, there is the application of our ideological suspicion to our understanding of reality in general and to the Bible and theology in particular. For instance, in the context of Latin America, this application makes us to question whether the reality of poverty is an unfortunate consequence or a result of a deliberate act. In this process, we experience a new way of perceiving reality that leads us to the exegetical suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account. This calls for a re-reading of the biblical text. An obvious example of this is the discovery of the biblical message about the preferential option to the poor. The poor are no longer to be one-sidedly understood in a spiritual sense, for the poor are those who are materially inadequate, and are victims of economical and political structures. Finally, we develop a new hermeneutic, that is, we find a new way of interpreting Scripture with the new perceptions of our reality at our disposal. Through the intentional and positive formulation of the hermeneutical circle, and by adding particular data to the equation, Sobrino offers us a very creative way of linking the Bible and life. It transforms the concept of the hermeneutical circle into an intentional, creative and revolutionary methodology. However, its difficulty is in reducing this new hermeneutical method to a narrow socio-economic and political agenda, due in part to the heavy borrowing

⁶ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of spirituality.

⁷ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, p.19.

of Marxist socio-political theory.

Both Hauerwas and Sobrino have different concerns about hermeneutical theory. Hauerwas begins with the basic assumption of the hermeneutical circle by suggesting that this has to be developed in the context of a community, while Sobrino starts, with a degree of hermeneutical suspicion, by suggesting that the reality of the real world plays an essential role in our hermeneutical theory. Obviously, these are two different levels of enquiry, but they are not mutually exclusive because we need both in order to enrich our understanding of the hermeneutical circle.

Thirdly and finally, both a shift of the point of departure from theory to praxis, and a change in the hermeneutical circle turns our attention to the subject. The individual is regarded no longer as object but as subject. The development of the person as subject takes place on the individual and social planes. On the individual level, we have to work for our salvation in terms of having character and sanctification. On the social level, we have to work for the transformation of the world in order to enable all subjects to be fully human subjects. Thus, the individual as subject is always a free subject, assuming personal responsibility for his/ her actions in the world and his/her own life. Therefore, when we talk about praxis we are always talking about the praxis of a free responsible subject who participates in the shaping of his/her own historical destiny.

An emphasis on the primacy of praxis in theological reflection, however, does not necessarily solve the problem of the diversity of theological interpretation. Ironically it complicates the problem. But our unity is not primarily dependent on our complete agreement over the details of Jesus' life or other theological concepts; rather, our unity is based on the assumption of what kind of people we must be to

be Jesus' followers. Furthermore, both Hauerwas and Sobrino remind us that the issues of Christian identity and the social relevance of the Christian faith are not primarily theoretical issues, but rather practical. That is to say, we can talk about Christian identity only if we live in accordance with the Kingdom's values, and we can talk about the social relevance of the Christian faith only if we have a profound spirituality to discern the signs of the times. Thus, the issue is not simply a question of the application of theory to practice, but is a foundational issue of the church's self-understanding and self-discovery.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the Kingdom demands our response in terms of praxis. Praxis is not simply an application of theory, but also it formulates theory. The Kingdom of God cannot merely be known by exegesis, but by living out the Kingdom's values. Without this praxis, we cannot fully know the Kingdom. In the next chapter, I will continue to examine the relationship between the Kingdom and the church in terms of the presence of the Kingdom in the light of the results of this and the preceding two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENCE OF THE KINGDOM

A. THE KINGDOM OF GOD TODAY

The preceding chapters have implicitly and explicitly demonstrated in different degrees and different stages, that for Hauerwas and Sobrino the Kingdom of God is both immediate reality [already] and eschaton [not yet], is both immanent and transcendent, present and future. However, this common understanding has different implications for their theological orientations. Despite this, both Hauerwas and Sobrino agree with one another about the close connexion between the Kingdom and Jesus, on the one hand, and that the messianic office of Jesus necessarily brings with it the messianic community, on the other. The former suggests that the Kingdom is found in the person and work of Jesus, while the latter suggests that apart from Jesus, the Kingdom is also to be found in the circle of disciples which constitutes the *ekklesia* founded by him.¹ Thus, the Kingdom does not belong exclusively to the future, but is also a present reality manifested in the Christian community. The church then has a special role in both salvation history and the history of humankind.

It is the sign of the Kingdom. Hans Kung says that

the church is not a preliminary stage, but an *anticipatory sign* of the definite reign of God: a sign of the reality of the reign of God already present in Jesus Christ, a sign of the coming completion of the reign of God..... It is the reign of God which the church hopes for, bears witness to, proclaims. It is not the bringer or bearer of the reign of God which is to come and is at the same time already present, but its

¹ See Jorgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit (London: SCM, 1977). He describes his ecclesiology as "messianic ecclesiology". "Messianic ecclesiology" is shorthand for "a christologically founded and eschatologically directed doctrine of the church." (p.13)

voice, its announcer, its *herald*. God alone can bring his reign; the church is devoted entirely to its service.²

Therefore, the special role of the church in the Kingdom is not a matter of privilege, but rather a matter of servanthood. Besides, the Kingdom and the church are not identical because the Kingdom is an entirely new, all-embracing reality. The church is not a demonstration or presentation of the Kingdom but a group of people who, in following Jesus, place themselves in the service of the Kingdom that is to come. Put differently, the church does not bring forth the Kingdom as product, but the Kingdom creates the church and demands discipleship. Despite this, Moltmann reminds us that

the church..... is not yet the Kingdom of God, but it is its anticipation in history. Christianity is not yet the new creation, but it is the working of the Spirit of the new creation. Christianity is not yet the new mankind but is its vanguard.³

In an anticipatory and fragmentary form, the church represents the future of the whole of reality and so mediates this eschatological future to the world. In order to be faithful to its calling of being a sign of the Kingdom, the church has to take its calling seriously.

Nevertheless, the way in which the church can be a sign of the Kingdom depends upon how the Kingdom is understood. If the Kingdom of God is purely subjectivity, then the presence of the Kingdom is merely concerned about a change of disposition of people, for whom little or nothing in the affairs of this world matter or can matter, because the Kingdom has not have yet begun for them. On the other hand, if the Kingdom is a power which will come from heaven unexpectedly at the end of the time, then the church can limit itself to mere fiducial belief with pure

² H.Kung, The Church (London: Search, 1971), p.96.

³ J.Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p.196.

subjectivity, and give the course of the world over to the "devils". If the Kingdom is understood primarily as this- worldly and concerned with earthly affairs in the way in which the "social gospel" movement in America did, then the presence of the Kingdom relates to a transformation of the social structures which leaves the individual with an empty utopia.

However, with the aid of biblical scholarship, we find that the Kingdom comes both as process and as climax.⁴ Thus, the presence of the Kingdom is both a saving invitation and the saving work of God. And yet the complete turning of humankind to the Kingdom would renew the face of the earth: for a person cannot give himself/herself to Christ and his Kingdom, and then stand indifferent to the great work of his/her redemption, which is valid for all creation. It is undeniable that the Kingdom is concerned about the transformation of the heart. But this must show itself in one's disposition, in a new basic relation to God and to one's neighbour and to the good. It is no partial act alongside our life, but an incident of indivisible totality. As the coming of the loving dominion and the Kingdom of God also means the redemption of the cosmos, of all things- which means the establishment of the saving dominion of God in Christ over everything that is created- so genuine conversion of the individual and of the community always demands and signifies a change in the milieu. Therefore, the growth of the new life in individuals must not be isolated from the growth of the Kingdom as a whole. The salvation of the individual stands in most intimate connection with the fulfilment of the salvation of the Kingdom. Each person opens himself/herself to the growth given from above, particularly by praying and working for the coming of the Kingdom.

⁴ See the work of J.Weiss, A.Schweitzer, and W.Kummel.

Nevertheless, the issue of the meaning of the presence of the Kingdom cannot be solved by pointing to the biblical passages which speak of its presence, but this can only be addressed if one takes into consideration the fact that the Kingdom brings with it a call to repentance and also a gospel of salvation. Rather, accepting the fact that the Kingdom is both present and future, I shall attempt to explore how the Kingdom creates and demands a particular way of life of its messianic community, and in turn how the Christian community is able to be a sign of the Kingdom, with reference to the preceding study of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theology. The presence of the Kingdom is concerned particularly with the encounter between the Kingdom and the world. However, to discuss the presence of the Kingdom does not mean that the church is the bridge between the world and the Kingdom, for Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humankind in terms of historical event and continuing spiritual reality. Also, an emphasis on the presence of the Kingdom does not suggest that we look for the future to bring the development and completion of something that already exists, because the Kingdom is not merely the coming Kingdom but also at the same time the eternal Kingdom, that has existed since the beginning of the world. Neither does it imply that the futurity of the Kingdom interprets all sayings of its presence, because the Kingdom is to Jesus no ideal but reality itself, which dominates and renews the world. Rather to emphasize the presence of the Kingdom is to acknowledge that the Kingdom does not merely belong to the end-time, but is at the same time "supra-temporally" eternal, so the end-time quality of the Kingdom necessitates a definite present-time quality. Because it is "supra-temporal", the eternal quality of the Kingdom is present and now. The Kingdom therefore is not present merely as a claim, a demand or a threat of judgment, but it also intervenes in a certain *katros* through the very fact of presence, and brings about a decisive change. With this the end time begins, which is at the same time the time of salvation. The Kingdom enters into the midst of time and

transforms it into the time of fulfilment. Thus, when we talk about the presence of the Kingdom, this is based on nothing other than based in the dynamically creative realism of the idea of God's sovereignty. On the other hand, the role of the church is nothing other than an acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ and following Jesus to witness to the Kingdom in the world.

If the presence of the Kingdom is concerned with the encounter between the Kingdom and the world, it calls the church to discipleship. This involves a dialectical process: that is, discipleship *of* the Kingdom and *for* the Kingdom. The former is about the style of life of the people of the Kingdom which primarily relates to the ethical dimension, while the latter is about witnessing to the Kingdom which principally relates to the missiological dimension.⁵ Nonetheless, these two processes are inter-related at two levels. Firstly, discipleship of the Kingdom cannot be understood apart from discipleship for the Kingdom, because discipleship is never for the sake of self-perfection. On the contrary, discipleship for the Kingdom is not possible without reference to discipleship of the Kingdom because discipleship is not merely a matter of doing, but also a matter of being, of following Jesus. Secondly, when the church witnesses to the Kingdom, it displays a style of life, and when the church has a style of life, it witnesses to the Kingdom. If discipleship of the Kingdom is primarily concerned about the internal life and integrity of the Christian community, then discipleship for the Kingdom is principally concerned about the external manifestation of the internal life of the Christian community. They cannot be separated. Besides, it is unnecessary to rank their priority, for example, by saying that the belonging and the being aspect come first, because discipleship of and for

⁵ I have to admit that there is a weakness in understanding discipleship of the Kingdom primarily in terms of life-style, and discipleship for the Kingdom principally in terms of mission. But for the sake of this study, this distinction is necessary, provided that it is not understood exclusively.

the Kingdom are two sides of a coin. Without either one of them, discipleship is incomplete. Interestingly enough, I find that Hauerwas' theology primarily starts from the concern of discipleship of the Kingdom, while Sobrino's theology principally starts from the concern of discipleship for the Kingdom. As said, their different point of entry is not to set discipleship of the Kingdom against discipleship for the Kingdom and vice versa, but rather their differences are complementary aspects of the one truth.

However, I have to clarify that an emphasis on discipleship of and for the Kingdom is not to reduce the Kingdom to human achievement, but rather discipleship is always a consequence of conversion to the Kingdom and in the Kingdom. Put differently, discipleship is a matter of responsibility⁶. The idea of responsibility is fundamentally rooted in the Christian faith as "relationship". It is fellowship with the living God. In M.Buber's words, it is an "I-Thou" relation. On the one hand, God takes the individual person seriously, and speaks to him/her; that is, the tremendous earnestness of God regarding humanity even to the point of sacrificing his only-begotten son for him/her on the cross. On the other hand, humanity must take God seriously. His/Her response is his/her responsibility. Thus, responsibility means that in a relationship between human beings and God, he/she responds to God's word with the responsibility of his/her personal decision and action. Therefore, discipleship is not anthropocentric which centers on the human. Nor is it theocentric in a sense alien to humanity and foreign to his/her world. Rather it centres in grace-endowed fellowship of humanity with God, in the dialogue of word and response, in responsibility. Then, discipleship is never a human effort, but is a response to God's graciousness. K.Barth rightly noted that

⁶ See Bernhard Haring, The Law of Christ, Vol.1 (Westminster: Newman Press, 1963), pp.35-53.

there is no discipleship without the One who calls to it. There is no discipleship except faith in God as determined by the One who calls to it and frees for it. There is no discipleship which does not consist in the act of the obedience of this faith in God and therefore in Him.⁷

Discipleship is always God's grace and initiative.

In the following, I will discuss the presence of the Kingdom in three correlated ways. Firstly, since the Kingdom of God is a reality instead of a concept, we cannot discuss the Kingdom without being challenged by it. Nor can we illustrate the Kingdom without first being conformed to it. Therefore, I will explore discipleship of the Kingdom in terms of having a messianic lifestyle. Secondly, as the kingdom of God is not only about God's salvation, but also his lordship, then discipleship should press toward "public" discipleship. I will examine discipleship for the Kingdom in terms of a commitment to mission. Thirdly and finally, if the Kingdom of God is concerned about both the discipleship of and for the Kingdom, then it orients our way of doing theology in a particular way. I will explore its implications for practical theology.

⁷ K.Barth, Church Dogmatics Vol.IV 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), p.537.

B. DISCIPLESHIP OF THE KINGDOM: A MESSIANIC LIFESTYLE

"Disciple" is the oldest term applied to Christians: "In Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (Acts 11:26). We are called to be Jesus' disciples. We are disciples in the Kingdom, followers of Jesus on the way. Incidentally, this was the other name for Christians in the Book of Acts: followers of "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Although the origin of this self-designation has not yet been fully explained, most scholars would agree that the Christian's unique lifestyle contributed to the name. The New International Dictionary of the New Testament emphasizes this term as a "designation for Christians and their proclamation of Jesus Christ, which includes the fact that this proclamation also comprises a particular walk or life or way," and the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament refers to "the mode of life which comes to expression in the Christian fellowship."¹ Thus, Christians at the beginning were associated with a particular pattern of life. Their faith produced a discernible lifestyle, a way of life, a process of growth visible to all. This different style of living which grew out of their faith gave testimony to that faith. J.Moltmann explains this relationship between faith and lifestyle in such words:

When we experience the meaning of our life and adhere to it, we develop a personal lifestyle. We seek to orient our life to this meaning. We consciously take hold of our life and direct it by seeking to make it correspond to this meaning within changing situations and demands. The meaning of life gives us a strong heart and this in turn shapes our external way of being in the world.²

Thus, the Christian faith and its inspired lifestyle are inseparable, unless the Christian faith is considered merely as an object for philosophical enquiry.

¹ See G.Ebel, "Way". In: The New International Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol.3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), pp.933-947; and Wilhelm Michaelis, "Hodos". In: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol.5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), pp.42-114.

² J.Moltmann, The Open Church (London: SCM, 1978), p.37.

At the time of the early church, Christian convictions became identified with a certain kind of behaviour. That style of life followed the main lines of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and his other teachings. To believe meant to follow Jesus. For instance, Aristides described Christians to the Roman emperor Hadrian in this way:

They love one another. They never fail to help widows; they save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something they give freely to the man who has nothing; if they see a stranger, they take him home, and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God.³

The early Christians were known for the way they lived, not only for what they believed. For them, the two were completely interweaved. The earliest title given to them reflected the importance of their Kingdom lifestyle. They were not called the people of "the experience" or the people of "right doctrine". Rather they were the people of "the Way". Thus, discipleship, first of all, is concerned with the messianic lifestyle.

The correlation between discipleship and lifestyle suggests a close relationship between the Christian faith and ethics⁴. This does not mean that discipleship is nothing other than a list of ethical codes, but rather that ethics is one of the indispensable dimensions in which discipleship manifests its meaning. When we look at the gospels' record of Jesus' call to discipleship, we find that Jesus' call was not

³ Jim Wallis, The Call to Conversion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), p.14. It quotes from Aristides, "Apology 15". In: Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Allan Menzies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 9:263-279. See also Henry Chadwick, The Early Church (London: Penguin, 1988), pp.56-60.

⁴ I prefer "ethics" to "morality" because "morality" is often understood individually, and get involved in the details and qualifications. However, "ethics" here does not only mean a philosophical study of the moral value of human conduct and rules and principles that ought to govern it, but also is understood in terms of "being ethical" which is concerned with one's moral life in a communal context.

just for belief, but for trust in God. In other words, it is a call to recognize the reality of God's rule, which is the Kingdom. And God's rule is a reality pressing upon those who hear Jesus' message. For those who respond to Jesus' call positively, it means the beginning of faith. But faith also means faithfulness. In both Hebrew and Greek the same word covers both meanings. In Jewish thought Abraham was a prime example of such faith- faithfulness, as expressed in his readiness to offer up Isaac. The Epistles to the Hebrews and to James reflect the same understanding (Heb. 11:17-18 James 2:21-22). Faith comes to expression in faithfulness, faithful obedience to God's will. Faith which does not manifest itself in action is a contradiction in terms. Thus, having faith and believing in God is a life lived in the light of God's coming Kingdom, lived out of the resources of God's rule, with habits and responsibilities, conduct and relationships, needs and ambitions, ordered by its priorities. Therefore, it is impossible to be Jesus' disciple without being ethical.

However, when I suggest that Jesus' call to discipleship has a significant ethical implication, this implication should not be understood in terms of goodness and rightness in a general ethical theory, but rather in a "messianic" context. That is to say, on the one hand in the power of the Holy Spirit, the down payment and guarantee of the Kingdom's presence, Christians can live lives that are different from their surrounding world. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount is not a utopian vision, but rather is a reality, at least among those who are in the Kingdom. On the other hand, a messianic context suggests that Christians are called to be faithful to God, which is not always the same as being morally good. Therefore, the relationship between the Christian faith and ethics is distinct and interrelated. They are distinct because they operate in different levels in terms of accountability, responsibility and relationship. But they are interrelated because the Christian faith is a life option which should affect one's ethical life, and ethics can help display

Christian convictions.

Primarily speaking, the messianic lifestyle is a life which is parallel to and is shaped by the "already, and not yet" nature of the Kingdom. As previously indicated, the Kingdom of God is both a present and a future reality. Thus, history and eschatology cannot be divided, as this world and the next, in the world and out of the world. Through his mission and resurrection, Jesus has brought the Kingdom of God into history. As the eschatological future, the Kingdom has become the power that determines the present. This future has already begun. At the same time, the messianic lifestyle signifies that Christians have already lived in the light of the "new era" in the circumstances of the "old" one. Since the eschatological becomes historical in this way, the historical also becomes eschatological. Hope becomes realistic and reality becomes hopeful. Thus, the messianic lifestyle is not a life in constant deferment, but a life in anticipation. An anticipation is not yet a fulfilment, but it is already the presence of the future in the conditions of history. It is a fragment of the coming whole, it is a payment made in advance of complete fulfilment and part-possession of what is still to come. Thus, the messianic lifestyle no longer stands under the law and in the midst of the compulsions of this transient world; it has already stood in the sunrise of Christ's new day. Its freedom lies in its transcending of the present through the power of hope for what is to come, and the actual in the light of the potential. But at the same time, it has to seize the new against the resistance of the old, so that a new beginning cannot be made without an ending, and freedom cannot be realized without struggle. Nevertheless, the messianic lifestyle cannot be exclusively understood on an individual level because the word "messianic" is used for a description of the people of the Kingdom in order that they represent what is to come. I will come to this point again when I discuss discipleship as a commitment to mission.

Obviously, both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider discipleship of the Kingdom as the messianic lifestyle. The church is called to live out the Kingdom's values in the world. For Hauerwas, truth and truthfulness cannot be separated. It does not mean that Christian convictions are proved meaningful or true by showing their ethical implications, but rather they are both true and ethical in that they force us to a true understanding of ourselves and our existence. Hauerwas says that

the claims they make about the way things are involve convictions about the way *we* should be if we are to be *able* to see truthfully the way things are.⁵

Therefore, Christian convictions cannot be understood apart from discipleship, and discipleship is nothing other than a truthful way of life shaped by the Christian faith. This emphasis is fully expressed in our preceding study of Hauerwas' theological themes. For instance, when Hauerwas talks about the marks of the church, he particularly refers to the Christian life rather than the concepts of the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church. Or when he talks about narrative, he illustrates it in terms of character and vision. Furthermore, his practice of pacifism is nothing other than one of the concrete manifestations of what the messianic lifestyle is. Unlike Hauerwas, Sobrino understands the messianic lifestyle in terms of its social manifestation. His emphases on justice and liberation are not simply the results of his humanitarian compassion, but rather are the consequences of his experience of how gracious and promising the Kingdom of God is. In other words, it is the Kingdom which inspires and demands him to work for justice and for solidarity with the poor. Sobrino says that

when all is said and done, without the spiritual life, apostolic work would be threatened from within. It would be cut off from its deepest roots.

When all is said and done, the spiritual life must be efficacious for the

⁵ S.Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.90.

transformation of the secular reality around us, helping us steer that reality in the direction of the reign of God.⁶

Thus, the messianic lifestyle is characterized by doing justice which is rooted in a profound spirituality. In the following, I attempt to explicate what discipleship as the messianic lifestyle is and involves with reference to the preceding study of Hauerwas' and Sobrino's theology. In short, it is a life of conversion, worshipping, following Jesus, being an alternative community, and a life which brings transvaluation.

Firstly, the messianic lifestyle is a life of conversion. Conversion is both the first step of entry into the Kingdom and the continuous mark of the Christian life. In other words, it is not only the conversion of non-believers, but also of believers. It not only brings people into the Kingdom, but also occurs inside the community of the Kingdom. Both Hauerwas and Sobrino agree with this.⁷ Besides, Hauerwas' view of character, virtue and vision, and Sobrino's suggestion of the preferential option to the poor, suggest that conversion means a radical change not only in outlook but in posture, not only in mind but in heart, not only in worldview but in behaviour, not only in thoughts but in action. Conversion is more than a changed intellectual position, but rather it is a whole new beginning. It is far more than an emotional release and much more than an intellectual adherence to correct doctrine. Rather, it is a basic change in life direction. Hauerwas calls this fundamental change "vision" and "narrative", while Sobrino considers being in solidarity with the poor as the result of this change.⁸ This fundamental change involves a process of "being turned from" and "a turning to". In short, it is from sin to salvation, from idols to

⁶ J.Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation, pp.1-2.

⁷ See my discussion on both Hauerwas' and Sobrino's views of spirituality in chapter one.

⁸ See my discussion on Hauerwas' concept of character, vision and virtue and Sobrino's concept of the spirituality in chapter one.

God, from slavery to freedom, from injustice to justice, from guilt to forgiveness, from death to life and much more. This "turning to" means to surrender ourselves to God in every sphere of human existence: the personal and social, the spiritual and economic, the psychological and political. However, Sobrino reminds us that the "turning to" is never private, albeit deeply personal. It has to be both historical and particular to each situation. On the one hand, we are called to respond to God always in the particulars of our own personal, social and political circumstances. On the other hand, the "turning to" is historical because it entails a reversal of the historical givens, whatever we may be at any place and time. Then, conversion is basically about a new relationship. That is to say, no longer are our lives organized around our own needs or the dictates of the ruling powers. Rather, we have identified ourselves with the Kingdom of God in the world, and the measures of our existence in doing God's will. Turning to God brings a change in all our relationships: to God, to our neighbour, to the world, to our possessions and so on. But conversion cannot be an end in itself. It is the beginning of active solidarity with the purposes of the Kingdom of God in the world.

The concept of conversion suggests that the messianic lifestyle has to be radical because it deeply reaches to and transforms even the basic relationship; it has to be comprehensive because it is a matter of life and death, so there are no half-answers and half-commitment; and finally, it has to be unconditional because it attempts no justification, but positively responds to God's lovingkindness. We can conclude that a life of conversion is a submission to the rule of God before all other claims on affection or commitment.

Secondly, the messianic lifestyle is a life of worshipping. Discipleship is never a discipline of anxiety, but comes from joy and love. I suggest that the

Christian life is a life of worshipping because we are the messianic people. We are already in God's Kingdom. Although the Kingdom of God is not yet fully realized in this world, we experience its presence in worship, particularly. In a section of Church Dogmatics on the "The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian community," Karl Barth writes:

It is not only in worship that the community is edified.... But it is here first that this continually takes place. If it does not edify itself here, it certainly will not do so in daily life, nor in the execution of its ministry in the world.⁹

Worship and the Christian's daily life of obedience are not two separate spheres but two concentric circles, of which worship is the inner and gives to the outer its content and character. The nature of our corporate worship will ultimately be a test of our other involvements in the world. The quality of our worship will reflect the quality of everything that we do, including whether we will serve and minister rightly in the world. If we are not experiencing the power of God in our worship with each other, we will not experience the power of God in our involvement in the world.

For Hauerwas, the Christian worship is characterized by sacraments: that is, baptism and eucharist. Through baptism we do not simply learn God's story, but we become part of the story. The eucharist is the eschatological meal of God's continuing presence. At that meal we become part of his Kingdom. His presence, his peace, is a living reality in the world. As his people we become part of his sacrifice in order that the world might be saved from sin and death. However, Hauerwas insists that an emphasis on being a holy people and being a sacramental people cannot be separated because "it is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God's Kingdom in the world. They set our standard, as we try

⁹ K.Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV 1, pp.643f.

to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway."¹⁰ For Sobrino, the Christian worship has to flow out of discipleship. His reasoning is based upon the christology of the letter to the Hebrews, in which Jesus is called by God to be a priest. But for that author, Jesus defines what it means to be a priest; Jesus does not offer sacrifices, he offers himself. He does not operate in the realm of the sacred, but in the realm of history. His mediation was an advocacy of love and justice among human beings. As the exalted Lord, Jesus ought to be acclaimed; but worship alone does not give access to God. Only when it is preceded by the following of Jesus, by advocating justice and love, can worship have any meaning.¹¹ Both Hauerwas and Sobrino suggest that the messianic lifestyle is a eucharistic way of life. Christians are the sacramental people. Then, the Christian worship requires a community which understands itself as a messianic community in terms of having a life with new quality and presence in the human suffering. Without worship, discipleship is a form of human asceticism; without discipleship, worship is idol worship.

Thirdly, the messianic lifestyle is a life of following Jesus because Jesus calls us to follow him. Jesus is a model for discipleship. To be a disciple of Jesus means something more than being a student of a teacher.¹² To be a disciple means to

¹⁰ S.Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, p.108.

¹¹ J.Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp.300-304.

¹² Orlando E.Costas quotes Juan Stam's saying that there are seven basic differences between following Jesus and following the rabbis. They are as follows:

- 1]. Following Jesus was by invitation, whereas with the rabbis it was by request.
- 2]. Becoming a disciple of Jesus involved a practical education that encompassed one's entire way of life. With the rabbis, it was purely intellectual, theoretical and abstract.
- 3]. Jesus' invitation to follow was grounded on a personal relationship. That of the rabbis was basically doctrinal.
- 4]. Following Jesus was a gift of grace. With the rabbis, it was in some sense a commercial enterprise, since their disciples were obligated to pay for their instruction.
- 5]. The discipleship of Jesus demanded absolute commitment. The rabbis did not and could not make such a demand.
- 6]. With Jesus, the life discipleship was a communal reality. With the rabbis, there was hardly any room for fellowship.
- 7]. The discipleship of Jesus was permanent. The invitation was for life. The goal of the rabbinic

"follow after". This is what Paul said, "Be imitators of Christ." (1Cor. 11:1) Both Hauerwas and Sobrino take this seriously.¹³ Despite this similarity, they have different interpretations and practice of following Jesus. As this has already been illustrated and discussed previously, I do not intend to repeat it here. Nevertheless, for both Hauerwas and Sobrino, following Jesus is what distinguishes Christians from other disciples and supporters of great men, in the sense that Christians are ultimately dependent on this person, not only on his teaching, but also on his life, death and new life. But we understand the real meaning of the Gospels, the teaching [message] of Jesus only in the light of his life, death and new life: in the New Testament as a whole his teaching cannot be separated from his person. For Christians then Jesus is certainly a teacher, but at the same time also essentially more than a teacher: he is in person the living, archetypal embodiment of his cause. This living Christ is and remains Jesus of Nazareth as he lived and preached, acted and suffered. The living Christ does not call merely for inconsequential adoration or even mystical union. Nor of course does he call for literal imitation. But he does call for personal and practical discipleship. This witnesses to a Christlikeness in terms of having the mind of Christ instead of externally duplicating of the words and deeds of Jesus. To possess the mind of Christ includes much more than acquaintance with the story of His life and words. But following Jesus should not be misconstrued as implying some naive ability on the individual's part to attain to His perfection. K.Barth rightly warns us that

there can be no question of a conformity which means equality, of anything in the nature of a deification of man, of making him a second Christ..... Jesus Christ will reign, and men will be subject to Him, and they will always be different in, and in spite of, the closet fellowship

disciples was to become rabbis themselves. (See Costas, The Integrity of Mission, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979, p.15)

¹³ See my discussion on Hauerwas' view of the imitation of Christ and Sobrino's view of following the historical Jesus.

between Him and His imitators. There will be no more Christs.... the Unique will always be unique, and the distances will remain....¹⁴

However, R.Bultmann challenged the possibility of following the historical Jesus by saying:

I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, and are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.... We can strictly speaking know nothing about the personality of Jesus.¹⁵

Is then it possible for us to follow Jesus? Bultmann is right that we should distinguish between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. However, their difference is not unbridgable, because in Jesus we encounter Christ, and in Christ we encounter Jesus. The two cannot convincingly be divided, and christology cannot sustain a radical breach between what we know by faith and what we know through historical investigation. William Barclay said that

the fact is that from the Gospels a recognisable person emerges, and it is equally true that the personality there depicted is in accordance with the facts.... This does not mean that I must literally and exactly and mechanically accept everything; but it does beyond all doubt mean that I must be able to regard the picture of the Gospels as historically and factually reliable in general.... The Gospels are certainly the product of the faith of the early church; but the Gospels are equally certainly the reliable record of the events on which that faith is founded.... no matter what historical research and analysis can do to that record, they cannot alter the historical rightness of its total impression in the mind and heart.¹⁶

Barclay suggests that historical investigation cannot create faith, and it must not seek to extend its role in this respect. It cannot demonstrate on its own that God is involved in a quite special way in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the decision of faith. However, at the same time, faith cannot create the Jesus event, but it is

¹⁴ K.Barth, Church Dogmatics, II 2, pp.577f.

¹⁵ R.Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (Collins: Fontana, 1962), p.11. See also Martin Kahler,

¹⁶ W.Barclay, Gospels and Acts (London: SCM, 1976), p.17 & 23.

dependent on it. Therefore, in order to know who Jesus is, we have to follow him [i.e. have faith] without giving in and up the historical investigation.

Fourthly, the messianic lifestyle is a communal life. It has two levels. On the first level, it suggests that the messianic lifestyle is not merely an individualistic concern, but it is also to be understood in terms of participating in an alternative society. This is what Hauerwas emphasizes.¹⁷ On this level, more than just individuals who have been converted, Christian disciples are now a people, a new community of faith, which has embarked on a new way of life. From the beginning, the Kingdom is made manifest through a people who share a common life. Their visible fellowship is the sign and the first fruits of God's new order begun in Jesus Christ. The message of the Kingdom becomes more than an idea. A new human society has sprung up. Here love is given daily expression; reconciliation is actually occurring. Not an individualistic vision, it creates a new community, an alternative community or alternative culture. The new life produces a new social reality, initially the movement and then the church. As an alternative culture where the Spirit is known, the church exists in part to nurture the new life through its shared perceptions, values, and worship, confirming and sustaining the new way of seeing and being. But the new community is also meant to embody the new way of being. In its own life, it is to live the alternative values generated by life in the Spirit and becomes a witness to compassion by incarnating the ethos of compassion. There is a radicalism to the alternative community of Jesus. If the church is to take seriously the double movement of withdrawal from culture and entry into an alternative culture, it will increasingly see itself as a community which knows that its lord is different from the lord of culture, its loyalties and values very different

¹⁷ See my discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

from the dominant consciousness of our culture. It lives the life referred to in John's description of Jesus' followers as in the world, but not of the world, grounded not in the world, but in God. The insistence on the sharp dichotomy between the Kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of light will help us to avoid the mistakes of liberalism's theology of the Kingdom. To insist that the church must be a counter culture is not to argue that culture is bad. Culture is part of the good creation. Rather the church lives as a new model in the very heart of the perverted culture, pointing by their words and life to God's alternative.

On the second level, the communal nature of the messianic lifestyle suggests that discipleship is not merely a matter of what the individual does with his/her aloneness before God, but rather it calls for love of neighbour as well as for love of God. The two go together, and the latter cannot be professed without the former, just as the former cannot be sustained without the latter. This is what Sobrino emphasizes.¹⁸ Since Jesus' call to discipleship involves and demands participation in the life of God's new people, then the messianic community should not be an exclusive and self-interested community. Ironically, it should actively participate in the daily life of the people in terms of proclaiming the good news and denouncing dehumanizing activities. The new covenant has a horizontal as well as a vertical dimension. I will come to this aspect again when I talk about discipleship as a commitment to mission.

Finally, the messianic lifestyle is a life which eventually brings transvaluation of oneself and one's practice of love. This is a result of a life of conversion, worshipping, following Jesus and being an alternative community. Regarding the

¹⁸ See pp.339-346.

matter of transvaluation, I confine my discussion to two points; that is, faithfulness instead of effectiveness, justice above security, and peace above economic growth. Hauerwas strongly holds that the Christian social ethic is first of all concerned with our faithfulness to Jesus instead of social effectiveness. It is true that faithfulness and effectiveness are not necessarily in contrast. But Christians are so often tempted to abandon Jesus' call to honesty and love for enemies, for the sake of quick results or to advance an ethic that everyone can accept. This is especially true in the case of wars fought to secure justice or preserve liberty and security. For Hauerwas, Christian pacifism is neither a form of survivalism nor a form of indifference. Rather, it is a matter of faithfulness.¹⁹ Christians should never sacrifice obedience for short term effectiveness because they know that the Kingdom is the ultimate clue to the nature of reality.

This transvaluation also challenges the market economy's understanding of justice and peace. For Sobrino, justice is never simply a matter of distribution. Rather, it is a matter of defending the life of the poor. Society cannot be one-sidedly dominated by the concern of economic growth and national security without reference to the virtue of justice, peace and brotherhood/sisterhood. Peace is not simply a condition without war, but rather is a condition with respect to human dignity. The real threat to modern civilization is not necessarily about communism, but is a system of institutionalized injustice, which benefits the wealthy and oppresses the poor. Therefore, the messianic lifestyle brings us to practise justice at a new level.²⁰

The above explication of the messianic lifestyle demonstrates that the creation

¹⁹ See my discussion on pacifism in chapter three.

²⁰ See pp.279ff.

of the messianic lifestyle is a work that is both individual and collective. It is a fact for each Christian, who really tries to express his/her faith in the concrete forms of his/her life. It is also the task of Christians as a corporate body. Nevertheless, the formation of the messianic lifestyle could not be the result of a doctrine, firmly and clearly established. On the contrary, it is the fact of living in faith. That is to say, discipleship is a kind of behaviour, action and decision which springs from one's innermost realization of God's sovereignty. It begins with a recognition of God, that God is the ultimate, the hidden reality behind all reality, the power beside which our power shrinks to infinitesimal insignificance. It is a readiness to acknowledge the importance of the rule of God as a factor in daily living and as a fact of enormous power. This suggests that we cannot have given ourselves to Jesus and ignore the meaning of his Kingdom on our lives and the world. But rather we become the people of the new order. Thus, discipleship of the Kingdom should include the way we think about present political questions, as well as our way of practising hospitality. It also affects the way we dress and the food we eat as well as the way in which we manage our financial affairs. It includes being faithful to one's wife as well as being accessible to one's neighbour. It includes the position one ought to take on current social and political questions, as well as the decisions which relate to the personal employment of our time. But we cannot make the Christian lifestyle. It is created by the Spirit when we personally and communally bind our life with the life of Christ and understand our life-history as a small part of God's great history.

Nevertheless, no proclamation of the Kingdom will make sense for the world if the Kingdom with all its implications is not taken seriously by Christians themselves. There is no genuine evangelization without Kingdom discipleship. It is not only a matter of credibility, but of authenticity and faithfulness to the gospel. J.Moltmann notes that "it is alone important that our life, our life-experiences, and

their expression in speaking and remaining silent, in doing and suffering, become messianic sign to others."²¹ A Christian is a visible sign of the new covenant which God has made with this world in Jesus Christ. In his/her life and words he/she would allow this covenant to be manifest in the eyes of other. He/She reveals to the world the truth about its condition, and witnesses to the salvation of which he/she is an instrument.

²¹ J.Moltmann, The Open Church (London: SCM, 1978), p.49.

C. DISCIPLESHIP FOR THE KINGDOM: A COMMITMENT TO MISSION

In this thesis, I emphasize the centrality of following Jesus in Christian discipleship. If Jesus does not preach himself but the Kingdom, then Christian discipleship is not only concerned with one's inner life, but it also has to be oriented towards the service of the Kingdom. If for Jesus the Kingdom is about God's sovereignty over, and his love toward, the world, then Christian discipleship cannot be exclusively confined to a personal and private level, but has to relate to the whole world. Put precisely, since Jesus' call is to demand the world both structurally and personally to repent, then discipleship is to affirm that Christians are sent to the world in the service of the Kingdom for the world. In other words, Christian discipleship involves mission. K.Barth, in an exhaustive Bible study, convincingly demonstrates that in every instance recorded in Scripture where a man or a woman is called by God to faith in Christ he or she is simultaneously commissioned by God to perform a task in the world.¹ Therefore, mission is the essence of theology instead of merely being a model or a paradigm because mission expresses at the deepest level the purpose of Jesus' call. Besides, mission is defined not by its objective, but rather by its origin. It is mission which defines and creates discipleship, not vice versa. If we see the agent of discipleship as the church, then the vision of mission means that the church does not exist for itself. The church is called to be a community at the service of the world. On the other hand, however, it also means that the life and growth of the church is a necessary condition of its service. Without the church there is no service, and thus no mission. Without mission, there is no church, for the church is missionary by its very nature.

Both Hauerwas and Sobrino unanimously agree that the church is mission, and

¹ K.Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV 3, p.592.

mission has to be oriented in the service of the Kingdom. For Hauerwas, his emphases on character, virtue, narrative and pacifism do not involve any tendency to privatize the Christian faith. Rather he believes that in order to witness to the Kingdom faithfully, the church has first to be an alternative society so that the world can know and experience what the Kingdom is.² For Sobrino, his emphases on the preferential option to the poor, justice and liberation do not in any sense reduce the Christian faith to a series of humanitarian programmes. Rather his commitment is the consequence of his experience of what the Kingdom is. The Kingdom becomes a vision and a yardstick to challenge the world.³ However, the different practice of mission between Hauerwas and Sobrino may induce a sense of ambiguity what mission is and what it involves.

Mission is always God's mission instead of the church's mission. Mission is the movement in which God sends Jesus to the world as Jesus sends the church to the world. The movements of sending and being sent give the meaning of mission. Thus, in order to be faithful to God's mission, the church has to come to the self-understanding of its nature as the continuation of the mission of Jesus in the world. Thus, the meaning of mission is primarily christologically grounded. This foundation suggests that both in Jesus' life and ministry we learn the meaning of mission, and Jesus' life and ministry shows us what mission is.⁴

In the preceding chapters, we have already discussed how Hauerwas and

² See my discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

³ See pp.332ff.

⁴ Here, I do not have any intention to isolate Jesus' mission from God's mission. But rather mission is always a concrete practice instead of a concept. Therefore, we can only better know what God's mission is through the life of Jesus because incarnation is the most concrete practice of God's mission.

Sobrino illustrate how discipleship finds its meaning in terms of following Jesus. Nevertheless, they have different emphases on it. For instance, Hauerwas considers the Sermon on the Mount as the summary of Jesus' life and ministry, while Sobrino considers the jubilee proclamation as the outline of Jesus' life and ministry.⁵ Obviously, these different points of departure result in different orientations of their ecclesiologies. In short, Hauerwas' ecclesiology is rather a centripetal and inward looking activity, while Sobrino's ecclesiology is rather a centrifugal outreach and concern. At the same time, their different emphases on ecclesiology also result in different practice of mission. How do their different emphases help us understand the meaning of mission? I consider that in order to understand the meaning of mission, we have to shift our attention from the study of Jesus' life to the promises of Jesus to be present. This does not mean separating mission from Jesus' life; rather an approach to mission in terms of the promises of Jesus to be present avoids any temptation of reductionism which reduces Jesus' story to either the concept of liberation or the practice of pacifism. Positively stated, to understand mission in terms of the promises of Jesus to be present suggests that Jesus' mission and his presence are inseparable. His mission leads him to where he is present, and where his presence is concretizes what his mission is. For instance, if we accept Sobrino's interpretation of Jesus' story in terms of the jubilee proclamation, then Jesus' mission is found among the poor and the outcast. But at the same time, when we look at the Scripture we notice that wherever Jesus is, he creates mission. Therefore, in order to avoid any kind of reductionism, we also have to understand Jesus' mission in terms of his promise of presence so that it allows Jesus' story to speak to us. However, to see Jesus' mission in terms of his promise of presence does not discredit any approach which sees Jesus' mission under a theme, but rather it is a different

⁵ See p.72.

perspective to complement the truth. In short, Jesus promises to be present in the apostolate, the sacrament and in the fellowship of the Christians, in "the least of the brethren", and in his parousia. I consider that Hauerwas' understanding is more inclined towards the view that Jesus promises to be present in the apostolate, while Sobrino's understanding is more inclined towards the view that Jesus promises to be present in "the least of the brethren". These different emphases result in their different emphases on Jesus' promise to be present in his parousia.

Firstly, Jesus promises to be present in the apostolate [Matt. 28:18ff], the sacrament [ICor. 11:23ff] and in the fellowship of the Christians [Matt. 18:20]. The word "apostolate" is here used to sum up the medium of the proclamation through word and sacrament, as well as the persons and community of the proclaimers. An emphasis on Jesus' presence in this aspect suggests that the church is a sign of God's salvation. If the church is a sign of God's salvation to the particular society in which it exists, attention is often given to the quality of church life. However, this emphasis does not necessarily mean that it privatizes the Christian faith. Rather, it considers that the church cannot be the agent of the Kingdom if it itself does not become the sign of the Kingdom by means of an embodiment of the Kingdom's values. In a sense, this understanding promotes a rather inward-looking attitude, but it does not necessarily mean that it distorts the gospel in terms of spiritualization and privatization, because its particular practice is undoubtedly for the sake of witnessing to the Kingdom. Apparently, this is a "passive" way of mission, but no one can deny its radicalness and seriousness. Also, this suggests that the meaning of mission is not first of all about what the church does, but about what the church is and should be. Generally speaking, Hauerwas' theology represents this perspective, especially his view of narrative. For Hauerwas, the Christian faith is better understood in terms of narrative because, on the one hand, it clarifies the distinctiveness of the Christian

faith apart from other religious faiths, and on the other it requires one's life to be conformed to a particular story, namely the Christian one.⁶ The concept of narrative reminds us that the first duty of the church is to be faithful to its story. This faithfulness takes the form of personal lifestyle, which becomes a powerful witness to the Kingdom of God. Thus, the Kingdom of God is the church living in the will of God within society. This is the breaking-in of a new order in society, a community within the larger community. It is the church, when truly living under the cross, which expresses the Kingdom of God in the world. Thus, mission is often understood in terms of pastoral activity and missionary activity.⁷ It is a pastoral activity because mission is about nurturing the Christian community in the direction of the Kingdom. It is a missionary activity because it invites other people to enjoy and experience the richness of the Kingdom.

Secondly, Jesus promises to be found in "the least of the brethren" [Matt. 25:31-46]. The "least of the brethren" are those who are poor, despised and outcast. Jesus' promise of presence does not only mean that he is present in the poor, but also he identifies himself with the poor. Put strongly, we find Jesus in the poor because he is poor.⁸ This does not simply mean that the poor are those people who have privilege in God's Kingdom, or that our goodwill to the poor is a matter of sympathy. Rather they are the latent presence of the coming Saviour, the touchstone which determines salvation and damnation, according to Sobrino.⁹ The hidden presence of the coming Christ in the poor therefore belongs to ecclesiology first of

⁶ See my discussion on Hauerwas' use of narrative.

⁷ See pp.99-100.

⁸ Here, I do not mean that Jesus is imperfect, but rather according to 2Cor. 8:9, "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor".

⁹ See my discussion on Sobrino' view of the church of the poor.

all, and only after that to ethics. Clearly, to see Jesus' presence in the "least of the brethren" suggests that mission is primarily to bring forth justice to the poor, and the church has to be engaged in this struggle. Thus, a commitment to mission is not only concerned with conversion and individual salvation, but rather relates to the practice of justice. Primarily speaking, Sobrino's theology represents this perspective. Sobrino considers that if Jesus promises to be present in the "least of the brethren", then the church is the servant of God in service for human existence, and its ministry to human existence is a ministry to human freedom. Mission cannot be isolated from the practice of humanization.¹⁰ Mission is a commitment to the world, and history is a sphere for a possible building for a better human order. This understanding removes the church from the centre of human history and sees it as subservient to the broader concept of the unfolding of God's Kingdom in the world.

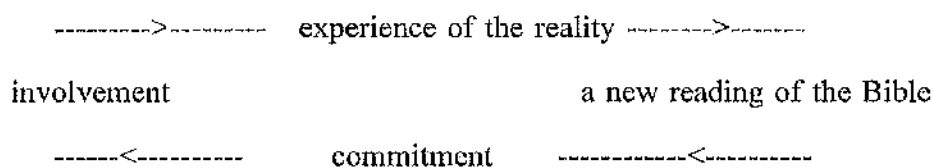
Sobrino considers that if mission involves humanization, then the promotion of humanization is both an individual act and a community act which operates both at an individual level and a structural level.¹¹ It is an individual act because, on the one hand, we are so often tempted to consider that the problems are so enormous that there is little we can do. As a result, we give in. We must not allow ourselves to be swayed by visions of success or failure. We are not responsible, as individuals, for the success of the Kingdom. But we are responsible as individuals to work within the Kingdom. On the other hand, a commitment to humanization is not a slogan, but it demands the transformation of the agent. In other words, we cannot promote justice without first being just. We cannot be in solidarity with the poor without first being poor.¹² In order to arouse the consciousness and responsibility

¹⁰ See my discussion on Sobrino's understanding of justice.

¹¹ See my discussion on Sobrino's view of spirituality and ecclesiology.

¹² See my discussion on Sobrino's view of the church of the poor.

of individuals Sobrino, like other liberation theologians, introduces the idea of conscientization. However, the concept of conscientization cannot be exclusively understood for the sake of political awareness, but also for the sake of an existential awareness of God's sovereignty. This awareness brings us to see that God is on the side of the poor and is struggling with the poor.¹³ Besides, there is no place in which God's sovereignty is not there. This awareness brings us to discern what mission is and inspires us to commit ourselves to it. In terms of mission, the concept of conscientization can be illustrated in the following diagram:



Although this is a circular diagram, according to Sobrino and to the practice of the base Christian communities, the point of departure is the experience of the reality. Sobrino calls this "theological locus".¹⁴ This experience influences our way of reading the Bible because we bring our experience into the Bible. For instance, if we read the Bible through the eyes of the poor, our concern no longer concentrates on the philosophical issues of the existence of God. But rather it will reinforce our convictions that God is intensely concerned about the welfare of the poor; that he sides consistently with the poor against their oppressors; that the pervasive injustice of the world toward the poor is rooted not only in individual but also in institutions and systems, the present world order; that the Kingdom of God, the new order, is designed especially with the poor in view; that the grace of God is manifest in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though himself rich, became poor; and that the gospel is meant to be preached particularly to the poor. These new

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See my discussion on Sobrino's view of spirituality.

readings of the Bible will inevitably lead us to a new commitment to the poor in the context of a fresh act of dedication to the Lord and his Kingdom. This solidarity with the poor does not imply that poverty is a virtue, but an evil which constitutes a challenge to the justice of the Lord who is King of creation. This solidarity eventually leads us to be involved in the struggle with the poor for a better world.

However, the promotion of humanization cannot only be an individual act because discipleship is a life of being an alternative society. Therefore, it is also a corporate action. Sobrino considers that this corporate action is undertaken by the institutional church.¹⁵ In Latin America, this function is fulfilled by the base Christian communities. The final document of the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico in February 1979 lauded the base Christian communities as "the focal point of evangelization, the motor of liberation." Some of them concentrate on strictly "spiritual" pursuits like Bible reading or training lay people to lead services in remote rural area. Others, perhaps the majority, focus the immediate needs of their neighbourhoods [potable water, rapacious landlords, rising bus fares] and social implications of the gospel. However, the Bible reading group should not be ignored because they can be the initiative of a new reading of the Bible. The importance of the base Christian communities is that they reflect the needs of a particular group of people. They are of, for and by the people.¹⁶

The promotion of humanization involves both individual action and communal action in terms of the church. This action should not only provide appropriate help to individual persons, but also challenge the structure of society as a whole, because

¹⁵ See my discussion on Sobrino's view of the church of the poor.

¹⁶ Ibid.

sin penetrates into social structures. But at the same time, the promotion of humanization cannot be understood primarily politically. Otherwise, it turns humans become the means for the political aim.

Finally, Jesus promises to be present in his parousia [Acts 1:11]. The word "parousia" is often understood in terms of the second coming of Jesus. But this is not a correct understanding because Jesus is already present. Therefore, when we talk about Jesus' parousia, what we really mean is "what is to come". It is close to what will be, but is not totally absorbed by that. It stands in relationship both to the future and to the present and past. "What is to come" does not only emerge out of the forces and trends of growth and decay, but also comes in liberation to meet what is becoming, what has become, and what has passed away. When they conceived of the coming of Christ in messianic glory, the New Testament writers were simultaneously thinking of the end of the world. Consequently, Christ's coming parousia is expected in universal, all embracing and openly manifest form. However, this is not merely about the close of history, but also the key to an understanding of the history of Christ and of the world. In other words, we see world history in the light of his future. The hope of the parousia brings the historical present of the Word and faith into the dynamism of the not yet which thrusts forward to what is ahead. Hence the Spirit is understood as the earnest, advance payment and foretaste of the coming glory. The presence of Christ in baptism and eucharist is hence believed as the hidden presence on the way to his direct presence. Thus, the relationship between Jesus' promise to be present in parousia and mission suggests that mission is a proclamation of God's universal salvific will because Jesus' delay of parousia is to reflect God's will- that is, no one is to perish, but all will be saved. Also, mission is a recognition of the lordship of Christ because there are not two histories, but one single history, which is God's history. Although Christ is still to come, he is present

in human history here and now. He is the lord of history. However, Jesus' promise of presence in parousia reminds us that humanity is not limited to the finiteness of history. No matter how unfavourable our situation is, we have hope. This transcendental dimension of humanity cannot be ignored.

Jesus' promise to be present in his parousia has different implications for Hauerwas' and Sobrino's thought. In terms of eschatology, both of them basically agree that Jesus' parousia is a realized eschatology. However, in his theological framework which is a cultural-linguistic model reference to previously, Hauerwas primarily considers that Jesus' promise is first realized in his church. This is why he calls the church "an alternative society". In this understanding, Hauerwas does not see the impossibility of Christian pacifism. Christians do not need to give in to realism, for they are an eschatological people.¹⁷ For Sobrino, Jesus' parousia in terms of a realized eschatology operates on another level. In his theological framework, that of liberation theology, Sobrino considers that salvation history and humankind history are not dualistic. Rather they are in continuity, not in the sense that humankind can establish the Kingdom of God on earth, but in the sense that God transforms the history of humankind in accordance with his Kingdom.¹⁸ Therefore, a commitment to and an involvement in social justice is nothing other than the awareness and acknowledgement of Jesus' parousia.

As previously indicated¹⁹, this difference between Hauerwas and Sobrino is not a difference of faith, but a difference of entry point. In short, Hauerwas is more

¹⁷ See my discussion on Hauerwas' ecclesiology.

¹⁸ See my discussion on Sobrino's view of the church of the poor.

¹⁹ See pp.101-102.

concerned about God's redemption, while Sobrino is more concerned about God's creation. They are not in contradiction with one another, but they complement the profound meaning of Jesus' parousia.

These three promises of Jesus to be present should be understood in unity instead of as separate optional elements. If any one of these promises of Jesus' presence is omitted, the truth will be obscured. However, it is true that we may give one of these promises more weight than others, but it is a matter of relative emphasis. Therefore, if we were to confine ourselves to Jesus' promise to be present in the apostolate, then we would not be able to expect the one who was crucified in the coming lord. If we were only to direct our gaze towards the promise of Jesus in "the least of the brethren", then we would be subject to historical fatalism and fail to appreciate the transcendental dimension of human nature. If we were only to see the promise of Jesus to be present in parousia, then we would all too easily wait for the coming lord as apocalyptic angel of revenge on behalf of those who are oppressed on earth. We have to emphasize that the fellowship of Christ lives simultaneously in the presence of the exalted one and of the one who was humiliated. Because of that, we expect from his appearance in glory, the end of history of suffering and the consummation of the history of liberation. The one who is to come is then already present in an anticipatory sense in the Spirit and the Word, and in the miserable and helpless. His future ends the world's history of suffering and completes the fragments and anticipations of his Kingdom which are called the church.

Therefore, discipleship for the Kingdom in terms of commitment to mission relates to the fact that Jesus conducted a cosmic mission. He was not, and is not, merely a personal saviour, or a therapist, or a healer, or a social critic, or a victor over demons and death- although he is surely at least each of these things. But he

is also all of them and more. His mission was as large as the whole of creation. His redeeming power reaches to wherever oppression, violence, and injustice are found. He has come to rescue the entire cosmos, in all its dimensions and activities, from bonds of sin. Therefore, discipleship for the Kingdom has to relate to that cosmic mission of Jesus at least in two ways. Firstly, we must give evidence that we are a community of character who are ourselves experiencing the healing, calming, reconciling work of Jesus. This is the concern of the messianic lifestyle. We must be acted upon by the power of Jesus. This suggests that although the forces of chaos are at work in politics and everywhere else, and although it seems that we cannot overcome such a situation, Jesus is in our midst, the forces of evil are doomed. As Christians we experience that power. We sense the victory in a personal way. His power is present in our personal struggles and dealings. But it is also a presence we know and celebrate communally, as a people whom God has visited as Saviour and healer. Secondly, we are called to promote Jesus' healing work in the world. Having experienced the firstfruits of his healing mission, we must become vehicles of his power in the larger society. Having been acted upon by divine grace, we become agents of that grace. We are not called to transform the world completely here and now. If that were our goal, we would still have to be very realistic about the ways in which our sin and finitude touch all our efforts. But we are not even called to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Rather, it is our task to live and act in such a way that our deeds point to the final victory.

However, we cannot divide these two dimensions into neatly separated time segments. It is not as if the disciples were, for a time, acted upon by Jesus, only to enter a period in which they were forevermore "pure" agents of his power. They had to return frequently to the posture of observers and receivers of God's grace in Christ. And so must we. We must be acting while we are being acted upon. We

must be continually giving while we are at the same time receiving. We must be healers who are still in the process of being healed. In other words, we are disciples of the Kingdom, and at the same time we are disciples for the Kingdom.

Before ending this discussion, I would like to clarify the mission of the church in terms of goal and function. A goal statement refers to some outcome or to some goal toward which certain activities are directed. For example, when a woodpecker pecks, its goal is to discover the larvae insects. Functional statements are descriptions of the effects of an activity within an organism. The heart valves have the function of giving direction to blood. Function and goal are distinct. In terms of the mission of the church, if mission is seen as a goal, then all the church's activities will be directed to the ultimate goal of the beatific vision of God. Consequently, it is concluded that all activities that are anticipations of this goal are Christian activities. However, if the mission of the church relates to the church's function within this world rather than the goal, then the distinction between the world and the church is not that the world has a natural goal, while the church has a supernatural goal. Rather the church is seen within the world, and it exhibits this intertwining in its proclamation, praxis and ministry which may include social and political mission. I consider that the mission of the church relates more to the church's function because the church is a "sign" of the Kingdom which is a matter of function.

This distinction is important because if we regard the mission of the church as relating to a matter of goal, then we may find that it is very hard to take Hauerwas' and Sobrino's account of mission together as an expression of Christian mission because their goals are different. However, if we consider that the mission of the church relates to a matter of function, then the difference between Hauerwas'

and Sobrino's account is complementary because they represent the different dimensions of mission.

D. DISCIPLESHIP AND THEOLOGY

In this thesis, I emphasize that both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that the Christian faith is not primarily an intellectual activity, but rather is a way of life, that is, discipleship. If this is so, then the essence of the Christian community is not to pursue theology, but to believe and obey the Word of God. This does not mean that we do not need to have theology. Rather, theology has to be done both in the context of a response of the existential experience of the Christian community and as a medium which contributes a vital dimension to the struggle for truth and faithfulness in the present. Put differently, for both Hauerwas and Sobrino theology fundamentally relates to practical theology. Nevertheless, this emphasis does not mean that other theologies such as fundamental and systematic theology are unimportant. Rather, according to David Tracy, fundamental theology deals with foundational questions of faith at a relatively abstract level; systematic theology is the interpretation of the Christian tradition in and for a particular situation; practical theology is the interface between the tradition and concrete engagement in the life of the world, in which critical theory and praxis are in a mutually critical relationship.¹ Thus, to consider theology as primarily practical is nothing other than to recognize the interrelatedness and interdependency of fundamental, systematic and practical theology, on the one hand and, to recognize that they may be undertaken by different people within different areas but interdependently, on the other. If, according to Hauerwas and Sobrino, discipleship is the essence of theology, then my attempt is to show how this enriches our understanding and practice of practical theology.

Firstly, both Hauerwas and Sobrino consider that practical theology is not a

¹ D.Tracy, "The Foundations of Practical Theology." In: Practical Theology, ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p.66ff.

"know-how" subject, applied theology, in which the Christian seeks to apply theory to the tasks or praxis of ministry. Rather, praxis is one of the criteria of theology. In terms of narrative, Hauerwas considers that truthful lives are the criterion of truth.² For Sobrino, ortho-practice is a way to "concrete" orthodoxy.³ Although both Hauerwas and Sobrino emphasize the importance and primacy of praxis in the Christian faith, they have no intention of reducing the Christian faith to a form of pragmatism. That is to say, the validity of the Christian faith is not ultimately judged by the practice of the Christian. Rather what they intend to do is to challenge the inadequacy and inappropriateness of traditional fundamental theology.

For instance, in terms of Jesus' resurrection, traditional fundamental theology sought to demonstrate the truth of Christianity by historical arguments for the factuality of Jesus' resurrection, while transcendental fundamental theology sought to demonstrate the meaningfulness of Jesus' resurrection. Fundamental theology seeks to address the hermeneutical issue of the meaning and truth of the Christian vision. It considers that the truth of Christianity is a theoretical problem, and the practice of Christians and of the Christian churches is a practical issue. No matter what the de facto practice of the church in its social and political ministry, the credibility of Christianity is based upon a historical or transcendental demonstration. Both Hauerwas and Sobrino challenge this understanding, and consider that a theory is valid only in relation to its practice.⁴ Meaning and truth do not exist as independent identities, but rather in their reception. The importance of reception is not that there is a clear cut meaning whose reception gives it its truth, but rather that

² See pp.182-183.

³ J.Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor, pp.21-24.

⁴ See pp.296ff.

the meaning of a religious vision depends on how it is continually received and transformed into a living belief and praxis. If beliefs provide the warrant for certain practices in relation to our society, then to affirm the belief is, at the same time, to point out the differences that the beliefs make for the community of believers and how the community relates to society, to the world and to one another. To the extent that a religious vision is offered as a warrant for a particular praxis, then that particular praxis in its perception as illuminative, right and true, especially in comparison with alternatives, warrants the religious vision. Besides, there is an equilibrium between the warrant of the hermeneutical disclosure of the religious tradition and the warrant of the practice of this tradition. This pertains not only to the justification of truth but also to the discovery of truth. In classical philosophy and theology, it was argued that personal purification was necessary for the discovery of the truth. Unless one desired the good, one could not know the good. Unless one disciplined oneself to the love of the other and the transcendent, one could not uncover the meaning of the love of the other and the love of the transcendent. In the wake of scientific methodology and technocratic rationality, this interrelation between praxis and truth has become overlooked and neglected. The church's commitment to truth, justice and charity is essential to its discovery of the meaning of its religious tradition's vision of truth, justice and charity. Consequently, praxis is not simply a warrant that discloses the truth of its religious tradition, but that praxis is a source of the discovery of such meaning and truth in the church's religious vision. Nevertheless, to emphasize the centrality of praxis in Christian theology does not mean that Christians can get a unanimous understanding of the truth, but rather it affirms that the truth is not only a matter of thinking and knowing, but also a matter of doing.

Secondly, both Hauerwas and Sobrino show that practical theology should be

formulated in the direction of, for, of and by the people. For Hauerwas, if theology is primarily done in response to the world's agenda, it betrays its identity because it accommodates the gospel to the world. For Sobrino, theology has often been taught and written by those who are very closely tied to the interests of the clergy; theological issues have often been formulated and explored from that point of view, from within that context. As a result, theology is gradually separated from the people. Obviously, Hauerwas and Sobrino have different understandings of the word "people". For Hauerwas, people refers to God's people, that is, Christians. In this context, practical theology is ecclesial theology. For Sobrino, people refers to those who are poor, exploited and outcast. In this context, practical theology is a contextual theology.

To consider that a people's theology is an ecclesial theology is to suggest that theology has to be done in the context of a cultural-linguistic model, according to Hauerwas.⁵ This means that Christian convictions can only be better understood in terms of the internal rules and procedures of their own language. This way of doing theology stresses the distinctiveness of Christian identity. However, this emphasis is a matter of clarification rather than a matter of superiority. Besides, it does not necessarily ignore the reality of pluralism. On the contrary, it takes pluralism seriously by having an honest dialogue without falling into the temptations of syncretism and relativism. So often the principle of pluralism implies that everyone has the right to choose the values, the lifestyle, the religious or non-religious orientation, which he or she finds suitable. No one has the right to judge another in this matter. The individual in his or her autonomy is free to choose. Thus, pluralism means being tolerant in terms of co-existence, on the one hand, and it means that no

⁵ See my discussion on Hauerwas' use of narrative and view of pacifism.

single truth is the whole truth, on the other. If pluralism is concerned with co-existence, then I do not see any discrepancy between the emphasis on the cultural-linguistic character of Christian convictions and pluralism. On the contrary, pluralism even demands one to be faithful and consistent to one's faith and practice. On the other hand, if pluralism means that truth cannot be found only in one's own truth, to a certain extent I agree to this. This is why I consider the importance and the necessity of dialogue. Nevertheless, dialogue is not only a matter of exchange, but also a matter of obstinacy. On matters of "fact" we do not acknowledge pluralism. We argue and we work at our disagreement until we reach agreement [although it is not always possible]. Therefore, a people's theology is not a theology of "ghettoism", but a theology of the people, God's people.

A people's theology is also a theology which belongs to those who suffer, who are exploited and outcast. Sobrino calls this a theology of the poor.⁶ A people's theology suggests that theology should be done in the context of the suffering of the people simply because Jesus proclaims good news to the poor. The reality of the people is the hermeneutical principle of theology. Thus, theology is no longer primarily confined to a philosophical enquiry, but rather it is deeply rooted in the historical context of the people. This shift of emphasis brings new insights to our understanding and practice of our faith. Liberation theology is a theology sensitive to the most urgent demands of history. Paulo Freire says that

it seems to me, must be the basic task, the prime concern, of the theologians of the Third World: to be men of the Third World. To steep themselves in it, so that they can be men of the world- utopian, prophetic, hoping men of the world.⁷

⁶ See my discussion on Sobrino's use of justice and understanding of evangelization.

⁷ Hugo Assmann, Practical Theology of Liberation (London: Search, 1975), p.75.

Thus, a people's theology is a theology which first belongs to the people, not to the academics. It does not mean that the academics play no role in it. Rather, it suggests that their working context should not be the library but the living experience of the people. Sobrino's interpretation of the people results in contextual theology because theology takes place in specific contexts. It is not merely being argued that theology ought to be contextualized. The contention is that all theology is contextualized. Thus, a people's theology emphasizes that its agenda has to be set by the needs, dilemmas, and problems of the people, and it is a theology done by the people. This recognition suggests that there is a basically different concern between theologians and the people. For example, much traditional Western theology has been written by professors working at European universities. Imagine a white male university professor in nineteenth century Germany who is beginning to write a book about God. Typically, he begins by writing about God's "attributes": God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent, and so on. Now imagine a black slave woman in nineteenth century North America. As she begins to reflect on and articulate her faith in God, she begins at a very different point. She speaks of a suffering God, a God who identifies with the pain of his oppressed people. The very first thing she thinks to say about God is that he shares in her humiliation; he is acquainted with her grief. Therefore, a people's theology realizes the different contexts among people, theologians and clergy. It demands that theology has to be done in the context and in the interests of the people so that the people are no longer secondary, but they are the integral part of the church.

The different emphasis on people between Hauerwas and Sobrino cannot be regarded as an "either-or". As previously said, Hauerwas' emphasis is more concerned about Christian identity, while Sobrino's emphasis is more concerned about the relevant of the Christian faith. Hauerwas shows that when the Christian

identity is affirmed, then we can find the relevance of the Christian faith to the world. At the same time, Sobrino illustrates that our Christian identity is affirmed when our faith is relevant to the world. Clearly, these different points of departure result in different theological significance, but they are not in contradiction with one another because they are united in the sense that theology building up the church as God's people so that the church can be a sign of the Kingdom.

Finally, both Hauerwas and Sobrino illustrate that practical theology concerns the formation of human selves and the transformation of society. These two dimensions have been respectively examined in the sections on "Discipleship of the Kingdom" and of "Discipleship for the Kingdom". Therefore, I do not want to repeat that discussion here. However, to consider that practical theology concerns the formation of human selves and the transformation of society means that theology is practical in the sense that it concerns the most basic issues of human existence. It has to do with the human pilgrimage in its totality: with its meaning and significance, with the determination of appropriate responses to the realities we confront during its course, with the growth of person in community, with the construction of institutions suited to human well-being.

The relationship between discipleship and theology is fundamentally the issue "who is Jesus Christ for us, today?" In other words, the real theological task is not to prove the existence of God, for that must ultimately be a matter of faith, but to enable the community of faith to critically to understand its faith and express answers to the questions: who is God, where is God to be found today, and what does this God require of us here and now? The academic theologian may well provide resources for answering these questions. But it is the practical theologian within the community of faith who has to help the community day by day and week by week

discover the answers in relation to the praxis and witness of the church in the world,
and so help it find the direction which enables it to be faithful to its task.

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