



VID

VID SPECIALIZED UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

The Liberation Theology in the Writings of Jon Sobrino and the
Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr

Master Thesis
MTHEOL-342

By
Francisco Sabotsy
Directed by Prof. Knut Alfsvåg

Stavanger, Norway

June 2019

Dedicated
to the
Malagasy Christian Church in Norway (FKMN).

Acknowledgment

I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not worn out upon you, and your shoes are not worn out upon your foot...that you might know that I am the LORD your God.

(Deut 29:4-5)

That reference is quoted here for the acknowledgment. Above all, I am deeply thankful to God that by the direction of the Holy Spirit I could write this thesis. Likewise, I also thank my precious Lord Jesus, not only for His help for the writing of this book but also for all the support He has granted me during the two year-study here at VID Specialized University. Glory be to God alone.

My thanks go to the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) for allowing me through the Lutheran Graduate School of theology (SALT) to continue my study here at VID. I thank VID as such, which is headed by Dean Dr. Tomas Sundnes Drønen, as it is the academic University where I pursued my theological study for two years. I particularly thank my supervisor, Prof. Knut Alfsvåg, lecturer in the Department of systematic theology as he directed me during the research. I am grateful to all the teachers here at VID for their lectures during the two academic years. Likewise, I am particularly grateful to all staff and librarians as they were always there and available in time of need.

My gratitude also goes to all of you who did not leave me alone here in Norway during the two years of my study. Thank you all, the Norwegian and the Malagasy friends here Stavanger for your support and the fellowship. A special thanks to the family in Bergen and the Malagasy Christian Church in Norway, the unique church where I worked during my study as an ordained Pastor. Thank you for the support, the prayers and the fraternal communion.

This research could not be possible without having in mind every day my family in the country, my dear wife and our three children. Thinking of them every day gave me the strength to have proceeded further than I could on the study. I thank them very much for their endurance as being left by daddy for so long time. Thanks for the perseverance and the prayers for dad.

For all of you, I am thankful here, what you have done for me could not be rewarded. So, I borrow what the Apostle Paul said to the Philippians: “that God will provide you with all your needs according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus.” (Philippian 4:19).

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment	iii
I) General Introduction.....	1
1.1) Motivation.....	1
1.1.1) Background of Study	1
1.1.2) Identifying Sobrino and Niebuhr as central figures for the research	3
1.2) Statement of the Problems	5
1.2.1) Research Example for the Topic.....	5
1.2.2) Research Questions.....	5
1.2.3) Sobrino' s and Niebuhr' s Handling of the Problems	6
1.3) Objective of the Study	8
1.4) Scope of the Research.....	9
1.5) Methodology: A Comparative Research Method	9
1.6) Plan of the Study.....	10
II) Christology in Sobrino' s Writings Viewed from the Liberation Theology Standpoint	11
2.1) Introduction	11
2.2) The New Way of Viewing Christ in Latin American Context	11
2.2.1) Latin America as Cradle of Liberation Theology	11
2.2.2) The necessity of Liberation Theology Given the Social Context	13
2.2.3) Approaches: A Historical-Theological and Pastoral Readings.....	14
2.2.4) The Crucified People: The Poor and the Oppressed as New Images of	15
Christ in History.....	15
2.3) The Kingdom of God in the First Century Jesus and its Significance in the Historical Reality of Today	20
2.3.1) Social Aspects of the Kingdom of God in the Acts and Preaching of Jesus.....	20
2.3.2) Why Jesus was killed? The Death of Jesus as a result of His Social Actions	19
2.3.3) Jesus has risen: A New Hope for the Crucified People in History	21
2.4) Sobrino' s Practical Approach to the Poor and the Oppressed	23
2.4.1) The Common Horizon of the Historical Reality.....	24
2.4.2) The Question of Discipleship	25
2.4.3) Christian Solidarity.....	26
2.4.4) Political Involvement.....	29
2.5) Summary.....	30
III) Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism	31
3.1) Introduction	31

3.2) Conceptual Backgrounds of Niebuhr’s Christian Realism	31
3.3) Niebuhr’s Christian Realism.....	33
3.3.1) Realism: A Short Clarification	33
3.3.2) Christianity as Religion of Revelation.....	34
3.3.2.1) The Transcendence of God.....	35
3.3.2.2) The Immanence of God	36
3.3.3) Niebuhr’s Anthropology	39
3.3.3.1) The Human Sin.....	39
3.3.3.2) Human Boundedness and Freedom	41
3.3.4) God the wholly Other Confronting Man from Beyond of Himself	42
3.3.5) Niebuhr on Applied Christianity	44
3.3.5.1) Christian Narrative Dimension	44
3.3.5.2) Moral Obligation Dimension	47
3.3.5.3) Niebuhr on Christian Love	48
3.3.5.3.1) The characteristics of Christian Love	48
3.3.5.3.2) Love as Forgiveness	49
3.3.5.3.3) Love and Justice	50
3.3.5.3.4) Love and the Social Praxis	51
3.4) Summary.....	52
IV) Discussing the Social Ethics of Sobrino and Niebuhr	53
4.1) Introduction	53
4.2) Critical Evaluation	53
4.2.1) Sobrino and the Jesuanic Martyrs.....	53
4.2.2) Binitarian Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr	55
4.2.3) Sobrino and Niebuhr and the Eschatological Dimension of Christianity	56
4.3) Comparative Analysis.....	59
4.3.1) Differences.....	59
4.3.2) Similarity	58
4.3.3) Both as Complementary Public Theologies.....	59
4.4) Social Ethics of Sobrino and Niebuhr in its Relation to the Overall Christian Theology	60
4.4.1) Christian’s Good Works: What does the Bible say?.....	60
4.4.2) The True Christian Life as a Life under the Gospel and Law	61
4.4.3) Misconception of Moralism and Antinomianism	62
4.4.4) Does Christian’s Good Work have anything to do with Salvation?.....	63
4.5) Christian Theology and the Secular Government.....	65
4.6) Summary.....	66

V) General Conclusion	68
The implication of Christianity in the Struggle against Poverty	68
5.1) Introduction	68
5.2) Theoretical Analysis for the Theological Motives	68
5.2.1) Sobrino on Constitutive Relatedness between the Crucified and the crucified	68
5.2.2) Niebuhr on the Nature of Man and the Triumph of Divine Love	69
5.3) A Practical Attitude of the Church in the Fight against Poverty	70
5.3.1) Sobrino's Practical Attitude.....	70
5.3.1.1) The Church and Social Works	70
5.3.1.2) The Church and the Social Justice	71
5.3.1.3) The Church and Politics.....	71
5.3.2) Application of the Christian Faith for Niebuhr.....	72
5.3.2.1) How to make the Human Beings to Feel Experiencing Divine love?	72
5.3.2.2) The Inward Voice of Conscience.....	73
5.3.2.3) Once Love is lived in Relation with Others in Society	73
5.4) Summary.....	74
Bibliography	76

I) General Introduction

1.1) Motivation

1.1.1) Background of Study

Christianity today becomes a rapidly growing religion in the world since Christians worldwide reach almost one-third of the population all over the globe.¹ It is questioned, however, how such Christianity brings transformation to a society. By transformation, we mean to make a society to be a better place to live, instead of being jeopardized by poverty, social injustice, insecurity, war, gender discrimination, et cetera. One of the hot debates going on today is how to integrate religious institutions in a social dimension of the life of people in a community, facing those above-mentioned challenges, which endanger the life particularly of the poor. That what says Kwok Pui-Lan that “today, theology must be done more intentionally in the public square, to promote dialogue for the common good and to educate global citizens, theology must address social and political issues that concern the public.”² Such debate is prompted mostly in the Global South which is becoming the center of the gravity of Christianity since the mid-20th century, estimated containing more than 70 percent of the worldwide Christians in less than ten years, by 2025.³ There are, however, a kind of standard features for all those countries which are threats for the human life, as says Mark Lamport: “these countries seem to share interconnected histories of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change. In spite of less than ideal circumstances, which include war, poverty, environmental degradation, human and civil rights abuses, ethnic and regional conflicts, hunger, disease, Christianity thrives.”⁴

It is then logical that the question about the relationship between the Christian messages and the realities socially going on day to day in those countries springs to mind and, to my understanding, worth investigating. In *Religions and Development in the Global South*, Rummy Hasan states that in “the Christian prayer “give us this day our daily bread” there is an injunction to provide the necessities of life, suggesting that Christianity addresses both material and spiritual needs.”⁵ Martin Luther also, in explaining this petition in the Lord’s Prayer, claims

¹ P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 2.

² P. Kwok, "Teaching Theology from a Global Perspective " in *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*, ed. P. Kwok, González-Andrieu, C. and D.N. Hopkins (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015), 12.

³ P. Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

⁴ M.A. Lamport et al., "Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South," (Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), xix.

⁵ R. Hasan, *Religion and Development in the Global South* (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 116.

that even though this prayer is brief and seems to be simple, it has a vast scope and contains all the necessities of our body and the temporal life...for us to spend our days in peace.⁶ He continues claiming that in case of war, strife, insecurity, dissension, the daily bread is already taken away.⁷ Not only that, but most importantly, the social praxis of Jesus recorded in the Gospels could shed light upon how critical, for Him, are the bodily and material needs for the human beings. Sobrino says that the Kingdom of God brought by Jesus was addressed mostly to the poor.⁸ Those who were poor at the time of Jesus could be divided into two groups, those who were economically poor and those who were sociologically poor. The economically poor were those whose life and survival were a hard task and heavy burden as being hungry, naked, sick, marginalized and also lacked most of the bodily needs.⁹ All the along the line during His earthly life, Jesus made Himself at the disposal of those people, serving, feeding, healing, and caring for them. As Sobrino still claims, this praxis of Jesus is already an initiation of the Kingdom of God He preached.¹⁰ It could be said to be part of the essence of Christianity.

Because of this, we can say that there seem some discrepancies between the concern of Christianity about the physical needs of the human beings and the fact that in the South people live in completely social deprivation of such physical needs due to the extreme poverty. It is worth discussing since, as stated above, in the Global South Christianity massively grows and soon will become a center of Christian mission worldwide. It thus leads to the following question: As Christianity thrives among the poor, should not it have something to say on the ethical challenges of poverty? Should not it be involved in the struggle against poverty? If so, what are the theoretically theological motives? And how the church should be in an action based upon the theoretical analyses? Those are problematics to which this research is dedicated. To solve such problems is the reason this research has been titled **Christianity and Society** in which both Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino and the Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr will be compared. In what follows we will see why these two figures have been chosen.

⁶ Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism," in *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore Gerhardt Tappert (Ohio: Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, 1917), 311.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ This shouldn't be taken exaggeratedly saying that Jesus left out the wealthy who approached Him, but the Gospels record that Jesus also received the rich who accepted the Gospel He preached.

⁹ J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Orbis Books, 1993), 79-80.

¹⁰ Ibid.

1.1.2) Identifying Sobrino and Niebuhr as central figures for the research

Sobrino and Niebuhr are worth well identifying since both are the leading figures of the research. Sobrino is an El Salvadoran theologian who has vividly contributed to the Liberation Theology, which was a religious movement that erupted in Latin America in the middle of the twentieth century marked by the high regard to those who have been impoverished by the social, political, and economic systems.¹¹ It is an immanent theology taking as starting point the preferential option of the poor in a society, as states Norman that “instead of first focusing on Christ and the Bible as the revelational center of human history and destiny, liberation theologians make existing social and political conditions the necessary lens for viewing and interpreting scriptural data.”¹² Facing the challenges of the poverty and the social injustice which result in people dying before their due time,¹³ Sobrino articulated his Christological concepts and concluded that there is *constitutive relatedness* of the Crucified Christ to the poor.¹⁴ By this, he says that the poor and the victims of the social oppression and injustice in the historical context of today are the new images of the Crucified Christ in the first-century history.¹⁵ Sobrino then searches for the Christological basis of the Christian care for the society so that the majority people have daily bread in its full sense.

Instead of focusing on such divine immanence, Niebuhr based his theology on transcendence, emphasizing that God is transcendent and different from the created world, but intimately related to the creatures.¹⁶ He severely criticized the American social Gospellers who enhanced the goodness of human beings. The social Gospel movement underlined the biblical promises about peace and justice, and love and interpreted these promises to be earthly applicable in a way that would heal the social crisis.¹⁷ The Kingdom of God was believed to be earthly realized since human beings could live according to those biblical promises, leading them into progressive social action.¹⁸ It then shared the cultural optimism of the American

¹¹ Virgillio Elizondo, "Emergence of a World Church and the Lrruption of the Poor," in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. G. Baum (Maryknoll, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999), 108.

¹² Norman L. ; MacKenzie Geisler, Ralph E., *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals : Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 465.

¹³ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 84.

¹⁴ S.J. Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino* (Peter Lang, 2003), 25-26.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S.J. Grenz and R.E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (InterVarsity Press, 2010), 108-10.

¹⁷ Donald Schweitzer, "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians," in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. G. Baum (Maryknoll, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999), 50.

¹⁸ Ibid.

liberalism of the time, enhancing the human condition to be gradually improved as now they would become realizers of God's Kingdom on earth through the exercise of reason in applying the biblical promises about peace, justice, and love.¹⁹ Niebuhr viewed this as sharply in contrast with the social issues facing the society, especially the economic slump inducing the Great Depression in 1929. This Great Depression in Niebuhr's view shows human's failure and self-centeredness because everyone was in the run of developing their own economies without thinking of others, especially the poor, it was then interpreted as God's judgment for the sake of such a failure.²⁰ Thus, instead of seeing goodwill and goodness in human beings (like the liberalism), Niebuhr saw the human beings living in the decay of egotism in the run of seeking their own benefit.²¹ This led him to differentiate God and His Kingdom from the created world, including the human beings; and in such differentiation, he saw God as transcendent and utterly distinct from the creatures, but at the same time, willing to intimately relate to the creatures with an intention to bring transformation to a society.²² This last point brought him to be a social, theological ethicist reckoned by the practical implication of the Christian faith.²³ There were then two distinct views on the Kingdom of God, the social Gospellers viewed the Kingdom as realizable in the human society by the human goodness and reason, Niebuhr viewed it as critical of the human society.²⁴

In Sobrino and Niebuhr, thus, we see the two distinct starting points of theological thinking, divine immanence and divine transcendence. The meeting point for both, however, is that God's concern about the creation and the life of human beings, although each one comes to such a meeting point in different ways and paths. That is the reason why we have chosen to compare those scholars; in such comparison, this research will seek the similarity and dissimilarity between their ideologies, and the complementarity. By doing so, it is expected to find the response to the fundamental problematics of the research. Now, we take one example showing how the topic has been dealt with by another scholar.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 49.

²¹ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 106-07.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 100-01.

²⁴ Schweitzer, "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians," 49-50.

1.2) Statement of the Problems

1.2.1) Research Example for the Topic

Ishimilenga Emedi is the one taken as an example. In his thesis entitled *The Local Church as an Agent of Social Transformation in a Poor Community*. In this, he asserts the close link between church and society “discovering ways of doing theology in a more meaningful, and relevant way, resulting in lives changed, saved, and communities transformed and calling the church to recommit herself to “biblical strategies of human service and social transformation.”²⁵ This treatise is more empirically and community-sensitive ecclesiastically based,²⁶ where the Maitland²⁷ is the field of the research. By doing so, there is a kind of survey some of the public problems such as infrastructure, unemployment, poverty level, housing and other issues such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases, teenage pregnancy and school drop-out, crime.²⁸ Based on those problems, the practical ministries of the local church intending to bring about solutions are enumerated, and this, as the author suggests, does not necessarily require any funds elsewhere either financially or materially, but the individual Christians and the church as a whole can contribute and work together to eradicate the local social problems gradually.²⁹ The author himself calls his approach as a practical and methodical, which is empirically grounded endeavoring to replace the church in her social context and calling, and the fundamental question that he strives to resolve is that what the church should do given the common problems facing the community? This is relevant and can shed light on what precisely are the research questions of this thesis and under what objective, to which we now turn.

1.2.2) Research Questions

Despite sharing the same purpose as the scholar above, we approach the topic in an entirely different way. This research is not so much dedicated to a specific context besides the Global South, since, as said above, it is becoming a center of the gravity of Christianity but simultaneously contains victims of poverty, war, social injustice and insecurity, homelessness which are in contrast with the essence of the Christianity. That what is referred to above as a discrepancy which is worth discussing. It is noted that such an incident has been taking place

²⁵ Pablo-George Ishimilenga Emedi, "The Local Church as an Agent of Social Transformation in a Poor Community" (University of Pretoria 2010), 1.

²⁶ By community sensitive church, he means the community makes the church sensitized about the needs of a community. (ibid., 68.)

²⁷ Maitland, Cape Town is a suburb in Cape Town, South Africa. It is situated along several important transport networks connecting the Cape Town city bowl to the rest of the city.

²⁸ Emedi, "The Local Church as an Agent of Social Transformation in a Poor Community," 68.

²⁹ Ibid.

not only in the historical context of today but also since even at the time of Jesus in the first-century history. People living in peace, having daily bread, being healed from diseases: this was at the center of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached, and He has already initiated the fulfillment of this in His social actions. When then Jesus Himself did this, the church, His historical body, must be engaged in it as well. However, we need a theological basis for the church's struggle against poverty. That leads to the research questions directing this thesis: What are the theological motives of the church's involvement in the struggle against poverty? And how should she approach it practically? These questions lead to the systematic study of the historical Jesus regarded from the standpoint of the Latin American Liberation Theology (LALT) in Jon Sobrino and the transcendent God caring for the fallen creation in the Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr. Let us have a short look at how Sobrino and Niebuhr approached this topic.

1.2.3) Sobrino' s and Niebuhr' s Handling of the Problems

Both approached the problems through the social ethics of the Christians and the church involvement in politics preceded by strong theological motives. For Sobrino, the shock was the indigenous social depravity causing deep poverty. To handle the problem, he tried to find out the theological issues involved. He moved back to the first century Jesus with a systematically social investigation, and there he found poverty was already a threat, but fortunately, the poor had Jesus among them proclaiming the Kingdom of God whose central message includes liberation from poverty and social oppression, and Jesus not only preached such message but also acted accordingly.³⁰ Such actions brought Him death since He affronted the impoverishing and the oppressive political structures.³¹ In this case, we can say that Jesus was crucified due to the liberating message and praxis toward the impoverished and the oppressed, and because of this, there is a constitutive relatedness between Him and them, they are His new images as He was crucified for them.³² It is confirmed since Jesus in Math 25:34-45 made himself identified with the hungered, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, prisoners and says that what is done to them is also done to him.³³ According to Sobrino, there is indeed a theological issue implicated; since Jesus had the compassion for the marginalized, so should do his followers, the Christians individually and the church. This is indispensable, and it has soteriological

³⁰ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 185.

³¹ Sobrino asks two questions about the death of Christ, why he was dead, and he was killed (See: 2.3.2). See: *ibid.*, 195-96.

³² Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 23.

³³ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 19-20.

implication, Sobrino claims that “outside the poor there is no salvation”, this does not mean to become poor to be saved, instead to become integrated in the life of the downtrodden by supporting them, fighting for them, defending them, and seeking a better life for them, following the example laid down by Jesus. It extends to the confrontation to the oppressors and the impoverishing and oppressive political systems, rendering the church to be undeviatingly involved in politics, as says Sobrino, “we must destroy the structures of oppression and violence. We must build new structures of justice. We must provide adequate means to do this political, social, and pastoral education and organization everything that will help change structures.”³⁴

For Niebuhr the case is a bit different. His approach to the problems lies upon the Christian realism, the political-theological concept enhancing the limitation of the human possibilities in caring for the society due to the corruptive human sin. In this, he attacked the utopian illusion of the secular liberals and social gossellers of the day which enhanced the realization of the biblical promise about peace and justice on earth through human beings. It is added by the cultural and theological optimism which claimed the improvement of the human condition by reason and goodwill, and also the insistence that God is at work to realize His Kingdom on earth through the human action.³⁵ Niebuhr accused the social gospel of being a cultural and theological concept humanly centered, which, instead of bringing forth a better society, led to disaster as the human being is corrupted by sin and cannot be hoped for anything good by themselves.³⁶ A good society humanly centered, for Niebuhr, is just an illusion, and a stumbling block since it does not see the roots of the societal problems, the human sins.³⁷ God’s grace, however, set them free from such corruptive sin in order to act in history. The solution he lies thus is not human-centered like the prevailing gossellers’ theology and liberalism of the day, but God-centered; by having a good relationship to God, the human being can be hoped for and live according to the Great Commandments about love and justice.³⁸ For Niebuhr faith is not imprisoned in doctrine such a kind of principle of this is what we believe, rather it is ethically lived.³⁹ From here his theology moves to the ethical reconstruction of the modern society. In doing so, he takes the ethics of Jesus as an ideal standard which, on one hand,

³⁴ *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Orbis Books, 2015), 61.

³⁵ Schweitzer, "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians," 50.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁷ R. Niebuhr and E.N. Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 95.

³⁸ R. Niebuhr, C. West, and L.B. Gilkey, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 33-34.

³⁹ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 108.

indiscriminately criticizes the human endeavor in acting in society as perceiving the sinful elements in all human actions; this indiscriminate criticism results in mitigating a self-righteousness and fostering a spirit of contrition into the emergence of justice.⁴⁰ On the other hand, such ethics of Jesus is a discriminate criticism, Niebuhr called it as the “impossible possibility” meaning that it is unattainable to the human being as they are limited; nonetheless, some aspects of it are possible to do. He cites those aspects as Christian responses to the ethics of Jesus which worth living in all areas of life, including politics.⁴¹ He treated it accordingly both theoretically and pragmatically.

1.3) Objective of the Study

The objective of this study lies upon the understanding of the theological issues involved in the social challenge in the countries in the South. The problem may appear in various ways in each one of the south countries, it nonetheless causes death and devalues life. Actually, it should be an answerability of the government to figure out a solution to it, since they ought to be at the disposal of serving the ordinary population. But sometimes, the governmental policies engender the problem.⁴² It is always puzzling the existence of policies that is so based on mindset of self-centeredness of leaders that becomes blind to the struggle for the surviving of the poor. Thus, it is doubtful whether the government is still the hope for the people. Yet, thanks to the rapid growth of Christianity that the majority people who live in poverty could have hope over despair. The church in the South then should be in a position of being a bodily caring church. There should be a kind of a new way of being church, making the Gospel proclamation goes hand in hand with the social actions.⁴³ To this indeed this research is purposed, seeking the manner the individual Christians and the church be involved in the fight against poverty. This, however, must be preceded by the systematic inquiry of the theological motives.

1.4) Scope of the Research

The scope of this research lies on the Christology of Jon Sobrino and Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr. It does not mean a continuation, like from Sobrino to Niebuhr, instead, a comparison between their ideologies, both theoretically and practically. We can see both in Sobrino and Niebuhr, a theological bedrock of the church involvement in the social activities,

⁴⁰ D.P. McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict* (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2001), 85.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁴² C. Stephen Evans, "Liberation Theology," in *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*, III. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 69.

⁴³ Paul Knitter says it as a new way of connecting different religions. See: P.F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Orbis Books, 2014), 134-47.

as already been mentioned, Sobrino deals with it in the light of the historical Jesus, whereas Niebuhr locates it in his concept of God who, even though transcendent, is also immanent intimately related to His creatures.⁴⁴ These led both to be persuaded that the church should be involved in the mundane life of people in a society. Their treatises, however, do not stop on such theory but end up with practice. This is normal because everything the church does should always be theologically or doctrinally based; doctrine determines the essence of the church, and if so, as we said before that social praxis is part of the essence of Christianity, then it must be systematically doctrinized, that is, the church doctrine about it must be laid on. Both, in Christian theology, should not be separated, orthodoxy without orthopraxis becomes a dead orthodoxy, but orthopraxis without orthodoxy is nonsense, as Henry Knight says that, “today, theology is concerned with the relationship between orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxis (right practice).”⁴⁵ To repeat, this research is limited in the Christology of Sobrino and the Christian realism of Niebuhr, in which it will be figured out both the doctrinal basis of the church responses to the societal depravity and the practically relevant way to transform it.

1.5) Methodology: A Comparative Research

The methodology relevant to the research is a comparative analysis because this is the method of investigation based on a comparison. The subject under the investigation is the theological issues involved in the social challenges facing the developing countries nowadays, intending to discuss the church contribution for finding out a resolution. In comparative research method, there are three basic questions, what to compare? Why? And how?⁴⁶ These questions must be answered. What to compare is that the Liberation Theology in Sobrino and the Christian Realism in Niebuhr. The reason for comparing is firstly both theological mainstreams discuss the abovementioned subject which is the inquiry of the research; and secondly, since each of them discusses some aspects of the theological problems and solutions implicated in the subject discussed, it seems that there is a kind of similarities and differences between their ideologies. By comparing then, those similarities and differences will be explored to see whether they are exclusive to each other or complementary.

Christian Realism and Liberation Theology have been in interaction since the late of the twentieth century; for the first attempt of comparison, they were viewed as mutually

⁴⁴ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 109-10.

⁴⁵ Henry H. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 195.

⁴⁶ Chanita Rukspollmuang, "Situational Analysis of Education for International Understanding in Thailand," in *Comparative Science: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. N. Popov and A.W. Wiseman (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2015), 223.

exclusive.⁴⁷ The comparison subsequently persisted, Dennis P. McCann continued to do so, and he concluded that it is accepted the differences between both; but, exaggeratedly saying the mutual exclusivity is hard; first, both are dedicated to discussing the theological implication of the problems the society faces. Thus, they are complementary because both can function as good associates in addressing the problems of our society from a theological perspective.⁴⁸ Such complementarity will be explored by using this methodology of comparative analysis.

1.6) Plan of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters; the first one is the general introduction in which it will be outlined the basics of the task, that is, what we writing about, why and how? In chapter two, it will be dealt with Sobrino' s Christology viewed from the standpoint of the liberation theology in Latin America. In this, there are three basic subchapters; the first one is that the Latin American context as the first work field of Sobrino' s Christology. The second one is the historical Jesus; here we will see how Sobrino articulates his Christology based upon the historical facts in the life of Jesus. The third subchapter here is that the practical way of approaching the poor aiming at alleviating poverty in Sobrino's thought. In chapter three, the theological concepts of Niebuhr will be handled, in which it will be treated the background of his academic career as an ethicist theologian, his theology, and his insights on a practical Christianity and the Christian faith involvement in society. The fourth chapter is the discussion of their ideologies, which will be organized into four subchapters, the critical evaluation, the comparative analysis, discussion in relation to the overall Christian ethical theology, and the Christian theology and politics. The fifth final chapter is a general conclusion; in which, I will give a direct response to the mainly foretold problematics of the research. It is noted that a short introduction will precede each of the three essential chapters and they will sum up with a summary. Now, to begin with, we take the Christology of Jon Sobrino.

⁴⁷ Raimundo Barreto, "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue," *ResearchGate* XV, no. January 2003 (2003): 95.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

II) Christology in Sobrino's Writings Viewed from the Liberation Theology Standpoint

2.1) Introduction

Facing the day to day social reality in Latin America, both the church and the theologians were aware of being responsible that they should have a contribution to turning the page of the history of the country. Jon Sobrino was one of those theologians. He prolifically wrote some outstanding books discussing the theological implication of the Latin American historical reality. His theology of liberation, however, remains mostly within the orbit of Christology. From his theoretical approach to the problems to the practical actions, Christology plays a crucial role since all he could say is Christologically rooted. The starting point for this is the historical Jesus, which Sobrino thinks as historically accurate unlike the historical Jesus of European liberal theology that covered by myths and different from the believed Christ in the church. He afterward moves in systematically analyzing the historical facts of the historical Jesus. At the end, Sobrino comes to the practical attitude as a result of his theological investigation, and there he tackles how the church as historical body of Christ should save the poor continuing the historical salvation of Jesus. Since Latin America is the birth context of the liberation theology, it is the best place to start with the approach to analyze the reality.

2.2) The New Way of Viewing Christ in Latin American Context

There are four subtitles will be handled here, the first one is that the Liberation Theology as it is so contextual that cannot be understood without exploring the situation in which it was exploded for the first time. The first task in dealing with it then is to analyze its social settings narrowly. Subsequently, it will be the focal point of the approach for reading the history for finding out the theological matters involved. It leads to the point where the Liberation Theology starts, the so-called limit-statement, from historical facts to faith statement. The final subtitle is the more in-depth theological analysis of the historical facts, claiming the social victims as the crucified people. Now, we start with the context of Latin American Liberation Theology.

2.2.1) Latin America as Cradle of Liberation Theology

The question worth asking primarily is that “what is liberation theology”? It can be generally defined as a theological reflection with a movement enhancing the preferential option for the poor.⁴⁹ It is a kind of theology cradled in a movement aiming at liberating the poor from

⁴⁹ M.K. Bahmann, *A Preference for the Poor: Latin American Liberation Theology from a Protestant Perspective* (University Press of America, 2005), 46-48, 65.

the burdens of poverty. Christian Smith makes a distinction between the theological concepts fostered within and the movement fostering such theologies, arguing that “liberation theology is simply a coherent set of religious ideas, about and for liberation.”⁵⁰ This makes liberation theology not merely a new emerging theology, but more than that, it is a liberating movement for social change. These two basic mutually dependent orientations, theory, and practice are already seen in the way the liberation theologians’ approach to reading the history with two glasses, both theological and pastoral. The first refers to the theological issues involved in what is going on historically, and the latter refers to the appropriate action worth taking as a response to it. According to Gustavo Gutierrez,⁵¹ the pastoral activity requires theological reflection; he argues that “theology does not produce pastoral activity, rather it reflects upon it.”⁵² Sobrino called the approach as a historical-theological and pastoral.⁵³ Thus, it can be said as the practical attitude of the church toward the poor whose bedrock is the theological reflection about liberation.

It is evident by this that historical reality is the starting point for the liberation theology, which is read theologically and acted pastorally. Since Latin America is the birthplace of this theology, it is suggestive of having a critical reflection upon the history related to poverty and social oppression from which liberation was indispensably required.

Both poverty and social oppression in Latin America are labeled as the springboard of liberation theology. David Turner argues that such poverty was manifested as infant mortality, malnutrition, inadequate wages, prejudices; and the oppression was considered as inhuman, barbaric, ungodly, unjust.⁵⁴ It is a very hallmark of the Latin America of the time, as claims David Tombs “...the history of greed and violence, suffering and oppression, and death and destruction characterized Latin America for five centuries since the arrival of Christianity.”⁵⁵ It was problematic during the heyday of the liberation theology in the twentieth century, Clodovis Boff claims the percentage of the poor at this period that almost the majority of the Latin American population, 80 percent, while 15 percent in the middle class and 5 percent were wealthy.⁵⁶ Boff explains the poor in this case as “those who suffer from the basic economic

⁵⁰ Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 25.

⁵¹ Gustavo Gutierrez has been believed to be the father of the liberation theology.

⁵² Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*, 26.

⁵³ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 25.

⁵⁴ J.D. Turner, *An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (University Press of America, 1994), 4.

⁵⁵ D. Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 3.

⁵⁶ J.V. Pixley and C. Boff, *Liberation Theology: The Bible, the Church, and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor* (Great Britain: Orbis Books, 1989), 1.

needs, those who are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with any dignity.”⁵⁷ The proposed causes for this poverty, as suggests Boff are either morally or naturally; there is poverty because there are illiteracy, prejudice, laziness, but also poverty is hereditary.⁵⁸ At the basics, however, the political and economic structures were strongly accused of being impoverishing, elucidating this, Christian Smith says, “Latin America suffers under neocolonialism, internal colonialism, external colonialism, a dependence on a center of power, and a marked bi-classism, these exploitative structures constitute serious sins, a sinful situation of injustice that can be called as institutionalized violence.”⁵⁹ Because of this, why theology and Christian pastoral action matter, resulting in the emergence of the liberation theology?

2.2.2) The necessity of Liberation Theology Given the Social Context

Foremost, the way of the liberation theology to emerge had already been opened by the forerunner Latin American Christians. During the Spaniard and Portuguese colonization, Christian mission went hand in hand with the colonialism; afterward, as time went on, because of the conquest of the new land, there was rapidly an increase in destruction and killing, more and more natives were reduced into slavery, others were victimized by diseases, malnutrition.⁶⁰ Because of this, voices of protest had been echoed as a result of the maltreatment of the natives. Here is a part of the protest, “by what authority do you make such detestable war against these people who were dwelling gently and peacefully in their land... you kill them every day to gain wealth, do they not have soul? It is certain that in your present state you have no more hope salvation than the Moors or Turks.”⁶¹ That is the voice already crying for liberation three centuries before the appearance of the liberation theology. Such early voice of protest is crucial because it helps the liberation theology for its self-understanding.

Additional to this is the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which can be stated as a turning point for a new model of the church in facing the world issues of today, and one of the strongest emphases was the question of love and justice on behalf of the poor.⁶² Sometimes, it is viewed that all the liberation theologies erupted in the aftermath of this Council are regarded as resulting from it. That what said the following by Faggioli that, “enthusiasts claim that the movements are the true fruit of Vatican II, in that they are the practical implementation of the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*, 18.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁶¹ Ibid., 12-13.

⁶² Thomas Schubeck, "Liberation Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin; Bromiley Fahlbusch, Geoffrey William (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999, 2000).

new ecclesiology of the people of God, of the new theology of the laity, and a church open to the world.”⁶³ Besides, the indigenous theologians were more and more gradually aware of the unfairness of the oppression and injustices in society, and as being fostered by their forerunners and the Vatican II, they tried to find out the theological issues implicated in the social problems. Two conferences took place which were organized by CELAM⁶⁴ in 1968 and 1978, discussing the church and society.⁶⁵ Between these years LALT was born when Gustavo Gutierrez wrote his book *A Theology of Liberation*.⁶⁶ The LALT thus was born for the sake of the challenges the society confronted. How then did the liberation theologians read the social incidents?

2.2.3) Approaches: A Historical-Theological and Pastoral Readings

As mentioned above, the way the liberation theologians read the history is based upon the theological reflection and pastoral attitude. Theological reflection related to history seeks to find a theological response to the problems posed by the historical events, while pastoral attitude attempts to solve those problems pragmatically. Sobrino says that the historical-theological mentions that there are historical phenomena in which God’s presence or purpose has to be discerned, the history is seen in its sacramental dimension, in its ability to manifest God in the present.⁶⁷ However, for the historical-pastoral, there are historical phenomena which the church needs to identify for her mission to rescue and to serve.⁶⁸ Sobrino, however, makes it more Christological by taking as a starting point for his liberation Christology the historical Jesus.⁶⁹ By doing so, he sets an explicit distinction between the historical Jesus in European Christology and Latin American Christology. For the Europeans, the history of Jesus was covered by thick layers of myths and different from the Christ of faith, while Latin America stresses the reality of the historical events of Jesus life, Sobrino claims that “if Jesus died like that, it is very plausible to assert that he lived like that.”⁷⁰ He regards the history of Jesus from a sociological perspective and sees it as also happens in the world history of today. Here is indeed what he argues for that, “we know that in our own day there are thousands of people whose deaths are like Jesus’s and the causes of whose deaths as alleged by their executioners are similar to the cause alleged against Jesus. These lives that today lead to this type of death

⁶³ M. Faggioli and D.S. Yocum, *Sorting out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements* (Liturgical Press, 2014), 14.

⁶⁴ CELAM stands for Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano (*Latin American Episcopal Council*)

⁶⁵ L. Boff and J.W. Diercksmeier, *Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 7-8.

⁶⁶ J.L. Segundo, *Liberation of Theology* (Wipf and Stock Pub., 2002), 233-34.

⁶⁷ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

have essentially the same structure as that claimed for the life of Jesus: proclamation of the Kingdom to the poor, defense of the oppressed and confrontation with their oppressors.”⁷¹

It is understandable by this that there is a sort of historical similarity between the social world of Jesus and that of today where the burdens of poverty and oppression are threats.⁷² Here comes to fore the relationship between history and theology, the historical Jesus is not read as just a simple history but, in its dimension as Good News.⁷³ The Gospel about Jesus perceived in history is made clear by the Christological titles, like Christ, Lord, Savior; for the Latin America, Liberator.⁷⁴ Here Sobrino comes to what he calls as a limit-statement and faith-statement. The limit-statement is the historically time and space limited facts, and faith-statement refers to the theological impression resulted from the limit-statement.⁷⁵ Jesus the Liberator is faith-statement, but according to the historical Jesus, there were limit-statements which gave birth to that. It means that from the standpoint of liberation, the history of Jesus is read for exploring His liberating message and praxis. The climax of what Jesus did for guaranteeing such liberation was his suffering death on the cross. In Latin America also, there are many people suffered and died before their due time due to poverty and the oppression. For Sobrino, they are the new images of the crucified Christ; this is the last point will be handled.

2.2.4) The Crucified People: The Poor and the Oppressed as New Image of Christ in History

Sturla J. Stålsett leads us to a deep theological connection between the Crucified Christ and the crucified people in his thesis entitled “The crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino.” According to his investigation, even though the historical body of Christ is traditionally understood Ecclesiologically, Sobrino prefers to approach it Christologically, claiming that not only the church is the identification of Christ in history but also the suffering and the oppressed humankind.⁷⁶ It is so indeed for a reason the close similarity between the historical Jesus and those kinds of people, as says Stålsett “the concept of “crucified people” is approached through a meditation on these people’s similarity with the figure of the Suffering Servant. The crucified people resemble the Servant, in

⁷¹ Ibid., 61.

⁷² This is indeed the importance of Christology in Sobrino as from the standpoint of Latin American Liberation Theology.

⁷³ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 62.

⁷⁴ It means that Christ as Liberator is just as the same as Christ as Savior.

⁷⁵ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 37-38.

⁷⁶ Sturla J. Stalsett, "Liberation Theology," in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, ed. Svein Rise & Stale Johannes Kristiansen (Surrey UK & Burlington USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited & Ashgate Publishing Compnay, 2013), n.p.

Sobrino's view, in being familiar with illness and suffering (Is. 53,3); in having a mission to establish justice (42,4-7), in meeting violent opposition when procuring to carry out this mission."⁷⁷

Additional to such similarity, Stålsett suggests three axes between Jesus and the crucified people, *epistemological-hermeneutical*, *historical-soteriological*, and *ethical-praxical*.⁷⁸ These two last ones will be explored in the later subchapters, but now we are going to see what is meant by *epistemological-hermeneutical*. What Stålsett argues here as epistemological-hermeneutical is that what Ellacuría says the dual movement of theology and history, meaning theologically conceptualizing the historical reality, and historicizing the theological concepts.⁷⁹ When applied to Jesus and the crucified people, the sense is that, firstly, the suffering and the death of Jesus, which is theological must find for itself a historical vantage point, and the historical reality of the suffering humankind of today must seek for itself a theological meaning. Stålsett says, "to gain knowledge about the suffering Jesus, we must know the suffering people of today ..., vice versa: to gain theological knowledge of the actual sufferings of the people, we must look to Jesus."⁸⁰

The point here is that the death of Jesus is interwoven with the historical reality of his day, about this Ellacuría claims that "it is his historical announcement and service of the coming Kingdom which meets resistance to the point of persecution and execution."⁸¹ The historical reality of the day of Jesus is still a historical reality of the world of today, people suffering due to deep poverty, oppression, marginalization, insecurity, strife, foodlessness, disease. Sobrino calls it as the common horizon of reality, past and present, where Latin America is unexceptional.⁸² The point thus is there is a constitutive relatedness between Jesus and those for whom he was sentenced to death; he was killed for the sake of them, they are the beneficiary of his death. Based upon this constitutive relatedness, Sobrino says the crucified people as the actualization of the Yhwh's Servant and the identification of the Crucified Christ are the new image of Christ in history.⁸³ So far, we outlined the so-called LALT, its birth context, the approaches of viewing the historical reality, the historical Jesus as its starting point, and finally, the suffering and oppressed humankind of today as the identification of the crucified Christ.

⁷⁷ Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 150-51.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 164-65.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸² J. Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples* (Orbis Books, 2015), 125.

⁸³ Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 540. See also: Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*, 124.

As the historical Jesus is the starting point, it is worth a close analysis, the Kingdom of God is the center of His acts and preaching. Now, we are going to deal with how such Kingdom is significant to the people facing the social challenges day by day, both then and now?

2.3) The Kingdom of God in the First Century Jesus and its Significance in the Historical Reality of Today

The Kingdom of God touches all areas of life of Jesus, it is the center of his preaching and mission. The following, we are going to see the connection between such Kingdom and Jesus' concern for the social life of people perceived in his preaching and praxis. How is this still significant in the present-day suffering world? How can we have an alternative observance of the death of Christ on the cross as not only for the sinful humankind's sake, but also due to the resistance of his actions in society of the time, since, by caring the poor and the downtrodden, he met the impoverishing and oppressing structure and left no choice about his crucifixion? Finally, Jesus has risen, how that could be new hope for the poor to get down from the cross? Those are the questions we are going to answer in the three following subtitles.

2.3.1) Social Aspects of the Kingdom of God in the Acts and Preaching of Jesus

Sobrino in *Jesus the Liberator* conveys a detailed analysis of the Kingdom of God; from his inquiry, three themes can be drawn, God and the Kingdom, the addressees of the Kingdom, and the Kingdom of God as critical of the worldly kingdoms. The starting point for Sobrino's analysis of the Kingdom of God is the adjacent view of God himself; he says, "what the Kingdom might be, depends on what God might be."⁸⁴ It means that the understanding of God is a key to understanding the Kingdom of God. One of the basic concepts about God Sobrino elaborates is that his relationship to history, as he, says "for Jesus, God is not a reality that could be not linked to history, but the relationship of God to history is essential to God."⁸⁵ Such God's relationship to history is echoed throughout the Old Testament stories, in Israel's Exodus experience, in prophetic, apocalyptic, and sapiential traditions. All show that God relates intimately to the history of his OT people,⁸⁶ seeing the situations, hearing the prayers, responding to the cry, speaking through his servants, caring for the people in all their suffering.⁸⁷ These God's characters in relation to history characterize the Kingdom. It is

⁸⁴ Sobrino gives an example of this as he says that *so, for example, the coming of the Kingdom is presented differently by John the Baptist and by Jesus, because they had different understandings of God*. See: Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 68.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Jesus in Latin America* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 83.

⁸⁷ A. Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh* (Liturgical Press, 1964), 26, 36.

however not an area which is geo-politically formed like the medieval Christendom; instead, it follows the divine principle and has two dimensions, transcendental and historical. In this historical dimension, it refers to God's sovereignty who powerfully acts in history.⁸⁸

In such a historical dimension of the Kingdom of God indeed its addressees are mostly understood according to the preaching and acts of Jesus, that is, upon this dimension lies its social aspects. As we said above, this historical dimension is based on God who is acting in history, and his acts include responding to the crying of people, looking after them, healing their disease, providing their vital needs, in sum, a total restoration of those who are treated in an inhumane way.⁸⁹ As we could perceive in the Gospels, this also is one of the basics of the tasks of Jesus. According to Sobrino, he introduced the concept as one of his messianic programs in Luke 4:18-20 about "the proclamation of the good news to the poor and the liberation of the oppressed."⁹⁰ The Beatitude statements (Math 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23) elucidate the same thing, claiming the Kingdom of God to be typically addressed to the poor and the hungry.⁹¹ They are then the addressees of the Kingdom; it is worth clarifying nonetheless who are they exactly? Sobrino gives clarification, saying that the Greek word rendered here as poor is *ptochos* (from the verb *ptosso*=to crouch or bend down), statistically used no less than 25 times in the New Testament, and in 22 cases it "refers to the economically afflicted and dispossessed," apart from the three other cases where it is used spiritually (Matt. 3:5; cf. Gal. 4:9; Rev. 3:17).⁹² Sobrino thus concludes that "when Jesus relates the Kingdom to the *ptochoi*, the meaning is not spiritual."⁹³ In its unspiritual sense, however, Joachim Jeremias divides them into two categories, the economically poor referring to those who suffer from the basic needs for surviving, like food, clothes, house, etc., and the sociologically poor referring to those who are marginalized due to moral behavior (prostitutes, sinners) and the despised tasks (Zacchaeus).⁹⁴

Jesus then brought the Kingdom of God whose message, which is fully restorative of humankind, was preached and communicated, and Jesus himself acted accordingly. His action is already a part of the Kingdom; it is its initiation, Sobrino says "putting the meaning of the

⁸⁸ J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* (Wipf and Stock Pub., 2002), 43.

⁸⁹ We see this mostly in the Old Testament prophets, like Ezekiel 34, Amos and some other small prophets.

⁹⁰ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 68.

⁹¹ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 157-58.

⁹² Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 81.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* trans. J. Bowden, vol. 1 (Salamanca SCM Press, 2012), 135-38. Also Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 80.

Kingdom of God into practice.’⁹⁵ Throughout the Gospels, we perceive the actions undertaken by Jesus restoring the lives of those who were thought of as not a fully human being because of their social conditions. By his actions, Jesus was resetting all things in order again, the new relationship to God by forgiving sins, the basic needs for survival, health to live, liberation from evil powers and devil, assurance to live in peace, love, and justice in a society by the Spirit. Those are the social aspects of God’s Kingdom which Jesus has initiated. Sobrino views it not only from such gained-privilege standpoint but also the from the liberation perspective, arguing from the opposite directions that there was a separation from God due to sin, suffering from basic needs, disease, severe torment of a devil, hatred, injustice. All these are of the worldly kingdoms,⁹⁶ which Jesus must have confronted in his liberation acts, and that led to the sanction against him and his subsequent execution.⁹⁷ That leads us to the next point, why Jesus was killed? The historical reason for his execution.

2.3.2) Why Jesus was killed? The Death of Jesus as a result of His Social Actions

Reading the death of Christ from a historical climate of his day is hardly ever done either in Christological treatise or Soteriology, but what is well acquainted with always is that its theological climate, saying that Jesus was died for atoning the human beings, and it is explained in different kind of theories.⁹⁸ Besides this traditional way of viewing the death of Christ, Sobrino introduces another way of interpreting it from a historical point of view, and by doing so, he asks two different questions which have two distinct answers as well, the first is why Jesus was dead? And why he was killed? According to Sobrino, the first question leads to the mystery of God about the Anselmian expiatory theory whereas the second requires an inquiry about the earthly-historical life of Jesus.⁹⁹ It is so indeed because the question why Jesus was killed connects automatically to other related questions, like who killed him, what was his relationship to those who killed him, if such relationship was not so good enough, why? These are very investigable because the reasons are well documented in the New Testament. Not only this, however, but also, the experience of the crucified people of today could shed light upon

⁹⁵ *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 87.

⁹⁶ The worldly kingdom here should not be the government or states, that might be included in a certain way, but what is referred to as worldly kingdom here is the kingdom of evil, kingdom of darkness where the king is Satan, and this is the basic opponent of the Kingdom of God.

⁹⁷ Sobrino, J. Sobrino, "Systematic Christology : Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God," in *Systematic Theology: Perspective from Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 136-38.

⁹⁸ It is reminded here the three different theories of atonement, objective, classic, and subjective.

⁹⁹ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 195.

the historical reason for that, as says Sobrino that “the crucified peoples of the Third World are today the great theological setting, the locus, in which to understand the cross of Jesus.”¹⁰⁰

The Roman soldiers crucified Jesus with the help of the Jewish religious and political leaders, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. When viewing the relationship of Jesus to these three distinct authorities, it seems that from the beginning they had been in conflict. After the two years of the baby Jesus being born, the roman representative, Herod the Great, found out a way to kill Him. This continued throughout the three years of his life by the Jewish leaders, according to the Synoptic narratives, they never stopped conspiring to find ways to accuse Jesus and arrest him, but it is written that they could not do anything for the time of Jesus had not yet come, after Jesus announced his messianic program, his fellow townspeople were full of anger against him and were about to throw him over a cliff (Luke 4:28ff), after he cured a man with a withered hand, “the Pharisees went out, and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him” (Mark 3:6).

Additionally, they always put Jesus to test to accuse him in his words and acts (Mark 10:2; Matt. 19:3; Matt.16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; Mark 12:13-17 par; Mark 12:18-23 par), and finally, as Jesus continued healing, driving out devil, teaching people, they became so more and more furious with him that wrathfully inflamed to kill him (Luke 6:11, 11:53, 13:31, 19:47, 20:19; Mark 11:15-19 par; Mark 14:1; Matt. 26:3; Luke 22:1). The tension became intense as Jesus also spoke about them in some of his parables, like the murderous vine growers (Mark 12:1-12 par.).¹⁰¹ By those stories, we can see that the life of Jesus was always at risk, and at the end when his time had come, his opponents could arrest him and tormented and killed him by crucifixion.¹⁰²

Having this in mind, it springs directly to mind why the entire life of Jesus was under the climate of a dark cloud as such. Basically, it relates to the essence of Jesus himself with all that are about him. That what Sobrino says, “the alternative is in the form of a duel, one against one, it makes perfect sense that Jesus was attacked, rejected and eliminated, put in the terms suggested earlier, the divinities (Jesus’ God and the idols) are fighting, so are the mediations (the Kingdom of God and the anti-Kingdom); that is why the mediators (Jesus and his adversaries) are also in conflict.”¹⁰³ Jesus as Son of God and bringer of the Kingdom of God must have committed himself to God’s fundamental concerns and the essential prerequisites of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 196.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 196-99.

¹⁰² It seems that Jesus knew beforehand that his ministry would end with death, it is just a question of time, as it is repetitively that his time had not yet come, when the time came everything about his execution was allowed.

¹⁰³ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 196.

the Kingdom. That is, people live in a relationship with God by forgiveness, in a peaceful and idyllic life with all that is needed for surviving instead being deprived of the necessities for living, in a good health both bodily and mentally, in love and fraternity and also solidarity with others instead of mutual hatred and exploitation, war, etc.¹⁰⁴ As already said before, those are the fundamental concerns of God in his relation to the people in history, and the characteristics of the Kingdom are the same as it belongs to God. By engaging in those concerns, Jesus put his life at risk to death, because, as states Sobrino, “his preaching and activity represented a radical threats to the religious power of his time, and indirectly to any oppressive power, and that power reacted.”¹⁰⁵ He was killed and truly dead, but he has risen after a few days of his crucifixion, and his resurrection has been a new hope for those for whom he was killed.

2.3.3) Jesus has risen: A New Hope for the Crucified People in History

The primary question that comes to mind before reflecting upon the resurrection of Jesus as a new hope for the crucified people is the certainty of the fact that he has risen indeed, how can we make sure for that? It is one of the central points Sobrino tackles in his second volume of the liberation Christology, *Christ the Liberator: A view from the Victims*; there he clarifies the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁰⁶ On such fact Sobrino produces both historical and theological certainties; historically Jesus has risen because there are recorded texts reporting it in the Gospels, according to those passages he has risen for three reasons, the first who witnessed for that were women,¹⁰⁷ the tomb was empty,¹⁰⁸ and the risen Lord appeared to his disciples.¹⁰⁹ Sobrino reiterates that all these are undeniably historical events demonstrating the warrantee of Christ resurrection. Besides of those histories, there is also a theological certainty of Christ resurrection, and that lies upon its “eschatologicality”, as Sobrino says that “the resurrection of Jesus is an eschatological event, the irruption of the ultimate into history.”¹¹⁰ As theology, this is faith-based, we have to believe that God’s full power has made Christ risen,

¹⁰⁴ There was Pax Romana during the period of Caesar August, but it is just superficial for it did not stand against the social structure wherein the exploitative system (master-slave, patron-client, et.al.) is prevailing, causing all the heart-breaking people never found peace (Pax) within their inner heart. See: D.A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 102-03. That does not mean that we strictly view negatively the Roman Empirical Structure, especially the Pax Romana as it made the spreading of the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire more secured. See: S. Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 177-79.

¹⁰⁵ Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, 196.

¹⁰⁶ *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* (Orbis Books, 2015), 54.

¹⁰⁷ This is hardly believed to be just an apologetics because the testimony of women of the time had no value.

¹⁰⁸ The enemies of Jesus, either Jews or the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb did not deny the fact of the empty tomb, they said that Jesus body had stolen by his disciples.

¹⁰⁹ The earliest text referring to Jesus appearance to his disciples is 1 Cor 15:3-5, and it seems to be a pre-Pauline “confessional formula of Aramaic-Palestinian origin.” Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, 57.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

such God's full power is the power which will be renewing the entire creation in the future eschatology.¹¹¹ Such divine full power in the future has been anticipately active in the world history in the resurrection of Christ, this resurrection then is not an eschatological implication in the history, but a historical implication in the eschatological re-creation.¹¹² The resurrection of Jesus is an eschatological event because it is an anticipation of God's eschatological renewal of the entire creation.¹¹³ Accordingly, the resurrection of Christ is certain as theologically being the firstfruit of God's eschatological work. Apart from the two certainties, historical and theological, philosophical one could be added; this is the philosophical concept about the correspondence theory of truth, meaning that past event is true and certain insofar as it has correspondence to our present existence.¹¹⁴ The resurrection of Christ is a past event indeed, but it has correspondence to our present existence since we feel saved from our sins (1 Cor 15:14-17), and there is the church where the risen Lord is preached.

From this last point, we can add a related new concept. Since the risen Lord is present among us, and we experience his presence, how can our life be eschatologically affected by that? Or in another way of saying, what is the ecclesiological implication of the anticipatory eschatological event, the resurrection of Christ?¹¹⁵ As mentioned above, God's eschatological power was active in Christ resurrection, our existence as believers, however, that is, the "ecclesiality", is based upon such resurrection, this means that the "ecclesiality" lies upon God's eschatological work. The believers and the church are God's eschatological people, experiencing the eschatological dimension of life in the world history of today, how is that? To clarify this, let us think of Sobrino. He elucidates that the existence of Christ today is eschatological, and his eschatological life breaks in believers' history and molds their lives,¹¹⁶ and as such, there is the so-called "an experience of the irruption of something quasi-eschatological into our situation."¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ W. Pannenberg and N.H. Gregersen, *Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology* (Templeton Press, 2008), 53, 56.

¹¹² This can be compared to the resurrection of Christ as an eschatological resurrection and eschatological salvation in Wolhart Pannenberg, and to what Sobrino says above as eschatological event irruptive in history. See: W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2004), 350-51., Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, 11.

¹¹³ H. Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 96.

¹¹⁴ Michael Glanzberg, "Truth," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, ed. E.N. Zalta and S. Abramsky (USA, Australia, Netherlands Stanford University. The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2018).

¹¹⁵ We must answer this question in order to be able to respond to the question about the resurrection of Christ as a new hope for the crucified people.

¹¹⁶ Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, 66.

¹¹⁷ We can say here a kind of historical-eschatological alternatives in the life of the earthly Jesus and the church, the earthly Jesus was historically exist, but the eschatological side of his identity was hidden under the cloud of his humanity, after his resurrection, he is no more historically exist but eschatologically; but the church takes his historical existence, meaning Christ is historically present through the church. The church thus now is historically

The church as God's eschatological people is also people of the eschatological Kingdom, whose life must be conditioned by the basic prerequisites of such Kingdom, and as we have elucidated before, that includes the welfare of all people in the entire areas of life. Now, we can be back to the historical Jesus on how he initiated the Kingdom of God through his preaching and praxis, and this leads the church to live following the way of living of the historical Jesus, initiating the Kingdom of God through both preaching and praxis for the wellbeing of the humankind. This relates to the question of the discipleship as Sobrino says that in "Jesus 'own words, discipleship, considered primarily as a continuation of his practice, in this way, the community of perspective required by hermeneutics is achieved in the continuance of Jesus' practice, which is necessary, though by no means sufficient, to understand the historical Jesus who initiated it."¹¹⁸ Hence, when then saying Christ resurrection as a new hope for the poor, the possibility of this is the church, as, through her, the risen Lord continues to exist historically.¹¹⁹ The question now moves from Christology to Ecclesiology. How does the church live, following the way of living of the historical Jesus to be new hope for the crucified people in the world history? Such a question leads us to the final point in this chapter, Sobrino's practical approach to the poor. We proceed to that.

2.4) Sobrino's Practical Approach to the Poor and the Oppressed

We have explained before that the approach of Sobrino is historical-theological and pastoral. We have discovered how he read the history theologically from the starting point of the historical Jesus. He found out that the so-called crucified people in the world history, especially in the third world, were those to whom both the preaching and actions of Jesus were mostly historically addressed, the poor. Jesus caring attitude toward them brought him death. He was killed and dead, but he has risen, and his resurrection is new hope for the crucified people in the sense that it brought forth the church, God's eschatological people in the eschatological Kingdom. Thus, the holistic salvation of the historical Jesus does not end in the crucifixion, but as he has risen, he continues doing so through his historical body of the present-day, the church. Now, we turn to the pastoral reading, the church caring attitude toward the crucified people. To begin with, we look at the typical horizon of the historical reality of Latin American society and society of the historical Jesus.

exist, but the eschatological side of her existence is still hidden under the cloud of her humanity, but like Christ, she will be eschatologically exist when the world history is over. *Ibid.*, 71.

¹¹⁸ J. Sobrino and R. Lassalle-Klein, *Jon Sobrino: Spiritual Writings* (Orbis Books, 2018), n.p.

¹¹⁹ For Sobrino, believers today experience analogously. See: Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, 66-67.

2.4.1) The Common Horizon of the Historical Reality

Why is this important? It is essential because it makes known to us the precise historical realities, both that of Jesus and the church in history, contextually in Latin America. Dealing with so, Sobrino takes as starting point the historical reality of the Latin America, particularly his home country, El Salvador; and there he saw the historically ongoing challenges in a society facing the majority populace, and he calls it as the *sinfulness of reality*.¹²⁰ What is prevailing within such sinful reality is that injustice, persecution, oppression, famine, slaughtering, and death. According to Sobrino, those who are victims of those tragedies could be divided into two, those who are persecuted and killed due to the act of defending and supporting those that are defenseless, he calls them *Jesuanic martyrs*; and those who are dead due to defenselessness.¹²¹ Stålsett says it this way, “Sobrino distinguishes between an ‘active’ and ‘passive’ analogous participation. The crucified people consist of many persons who today actively take up the challenge and mission of establishing justice in the world, and who for that reason encounter opposition and persecution. On the other hand, there is in the crucified people a majority of people who are put to death, not because of what they actively do or seek to accomplish, but simply because of what they passively are. These are all the innocent victims of history who die defenseless in the hands of their executioners.”¹²²

Sobrino sees the similar reality to have already taken place at the time of Jesus in the first-century history, and Jesus himself was the one among those who were persecuted for the act of defending the defenseless and put to death for that. It means that in Jesus time, the majorities faced victimization of defenselessness which resulted in deprivation in entire areas of life, and he reacted against it by his sayings and actions.¹²³ We thus see the universal horizon of social reality irrespectively of time distance, and it has been sinful as based on injustice and the play of death. When talking about the crucified people here, they divide into two, those who are saving the defenseless victims and the defenseless victims that are saved; and this relates to the question of salvation, which means that salvation history becomes salvation in history. That is the second axis of Stålsett in the relationship between Jesus and the crucified people, the *historical-soteriological*.¹²⁴ According to Sobrino then, such salvation can be explained, not

¹²⁰ Sobrino, J. *Where Is God?: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Orbis Books, 2015), 116.

¹²¹ Sobrino, J. *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*, 6.

¹²² Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 154-55.

¹²³ This is evidenced when thinking of the Greco-Roman society as a society based upon the slavery system. Andrew Mason Burks, "Roman Slavery: A Study of Roman Society and Its Dependence on Slaves." (East Tennessee State University 2008), 7.

¹²⁴ Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 164.

only theologically, but also socially/historically.¹²⁵ It means that Jesus, by defending the socially defenseless victims, has been not only a theological savior but also social/historical savior sharing the same reason for being persecuted as those who have endeavored to establish justice and defend the poor in history.¹²⁶ On the identity of Jesus as historical savior lies the tunnel the church follows if she wants to live following the way of living of Jesus, doing what Jesus did. Hence, there then is a kind of dialectical existence of the church or a dialectical ecclesiology, meaning that on the one hand, the church has already been saved, such salvation is more theological; but on the other hand, she is a savior, and the salvation here is social/historical. It is so indeed since the same historical Jesus is still present today in the church as a risen Lord, and a social/historical salvation continues through his historical body, the church. The question, however, is that to what extent is the church aware of that? It leads us to the issue of the discipleship, to which we now turn.

2.4.2) The Question of Discipleship

The German Lutheran theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* says that “in Christ we no longer live our own lives, but He lives His life in us, the life of the faithful in the Church is indeed the Life of Christ in them.”¹²⁷ It is the reflective concept of discipleship in Sobrino’s thinking; it means that being a disciple is to follow Jesus, to live the life He lived, and to let Him live in us, and work through us. We have already elucidated the three axes of the relationship of Christ and the crucified people in Stålsett, *epistemological-hermeneutical, historical-soteriological, and ethical-praxical*. We have already explained the two first ones, but in the *ethical-praxical* axis Stålsett clarifies what it means to follow Christ, he says “to participate in the mission to take the crucified down from their cross, i.e., to act out of compassion, to establish justice and the true fellowship among the human beings, this is the praxis of following.”¹²⁸ Having this in mind, we have to move back to the first-century Jesus

¹²⁵ Sobrino summarizes it as follows: “salvation is life (satisfaction of the basic vital needs) over against poverty, infirmity and death; salvation is dignity (respect for person and their rights) over against disregard and disdain; salvation is freedom over against oppression; salvation is fraternity among human beings who are brought together as family” J. Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Orbis Books, 2015), 120.

¹²⁶ Jesus however is different from them because apart from the historical reason for his death, there is also a theological reason, and that is the Anselmian expiatory theory of atonement. In addition, for Jesus, the historical and the theological reasons for his persecution and execution are eschatologically connected, thus, for him being sentenced to put to death was not choice, it was a “must” to make valid eschatologically his social/historical salvation. There is then a huge dichotomy between the historical Jesus and those what Sobrino calls as Jesuanic martyrs in that sense, even though they share the same reason for being put to death historically, defending the poor.

¹²⁷ D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Touchstone, 2012), 274.

¹²⁸ Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 165.

to find out exactly how he acted out of compassion, how he established justice and promoted welfare for the humankind of his day, that is, taking the crucified down from the cross.

Previously, we have handled the social acts of Jesus as social aspects of the Kingdom of God, and there we found out that his praxis is based on the character of God in his relationship to the people in history, promoting humankind's wellness, and love and justice based society. Here, we are going to have a narrow look at how Jesus practically committed himself to that. Since Jesus made as a center of his preaching and acts, not himself, but the Kingdom of God, we had best review it, Sobrino says that the Kingdom of God is a reality in which the human condition is in harmony with the will and being of God himself.¹²⁹ Jesus committed himself to furshinsh such harmony. he preached the loving God and made such love tangible through social actions; this includes being always on the side of the poor,¹³⁰ visiting and healing the sick, giving food to the hungry ones. Teaching about human dignity and value irrespectively of the social classes and life condition, and by doing so, he set himself as a paradigm to follow (John 13:14). Above all, He built a new relationship to God for those who had faith in Him, and bodily look after them because that is the life in harmony with God's will and being. It is so, for those who belong to God should not be in deprivation of the vital needs in life. How does the church think of this? Let us turn to the Christian solidarity in Sobrino.

2.4.3) Christian Solidarity

Christian solidarity is so clear already in the preferential option for the poor as one of the basic principles of the liberation theology. Sobrino reports Leonardo Boff when arguing the essence of the liberation theology, saying that "a true theology of liberation can be developed only on the condition that the theologians make an unequivocal option for the poor and their liberation."¹³¹ Such preferential option for the poor denotes an intimate willingness to be in solidarity with them, and it reflects the attitude of Jesus toward the sinners, as he says in Mathew 9:13, "for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."¹³² What does Sobrino mean by solidarity? He explains that "solidarity means poor people and the nonpoor people mutually bearing one another, giving to each other and receiving from each other the best that they have in order to arrive at being with one another."¹³³ In ecclesiological

¹²⁹ J. Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (Wipf & Stock, 2004), 44.

¹³⁰ It includes the two kinds of the poor as we explained that before, economically and sociologically, and we see in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus was always blamed by the Jewish religious leaders for that.

¹³¹ Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 37.

¹³² It is probable that contextually, Jesus speaks of the sociologically poor here. The question here, however, is the solidarity with the poor regardless whether they are sociologically poor or economically.

¹³³ Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays*, 168.

perspective, this can be interpreted in double senses, first, it can be viewed from the standpoint of the Christians' individuality, meaning that the individual Christians should take the side of being in solidarity with the poor, defending them, fighting for them, seeking their wellbeing, and providing their basic needs as far as the individual could do. The point here is to take the solidarity of Jesus with the poor and sinners to be applicable to the individual Christians. The second sense is to take such Jesus' attitude to be applicable to the church as an entity and institution; she should be so thoughtful of the poor and homeless that set aside budgets or infrastructure as a kind of contribution of their welfare.

This latter point relates to the question of evangelization, which, in liberation theology perspective, can be performed both prophetically and pastorally. The prophetic evangelization that the church should be engaged in is that the act of announcing publicly the will of God which values the holistic development of the entire human beings. The act of denouncing whatsoever adds it, which opposes such God's will, and this includes the condemnation of the politically oppressive system enhancing the social injustice and the inhumane treatment of the fellow countrymen.¹³⁴ Priscila Pope-Levison says when putting this in the Latin American context, "when the Latin American church has actually denounced the capitalist system, the doctrine of national security, the accumulation of wealth for the minority and impoverishment of the majority, it has taken the prophetic evangelization seriously."¹³⁵ Sobrino also shares the same idea for this, as he says that service to God's good coming means anything like a softer prophetic denunciation and condemnation of oppressors."¹³⁶ It is right since the reason for denouncing is that the unequivocal solidarity with the destitute that endeavoring to react against the impoverishers on behalf of them.

Moreover, there is also a pastoral evangelization, meaning the evangelization by word working out in practice.¹³⁷ For this, Jesus is the real typical example to follow, as argues Priscila, "Jesus preached the reign of God and then acted out his proclamation through deeds, solidarity with the oppressed, healing the sick, and cleansing the lepers."¹³⁸ That is indeed what we have elucidated before as the historical-pastoral reading of Sobrino's approach to history, and as we have said, it means the historical phenomena which the church needs to identify for her mission to rescue and to serve. According to Sobrino, this approach is so practical because

¹³⁴ P. Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, vol. 69, American University Studies (New York, Bern, Frankfurt, Paris: Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated, 1991), 22.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 119.

¹³⁷ Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, 69, 23.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

it brings God closer to the poor people,¹³⁹ we can say it is one way to get theology down from its “academicity” to a social playground for the benefit of the social victims.¹⁴⁰ When this happens, a changed relationship is assured, both to God and the fellow human beings, because if they feel the love of God tangibly touching their lives through the pastoral attitude of the church, they might be converted and devote their lives to God, which is inducing the mutual solidarity and love. According to Leonardo Boff, that is indeed the conversion from the liberation theology perspective, a life devoted to God and others in solidarity and love by mutually bearing the burdens, instead of just belief.¹⁴¹ Sobrino states it as “changing the heart of stone into a heart of flesh,”¹⁴² merely conditioned by the evangelizing act of the church, which is much more fruitful if working out in practice through the church pastoral attitude. Unlike this pastoral evangelization which is more diaconal, the prophetic one treated above is more politically-oriented. That is the last theme I will treat below as a final point in this second chapter.

2.4.4) Political Involvement

As already been mentioned before, liberation theology is not just a theological genre, but also a movement crying for the liberation of the poor. It can be said on the one hand to be a political revolution preceded by and based upon a liberating aspect of Christianity which is theologically deep-rooted.¹⁴³ It is so because the theologians view that poverty in Latin America is not a natural tragedy dropping from elsewhere, but an impoverishment resulting from an economic and political structure which could be fought. To such fight the liberation theologians dedicated themselves, and Jon Sobrino was unexceptional. His approach is entirely different since he approached the problems from a Christological standpoint, saying that when poverty happens this way, and you strive to solve it, you have to confront the impoverishers, prophetically speak out against them, and be critical of them.¹⁴⁴ That is the schema in his mind when thinking of the climate of the historical reason for the execution of Jesus that by defending the oppressed he attacked the oppressors, and that brought him death.¹⁴⁵ The same case for the

¹³⁹ Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 125.

¹⁴⁰ C.f. E.A.N. C, *Liberation Theology* (Moody Press, 1985), 283.

¹⁴¹ L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (New York: SPCK, 1980), 285-86.

¹⁴² Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 79.

¹⁴³ G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, ed. Sister Caridad and John Eagleson, Maryknoll, New York (Orbis Books, 1988), n.p.

¹⁴⁴ Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*, 96-99.

¹⁴⁵ Even though Jesus did not react directly against the political structure of his day, it is plausible that he did so indirectly through some of his preaching and actions, and on the contrary, the political leaders of his day thought of Jesus as their rival. See: *ibid.*, 98.

Jesuanic martyrs, there is a political implication in their martyrdom as they were persecuted and put to death for their endeavor to establish peace and justice in society and struggling to transform the oppressive and impoverishing socio-economic and political order.¹⁴⁶ How is the church involved in politics according to liberation theology?

Firstly, there is a missiological implication for this, and this has been mentioned above as the prophetic evangelization, meaning that the church is speaking out against the impoverishing ideologies and actions in the political areas and the government. Second, it implies the eradication of the political structure enhancing the oppression and violence,¹⁴⁷ and in Latin American context, such political structure is the capitalist system.¹⁴⁸ This system was viewed as exploitative, because, by definition, it is “a political regime in which the ownership of the goods of production is left open to economic competition.”¹⁴⁹ The competitors are the rich ones who have laborers working for them, and those laborers are paid, but not according to the crops they worked for, as the employers also must think of the benefit. That is why it is said that exploitation of the working class, the poor, is intrinsic in this system; and as such the liberation theologians accused it as exploitative, oppressive, impoverishing, unjust, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Instead of capitalism, they prefer the socialist ideology which is a political regime advocating the means of production to belong to the entire community.¹⁵⁰ The liberation theologians viewed this as just since it seeks the entire people to be beneficiary of the wealth of the country.¹⁵¹

Thus, when then the liberation theologians speak of the transformation in the socio-economic and political sphere, in sum, what is meant by that is the transformation of the capitalist structure into socialist.¹⁵² Sobrino speaks out for this, as he says, “we must destroy the structures of oppression and violence; we must build new structures of justice. We must provide adequate means to do this political, social, and pastoral education and organization everything that will help change structures, here we simply want to go over the formal structure, instead of injustice, justice; instead of oppression, freedom; instead of selfishness, love; instead

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁴⁷ *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 61.

¹⁴⁸ P. Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America--and Beyond* (Temple University Press, 1987), 123.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 91.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ It does not mean that Marxist philosophy is relevant to Christian ideology, in fact, it is an atheistic ideology, and incompatible with the Christian faith; yet, for the liberation theology, it is tolerable as a tool to explain the ideology of the socio-economic and political aspects of Christianity.

¹⁵² J.R. Pottenger, *The Political Theory of Liberation Theology: Toward a Reconvergence of Social Values and Social Sciences* (State University of New York Press, 1989), 68.

of death, life.”¹⁵³ Besides, there are twofold ideologies held by the liberation theology as legacies from the Second Vatican Council. The first is that the church must not belong to any political parties, and the second is that the church should cooperate with the states and the political leaders, for the majority people to be well served by both the church and the states, “since both are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same human beings.”¹⁵⁴

2.5) Summary

Christology of Sobrino focuses upon the messianic program of Jesus. He served the Kingdom of God whose requirements is that the holistic wellness of the humankind. It is at the heart of His preaching and actions, and it brought him persecution and death. He was persecuted and killed for this, and died, but afterward, he has risen and alive eternally. His resurrection is the first fruit of God’s eschatological act which will renew the entire creation at the end time. There is, however, the ecclesiological implication of such God’s eschatological act, which must mean that the church is God’s eschatological people, and as such, she is the people of God’s eschatological Kingdom. Hence, there is then an eschatological implication in the historical existence of the church since she is God’s eschatological people brought forth by his eschatological act, the resurrection of Christ. Her historical existence is conditioned by the prerequisites of God’s eschatological Kingdom to which she belongs, and that includes wellbeing of the entire humankind. The church could achieve it by being on the side of the poor to visit and care for their bodily needs. That is the pastoral evangelization for the liberation theology. Besides this, there is also a prophetic mission, which involves the duty in politics. It implies transforming what seems to impoverish in the political system. Church involvement in politics, yet, does not have to implicate changing the political structures, but Christian ethics could be lived in any existing political systems. That is precisely the central ideology of Christian Realism, to which we now are proceeding.

¹⁵³ Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, 61.

¹⁵⁴ O.A. Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements. Introductory Essays by Ignacio Martin-Baro and Jon Sobrino*, trans. Michael J. Walsh (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 78.

III) Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism

3.1) Introduction

In a modern theological debate, both divine transcendence and immanence have been a great topic. God as transcendent means that he is “self-sufficient apart from the world, God is above the universe and comes to the world from beyond,” but God as immanent means he is “active within the universe, involved in the processes of the world and of human history.”¹⁵⁵ That is the theological debate that originated both the protestant liberalism with the social gospel and the neo-orthodoxy in modern theology. While thus the neo-orthodoxy underscores the otherness of God and his incomprehensibility to the human mind, protestant liberalism understands him only through the human mind, spirit, and the historical experience. The balance between the two is the theological contribution of Christian realism, for which the North American ethicist theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr is mostly viewed as the father.¹⁵⁶

Thus, from the first half of the 20th century Niebuhr has been one of the most well-known theologians, his books have been mostly read, not only in theological research but also political and philosophical.¹⁵⁷ Following the footsteps of his father, Niebuhr entered the pastoral ministry and mostly under the influence of the social gospel that prevailed of the day, which discussed Christianity and the social issues.¹⁵⁸ His theological contribution, however, remains to call into question the divine immanence and the optimistic anthropology of the protestant liberalism and the social gospel. By so doing, he takes the other wing of theology, the neo-orthodoxy, and concludes that the immanent God is also transcendent. His moral theology then is a kind of drama of such divine simultaneously paradoxical characters. Now, let us move on to discuss it in detail.

3.2) Conceptual Backgrounds of Niebuhr’s Christian Realism

Here, we are going to have a view on the prevailing ideologies behind Niebuhr’s Christian realism. He thought of them as concepts resulting in optimism in modern human generations; and such optimism induced the world’s tragedies in the first half of the twentieth century to be an unexpected explosion, such as the world wars and the great depression. All Niebuhr could

¹⁵⁵ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Reinhard Keiser, "Reinhold Niebuhr," in *New World Encyclopedia*, ed. Frank Kaufmann (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Many American politician and social activists have been influenced by Niebuhr’s thought, like Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, etc. We can see more about this later on.

¹⁵⁸ Keiser, "Reinhold Niebuhr."

say in his theological insights are intense adverse criticisms against those prevailing ideologies.¹⁵⁹ The first of these is the American secular liberalism, which is the political left wing of the enlightenment in modernity enhancing the advancement of humans in promoting a better society.¹⁶⁰ The second one is the religious liberalism, the liberal social Gospel expanded in the United States and Canada in the early-20th-century.¹⁶¹ It is a movement underlining social salvation whose focal point is the earthly realization of God's Kingdom.¹⁶² It is the human beings as rational who would make such God's Kingdom realized on earth, this what Naqvi states, "the new Gospellers instead tended to emphasize the natural goodness of man and were optimistic about the human capacity for doing good and about the potential for creating a Kingdom of heaven on earth."¹⁶³ Like the secular liberalism, this is also a legacy from the enlightenment, because it is an inheritance of the rational theology of the liberal Protestantism in the late 19th and early 20th century.¹⁶⁴ Despite the differences, as one is secular and the other is religious, both are sharing the same viewpoint on the cultural optimism based on the human intellectual capacity.

When Niebuhr began his career as Pastor and theologian, what he saw happening in the world history was entirely in contrast with the dominant optimistic view about the human beings who are now viewed as capable enough by their reason to solve the social challenges. Those happenings were wars, the great depression, which were unexpected eruptive calamities resulting in great misfortunes and casualties. Given this, Niebuhr was persuaded that a good society based upon humans' endeavor by their reason is just a dream and illusion, because that is impossible since human beings are limited. That is what he says that "the evil in human history is regarded as the consequence of man's wrong use of his unique capacities, the wrong use is always due to some failure to recognize the limits of his capacities of power, wisdom, and virtue."¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ P. Terracini, *John Stoward Moyes and the Social Gospel: A Study in Christian Social Engagement* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris AU, 2015), n.p.

¹⁶⁰ A. Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 2012), 23-24.

¹⁶¹ Schweitzer, "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians," 50.

¹⁶² Cecelia Tichi, *Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America (and What They Teach Us)* (USA: ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited, 2010), 326.

¹⁶³ S.N.H. Naqvi, *Perspectives on Morality and Human Well-Being: A Contribution to Islamic Economics* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kube Publishing Limited, 2016), 90.

¹⁶⁴ L.A. Muray, *Liberal Protestantism and Science* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 32.

¹⁶⁵ R. Niebuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion?: A Study in the Social Resources and Limitations of Religion in Modern Life* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010), 156.

3.3) Niebuhr's Christian Realism

3.3.1) Realism: A Short Clarification

For clarifying realism, I will take these two opposite philosophical ideologies, both idealism, and pragmatism, and see how realism is distinct from them. First, idealism is a philosophical concept emphasizing the human mind-dependent existence of the objective reality.¹⁶⁶ It could be both metaphysical, which means the ideality of the reality; and epistemological, meaning the process of knowing the truth about the objective reality based on human experience.¹⁶⁷ The pragmatism, on the other side, is a philosophical conception in viewing the reality from the standpoint of man's practical attitude toward it.¹⁶⁸ For idealism and pragmatism, the reality is conditioned by the human being; man is implied in the existence of the reality because the condition of the reality is that it is conceivable in man's mind,¹⁶⁹ and pragmatically actable. Realism is distinct from both in the sense that reality exists independently of humans' minds and their practical attitudes.¹⁷⁰ It means that the human being is not the condition of the existence of any realities. It is thus a way of viewing things as they are, and act accordingly. Christian realism is related to this, it is Christian ethics applied in the entire socio-political sphere.¹⁷¹ However, it is a rejection of all the prevailing ideologies making humankind as the center of reality. In the theological treatise of Christian realism, thus, Niebuhr strives to differentiate God the creator and the human being the creature.¹⁷² Human beings are ideally and practically limited, not everything could be conceptualized by their mind, this is so as they are creatures.¹⁷³ Hence, when they come to know God, it is through God's revelation, and as such God's revelation is the foundation of the Christian religion and humankind's welfare. That is the neo-orthodoxy of Niebuhr's theology, to which we turn.

¹⁶⁶ K.L. Pearce, "Mereological Idealism," in *New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. T. Goldschmidt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 214.

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Sommer Robinson, "Idealism," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ed. etc. Patricia Bauer Adam Augustin (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite, 2014).

¹⁶⁸ R.B. Goodman, *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader* (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

¹⁶⁹ C.f. to *Cogito, ergo sum* (= I think; therefore, I am) of Rene Descartes (a 17th century French philosopher).

¹⁷⁰ Alexander Miller, "Realism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, ed. E.N. Zalta and S. Abramsky (USA, Australia, Netherlands: Stanford University. The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2003).

¹⁷¹ R.W. Lovin, *Christian Realism and the New Realities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 30.

¹⁷² R. Niebuhr and G. Dorrien, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), xi.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

3.3.2) Christianity as Religion of Revelation

In his book *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Niebuhr brings to light his understanding of Christianity as a revelation-based religion. To begin with this, he interprets the Christian view about man and its relevance to the known facts of human history. In this, he finds that what is enhanced in all the intellectual movements in human history, like humanism and enlightenment, have always been in contradiction with the historical facts. In those intellectual movements, it has been underscored the progress of the rational man in developing the life of humanity. According to the historical facts, however, man is subrational, the known facts are seen as depreciating and devaluing the life of humankind instead of developing it, as states Niebuhr that “the modern mind fails to find a secure foundation for the individuality which it ostensibly cherishes so highly.”¹⁷⁴ This finiteness of reason lifts the human spirit, which enables man to stand outside and beyond time, the nature, the world; and that brings them to the self-transcendence and self-regard as a god, the center of the entire universe. Niebuhr says about this that, “a spirit who can set time, nature, the world...and inquire after these things, proves that in some sense he stands outside and beyond them, this ability to stand outside and beyond the world persuades man to regard himself as god around whom the universe centers”.¹⁷⁵ According to Niebuhr, this is the concept which perennially results in mysticism in both eastern and western Christendom, though the east is more addicted to that.¹⁷⁶ He, thus, still accuses such mysticism as a man’s self-transcendence “seeking absorption into eternity.”¹⁷⁷

The Biblical religion must be distinguished from such human self-immolation in mysticism; it is a religion of revelation. Such revelation is both a private and special, private revelation is “the testimony in the consciousness of every person,”¹⁷⁸ and a special revelation refers to events in history that become God’s self-disclosure to humankind.¹⁷⁹ These two kinds of revelation are complementarity because “without the special revelation the private experience of God would remain subject to caprice; yet, without the private revelation of God, the special/historical revelation would not gain credence.”¹⁸⁰ For Niebuhr, the religion of

¹⁷⁴ R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 123.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁷⁶ J.R. Horne, *The Moral Mystic* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 12-13.

¹⁷⁷ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 125.

¹⁷⁸ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 105.

¹⁷⁹ L. Gilkey, *On Niebuhr: A Theological Study* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 72.

¹⁸⁰ K.M. Hamilton and J.B. Moulaison, *The Doctrine of Humanity in the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 48.

revelation has two features; first, it understands the finiteness of man and the existence of evil in him; second, it lies upon both God's transcendence and immanence. He says about it that, "the most important characteristic of a religion of revelation is this twofold emphasis upon the transcendence of God and upon His intimate relation to the world."¹⁸¹ Let us have a short look at such God's transcendence and immanence.

3.3.2.1) The Transcendence of God

Divine transcendence is one of the concepts which is at the heart of Niebuhr's theology in his attack against the human-centered thoughts, secularly, like the liberalism, the idealism, and the pragmatism; and religiously, like the social Gospel and the mysticism. For the secularists who do not admit the existence of God as he is beyond the human reason and mind, and cannot be experienced apart from faith, Niebuhr says that God exists and he is so transcendent. For the religious who acknowledges the existence of God but knows him as inseparably interwoven with the human spirits, Niebuhr says, God the creator is so transcendent and different from the creature human beings, and remains critical of them, because he "stands over against man and nation and must be experienced as enemy before he can be known as friend."¹⁸² The transcendence of God is displayed in three ways, his sovereignty, providence, and freedom. His sovereignty lies in his dominion over all nations, as Niebuhr claims that "history is conceived as unity because all historical destinies are under the dominion of a single divine sovereignty."¹⁸³ Related to this, as God is sovereign over all nations, he is the controller of the world's history; it means that he is beyond the creature world and non-temporal, but such world is under his providence.¹⁸⁴ Because of such divine providence of the world, the world history becomes revelatory; it points beyond itself and to the creator.¹⁸⁵ The third way displaying the transcendence of God is that his freedom in giving himself to the world, that is, in his full freedom, God gives himself to the world through Christ in love because his engagement in the world is not an expression of God's limitations instead his freedom.¹⁸⁶ It means that the transcendent God cannot be known to humanity unless he, in his complete freedom, gives himself to human beings. It is worth remembering that the plain manifestation

¹⁸¹ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 126.

¹⁸² Niebuhr, R., *Faith and History - a Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History* (Read Books Limited, 2013), 103.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸⁴ Niebuhr, R., *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D.B. Robertson (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 228.

¹⁸⁵ R.L. Miles, *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 74.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

of such self-giveness of God to the world is the cross of Christ. As we see here, the transcendence of God showed in his freedom denotes his intimate relation to the world. Let us have a look at this.

3.3.2.2) The Immanence of God

Divine immanence is the essential point differentiating Niebuhr from the other Neo-orthodox theologians, especially the Europeans, Stanley Grenz calls it as a modified neo-orthodoxy. As he says the following that “on this central issue he agreed with the main emphases of Continental neo-orthodoxy, but he saw in the Bible an emphasis on the transcendence of God, with an emphasis on God’s intimate relation to the world.”¹⁸⁷ Niebuhr himself emphasizes it by saying that, “though God is majestic and transcendent he is nevertheless related to man by both his qualities and his interest in man...his interest in man remains even when, as in modern Barthian theology, he is described as the “wholly other.”¹⁸⁸ According to Niebuhr, such transcendent-immanent is the paradoxical existence of God.¹⁸⁹

We have explained above the divine transcendence. However, his immanence refers to his salvific relation to the world, and this relates to the revelation mentioned before which denotes, not only the otherworldly God made himself at a disposition to be known but also the reason for his revelation, his willingness to relate to his creatures for the sake of his love.¹⁹⁰ As said before, there are both private revelations, which refers to God speaking to each by their conscience; and the historical revelation referring to the event in history disclosing the essence of God.¹⁹¹ There were countless events in the Bible and the world history that became God’s revelation, but the top one among them is that when God himself the creator, through his Son, became substantially one of his creatures, the non-temporal in time, the controller of the world history became controlled by the history. That is the historical existence of God through Jesus Christ whose climax fact of his mundane life is the crucifixion on the cross.¹⁹² Such cross is soteriological, divulging the profound truth about the nature of humankind and the quintessence of God.¹⁹³ Niebuhr says that God’s essence revealed upon the cross is the agape, the sacrificial love, which, he says, transcends the character of God.¹⁹⁴ This love as such must be defined as

¹⁸⁷ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 105.

¹⁸⁸ Niebuhr, West, and Gilkey, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, 38.

¹⁸⁹ E.J. Carnell, *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 23.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 89.

¹⁹³ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 108.

¹⁹⁴ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 96.

the ontology of God conditioning His soteriological acts in His immanence.¹⁹⁵ Emphasizing this, John Hall claims that love is the being of God touches the human historical existence,¹⁹⁶ and this must be salvation. As we have said, the soteriological dimension of God's immanence displayed in the cross of Christ unveils not only such God's essence as love, but also the truth about the humankind, this leads us to Niebuhr's anthropology. Let us proceed to this.

3.3.3) Niebuhr's Anthropology

It is understandable that for Niebuhr, the cross of Christ plays a role of bridging his treatise on God and man. As we claimed above, on the side of God, it indicates his essence as love; whereas on the side of man, it shows his place to be in the abyss of sin, lost and decaying. The cross of Christ would not have existed without those twofold cases. The understanding of man, thus, is a huge topic in Niebuhr's theology because it sheds light upon why the transcendent God becomes immanent, intimately related to his creatures. Barreto says Niebuhr's anthropology as traditional following the line of the enormous theological figures from the Apostles, as he says, "Niebuhr's view of human beings and the world is strongly influenced by a tradition that traces its way back to Paul, Augustine, and the Reformers."¹⁹⁷ There are three key themes can be drawn from it, the human sin, their boundedness, and freedom; to begin with, we take the human sin, and after, the two latter ones come.

3.3.3.1) The Human Sin

The 19th-century liberal theologian Albrecht Ritschl says, "what is sought with the help of the superhuman power revered by man is a solution of the contradiction in which man finds himself as both a part of nature and a spiritual personality claiming to dominate nature."¹⁹⁸ It is a key point for understanding Niebuhr's anthropology. He, however, articulates it in a way that Ritschl does not have in mind, arguing that man as part of nature means he is creature, and as such he is finite; but man dominates nature means that he is a rational creature, and as such he is free, Niebuhr calls it as both human finiteness and freedom.¹⁹⁹ The ground of sin for Niebuhr, however, is that man's denial of his creaturehood in order to usurp the place of the creator.²⁰⁰ Finstuen says that for Niebuhr, pride is the humanity's first sin, "modern man, like

¹⁹⁵ Douglas John Hall, "The Logic of the Cross: Niebuhr's Foundational Theology," in *Reinhold Niebuhr Revisited: Engagements with an American Original*, ed. D. Rice and M.E. Marty (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 69-70.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Barreto, "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue," 99.

¹⁹⁸ A. Ritschl, H.R. Mackintosh, and A.B. Macaulay, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine* (WIPF & STOCK PUBL, 2004), 199.

¹⁹⁹ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 178.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

Lucifer and Adam before him, was unwilling to admit that God was God and man was man.”²⁰¹ Finstuen still reports Niebuhr saying that Christianity is not simply “a virtuous human quest for God,” but it is a battlefield where God and man’s self-esteem are at odds.²⁰²

This is the basics of the human’s problem, but it is manifested in various ways; yet, Niebuhr orbits it in two dimensions, religious and moral/social; the religious dimension of sin is “man’s rebellion against God, his effort to usurp the place of God; and the moral and social dimension is injustice.”²⁰³ Religiously, sin as rebellion against God means that God is not viewed nor treated as the source and center of our existence.²⁰⁴ As God is rejected, man transcends himself usurping the place of God, and this is what we have stated above as pride. For Niebuhr, such pride is manifested in three distinct types, pride of power, pride of knowledge and pride of virtue.²⁰⁵

The pride of power is displayed in two forms, and that what says Adler as both the superiority and inferiority senses.²⁰⁶ The superiority sense of the pride of power of man is that man feels secure; he believes that he has achieved perfect self-sufficiency and self-mastery and sense as such to be fully secure.²⁰⁷ Here, human beings deny their nature as a finite creature and think of themselves, instead of God, as the condition of their security against all vicissitudes.²⁰⁸ The historical implication of this is that for all the challenges facing them in history, they are not considered as part of the causes of the problems, and this for Niebuhr is very challenging that must be closely viewed in solving the historical problems.²⁰⁹ The second form of the pride of power is the sense of inferiority, that is, the sinful ego-assertion rooted in anxiety resulting in man’s feeling of insecure and meaningless.

For this reason, a man runs to power competitively and falls to self-transcendence, Niebuhr calls it as a “sinful will-to-power.”²¹⁰ Such will-to-power is also problematic for the

²⁰¹ A.S. Finstuen, *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 77.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 179.,

²⁰⁴ T.D. Cooper, *Sin, Pride & Self-Acceptance: The Problem of Identity in Theology & Psychology* (InterVarsity Press, 2009), 60.

²⁰⁵ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 188.

²⁰⁶ R.W. Lundin, *Alfred Adler's Basic Concepts and Implications* (Taylor & Francis, 2015), n.p. See also: Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 192.

²⁰⁷ P.B. Josephson and R.W. Holder, *Reinhold Niebuhr in Theory and Practice: Christian Realism and Democracy in America in the Twenty-First Century* (Lexington Books, 2018), 63. See also: Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 189.

²⁰⁸ T. Sample, *Human Nature, Interest, and Power: A Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Thought* (Cascade Books, 2013), 72.

²⁰⁹ Barreto, "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue," 99. We will see later how Niebuhr solves such problem, but now I just say the sin of pride of power with its consequences.

²¹⁰ R. Niebuhr and R.M.A. Brown, *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses* (Yale University Press, 1987), 81.

human's society because, as writes Nietzsche, "it is the prime motor of all the living organisms."²¹¹ Man, however, is not aware of such problems as the will-to-power for them is the way whereby they think themselves freed from the abyss of meaninglessness.²¹² Niebuhr relates it more to the collective groups of humans, which lack the moral potentiality of the personal relationship and determined by power instead of ethical considerations, and because of this, the existence of the countering power is always suggested. The more this happens, however, the more the society becomes immoral due to the will-to-power, that is indeed what Niebuhr elaborates in his work *Moral Man and the Immoral Society*, where he says that "The will-to-power of competing national groups is the cause of the international anarchy which the moral sense of mankind has thus far vainly striven to overcome."²¹³

The second type of man's pride is the pride of knowledge. Niebuhr also calls it as pride of reason for it feigns the infinitude of the human mind, he writes that "all human knowledge is tainted with an ideological taint, it pretends to be more true than it is, it is finite knowledge, gained from a particular perspective, but it pretends to be final and ultimate knowledge."²¹⁴ The Niebuhrian interpreter Josephson declares that this is the playground of those who are powerful and wealthy in the world history.²¹⁵ That is indeed Charles Brown declares, as he cites the followings as examples of the Niebuhrian pride of knowledge: the claim of Hegel about his thought as the final one, the blindness of Marxism to the taint and limitations of its viewpoints, and the failure of a naturalistic age to recognize the limits of the scientific knowledge.²¹⁶ As such, since man's knowledge is supposed to be ultimate, a man then is assumed to be transcendent over history and could control it, and whatever they do in the history of any societies seems not to result in any other dangers. The case, however, is that the more man is prideful of his knowledge, the more his condition worse.²¹⁷ Talking about Hegel here, it springs to mind what we have said before about the idealist thoughts, which gives credence to the human mind as capable enough in knowing and controlling the objective reality. Hegel says himself that, "the aim of knowledge is to divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and to find ourselves at home in it: which means no more than

²¹¹ F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Endymion Press, 2018), n.p.

²¹² Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 185.

²¹³ Niebuhr, West, and Gilkey, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, 20.

²¹⁴ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 194.

²¹⁵ Josephson and Holder, *Reinhold Niebuhr in Theory and Practice: Christian Realism and Democracy in America in the Twenty-First Century*, 63-64.

²¹⁶ C.C. Brown, *Niebuhr and His Age: Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Role and Legacy* (USA: Bloomsbury, 2002), 79.

²¹⁷ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 196.

to trace the objective world back to our notion, to our innermost self.”²¹⁸ We see by this how the idealist figure in history comes to the top in the ambition to know and control the reality; Niebuhr, however, accuses it as pride and uncomely determination failing to understand humankind’s finite nature.²¹⁹

The third type of pride is the pride of virtue or the moral pride, and it is the thinking of the self as standard and righteous whereby the others are judged. For Niebuhr, this is also one of the primary sources of man’s problems, he writes that “it is responsible for our most serious cruelties, injustices and defamations against our fellowmen, the whole history of racial, national, religious and other social struggles is a commentary on the objective wickedness and social miseries.”²²⁰ Like the two other types that have been mentioned, this one also points up the infiniteness of man as he presumes himself to be an ideal. That is the sin of self-righteousness for which Niebuhr shows himself to be under the wing of Jesus, Paul, and Luther, and it is the source of much cruelty in history.²²¹ It extends to the spiritual pride, “the ultimate sin making the self-deification implied in moral pride.”²²² For Niebuhr, when it comes to a larger group, like nations, it becomes “the pregnant source of injustice and conflict.” It is so indeed because by pretending ourselves as perfect we condemn our neighbors and attribute evil motives to them because their moral systems are not in accord with our values.²²³

Apart from the understanding of sin as pride, Niebuhr also understands it as sensuality. While sin understood as pride refers to humankind’s act of turning away from God to the self as the center of existence, sin as sensuality refers to an act of turning away from the self-freedom to self-destruction.²²⁴ In the classical Christian theology, this is the view of the sin of the western Christianity, which regarded it as lust which is manifested in various forms, as cites Niebuhr, “sexual license, gluttony, extravagance, drunkenness, and abandonment to various form of physical desire.”²²⁵ Tracing back from the Pauline-Augustinian tradition, Niebuhr claims that this kind of sin results from the humankind’s rebellion against God, according to the Epistle to the Romans that as the man changed the incorruptible God into the corruptible

²¹⁸ P.J. Kain, *Hegel and the Other: A Study of the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 72.

²¹⁹ Cooper, *Sin, Pride & Self-Acceptance: The Problem of Identity in Theology & Psychology*, 63.

²²⁰ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 200.

²²¹ Brown, *Niebuhr and His Age: Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Role and Legacy*, 79.

²²² Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 200.

²²³ D.A. Morris, *Virtue and Irony in American Democracy: Revisiting Dewey and Niebuhr* (Lexington Books, 2015), 94.

²²⁴ G.W. Stroup, *Before God* (grand rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 89.

²²⁵ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 228.

man, God then gave them into a reprobate mind to commit all the shameful acts.²²⁶ By defining sin as lust, the Thomist and Lutheran traditions emphasize this, because, for both, lust is not a natural desire in man nor an instinctive motive of the bodily life, but a consequence of the act of man turning away from God, which results in the corruption of heart and will into an evil desire.²²⁷ This sinful desire implies both self-love and sensuality in a way that self-love is the preferential option of the self with all that pertains to it, and sensuality is the inordinate acts aiming at satisfying the self from the creaturely and the mutable values.²²⁸ Besides this human sin, Niebuhr also treats man's boundedness and freedom; to this, we move on.

3.3.3.2) Human Boundedness and Freedom

As previously stated, for Albrecht Ritschl man is both "part of nature and dominate the nature," this is what Niebuhr says as man's boundedness and freedom, and for him, they are the two aspects of the essential nature of man and his paradoxical existence.²²⁹ We have elucidated how he deals with it in his treatise of humankind's sin, yet, here he approaches it separately from sin, but as a reality of man's life. Niebuhr writes that the boundedness of man implies his creaturehood involved in a spatiotemporal process, which implicates all the givenness of nature including the life in a community.²³⁰ People, however, are less morally responsible as members of a community than as individuals, that is, as stated above, what Niebuhr elaborates in his work *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Here, he explains that the social justice and peace could never be fully hoped for in any group of peoples for they are ethically inferior when grouping, and as such, they always use coercive forces and power for maintaining the social cohesion.²³¹ Human life, however, is bounded in such a community, as says this Niebuhrian interpreter that, "human selves are firmly grounded in human communities, social systems, and ideologies that are not separate from them but form their very identities."²³² Because of this, any social groupings like family units, religious communities, and the entire society have a significant role in caring for men in their social existence.²³³

²²⁶ Ibid., 230.

²²⁷ Ibid., 232.

²²⁸ Ibid. See also, J.H. Lee, *Reinhold Niebuhr on World Politics in a Nuclear Age* (Nashville, TN: Salem Publishing Solutions, Incorporated, 2012), 50.

²²⁹ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 270.

²³⁰ Miles, *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism*, 62.

²³¹ Niebuhr, West, and Gilkey, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, 15.

²³² Miles, *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism*, 65.

²³³ R. Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History* (Toronto, Ontario: CHIZINE PUBN, 2017), 34.

This later point extends to the Niebuhrian concept about man's freedom, meaning his "transcendence over the natural process."²³⁴ Man is not just a simple creature, but he is a rational one, and his rationality is the source of his creativity in constantly reshaping the givenness of nature for guaranteeing the holistic welfare of humankind.²³⁵ As mentioned above, such givenness of nature involves any social groupings, starting with the family unit, religious institutions, and the entire community; all should have a consciousness of being accountable for responding to the basic human needs.²³⁶ Such consciousness is related to the human being as the image of God, which Niebuhr differentiates from the likeness of God; and as he reports Irenaeus, just such God's likeness has been destroyed by the Fall but not the image of God.²³⁷ The Niebuhrian interpreter Ahn argues that "the image of God is the aspect of the human nature that enables people to transcend the world of finitude, allowing them to see the world from the perspective of eternity,... it is the freedom side of the human individuality, which is also their spiritual side."²³⁸ For Niebuhr, however, the freedom of man is subject to the freedom of God; it is only by encountering with the transcendent God as the wholly other, a man could understand his nature.²³⁹ That is the point we are going to deal with next.

3.3.4) God the wholly Other Confronting Man from Beyond of Himself

For Niebuhr, this is the essence of the Christianity of which man ought to be conscious and acknowledges. It is also the heart of the Christian realism because it profoundly underscores the transcendence of God and his otherness, the nature of man as a finite creature, and God's intimate relatedness to such finite creature. Here also Niebuhr rejects both the rejection of God's existence in secular liberalist thinking and the lack of awareness of God's otherness in religious liberalism and the mystical theologies. As we have expounded before, these are the underlying sources of man's historical/social problems since they lack a full recognition of man's essential nature resulting in usurping the place of God. Since man fails to recognize his nature, he never comes to the consciousness of the existence of evil in him, and to solve this, God the Other confronts him from beyond himself. Niebuhr writes that "man does not know himself truly except as he knows himself confronted by God, only in that

²³⁴ *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 270.

²³⁵ Miles, *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism*, 62.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

²³⁷ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 270.

²³⁸ I. Ahn, *Position and Responsibility: Jurgen Habermas, Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Co-Reconstruction of the Positional Imperative* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 163.

²³⁹ Barreto, "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue," 100.

confrontation does he become aware of his full stature and freedom and of the evil in him.”²⁴⁰ Such existence of evil in man effects hardship and pain in the historical world of today, against which Christianity assures to humankind a moral obligation to fight.²⁴¹ How to understand this?

The starting point is the transcendence of God previously mentioned, and his otherness which is incomprehensible to man’s mind apart from his self-disclosure. This is a legacy Niebuhr inherited from the European Neo-orthodoxy, particularly the Barthian theology; but as we said before, for him, this transcendent God is also immanent and as such caring for the creature world. His immanence is demonstrated in his revelation to humankind whose highest pinnacle is the death of Christ on the cross, in which Christ made himself a victim of humankind’s sin for saving the lost world.²⁴² We have also urged that for Niebuhr this is the general revelation, “the sense of being confronted with the wholly Other,” and it contains three elements, including a moral obligation laid upon man not by himself but by God.²⁴³ It relates to the question of conscience that has been said before, which Niebuhr defines as “the voice of the universal and the eternal in man.”²⁴⁴ He also writes that in the historical revelation, God the wholly Other confronts man at the edge of the human consciousness.²⁴⁵ The Niebuhrian concept then could be asserted following this process, when the acme of the historical revelation of God, meaning the life and death of Christ, is preached, we see the self-giving love of God irrespectively of price, life on justice and care, and the unlimited forgiveness of sins. Being conscious of this, we are strongly suggested by the voice of our conscience to live that sort of ethics. We, however, as finite creature and sinners, we cannot arrive at completely fulfilling such high ideal ethics. And as such we feel judged and under a great moral obligation, asking a question that to what extent could we live these ethics? That what Niebuhr calls as the “impossible possibility,” the ethics of Jesus is ideal as he is the infinite and eternal God, and impossible to be fully realized, yet, it could be a motive for approximating the ideal of love. That is precisely the point he elaborates on his applied Christianity, which, the following, we are going to elucidate.

²⁴⁰ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 131.

²⁴¹ For this, Niebuhr remains influential on the former U.S president Barack Obama, who said Reinhold Niebuhr as his favorite theologian and philosopher. R.W. Holder and P.B. Josephson, *The Irony of Barack Obama: Barack Obama, Reinhold Niebuhr and the Problem of Christian Statecraft* (Taylor & Francis, 2016), n.p.

²⁴² Brown, *Niebuhr and His Age: Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Role and Legacy*, 77.

²⁴³ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 131, 37.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

3.3.5) Niebuhr on Applied Christianity

Now, we come to Niebuhr's Christian social ethics, which he mostly develops in his work: *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. In this, he explains the ethics of Jesus as "impossible possibility", unattainable for the sinful humankind, but functions as a motive for living Christian ethics in society.²⁴⁶ Browning articulates it as a kind of multidimensionality; he says that "Niebuhr gives us a good example of what a Christian ethic look like from the perspective of these five dimensions, in order to fit the contours of an explicitly Christian theological view of praxis."²⁴⁷ According to Browning, the five dimensionalities of Niebuhr's Christian ethics are practice dimension, pre-moral goods dimension, Christian narrative dimension, moral obligation dimension, and the contextual dimension.²⁴⁸ Below, we are going to view just two of them, Christian narrative and moral obligation dimensions. Before this, however, we should remember the basics of Niebuhr's theological ethics, it is a theocentric ethic as the transcendent God revealing himself to man makes possible for a human to live responsibly to others.²⁴⁹ As stated before, the acme of such divine self-revelation is both the life and death of Christ, and this is the Christian narrative where Niebuhrian ethic finds its truest center and source. Let us have a look at this in detail.

3.3.5.1) Christian Narrative Dimension

According to Browning, this is one of the dimensions of Niebuhr's Christian ethics, and it refers to the essence, and the action of God in his relation to the world revealed in history.²⁵⁰ What stands as the climax of this is the event on the cross, as still says Browning "the Christian narrative of the cross..., the narrative of Jesus passion, his trial, and crucifixion."²⁵¹ Such cross of Christ does not stand alone, but behind it is God's self-sacrificial love redeeming the creatures. God's self-sacrificial love was manifested throughout the entire life of Jesus, his teachings, preaching, and praxis. This is the Christological implication in Niebuhrian social ethics, and as asserts Paul Lehmann it is the key to understanding Niebuhr's theological

²⁴⁶ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 50.

²⁴⁷ D.S. Browning, *Christian Ethics and the Moral Psychologies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 22.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

²⁴⁹ Miles, *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism*, 62.

²⁵⁰ Browning, *Christian Ethics and the Moral Psychologies*, 25.

²⁵¹ "Human Dignity, Human Complexity, and Human Goods," in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R.K. Soulen and L. Woodhead (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 316.

thoughts.²⁵² Lehmann characterizes Niebuhr's Christology in three points, "pivotal, not peripheral, more implicit than explicit, reverse, not regular," and these three aspects he explains in what he calls as "Christus in Nobis" and "Christus pro-Nobis" (Christ in us and Christ for us).²⁵³ The Christus in Nobis implies both Christ otherworldliness and his historical involvement, referring to the timeless Christ in time, the ideal in actual.²⁵⁴ That is what Niebuhr calls as myth, which must be distinguished from the myth in historical Jesus of the liberal Protestantism that refers to the unreal events in history. For Niebuhr, the literal and the historical truth is insisted, but it must be explained in the mythical method as it is the rational inquiry of the irrational transcendent God.²⁵⁵

The otherworldliness and historical involvement of Christ can be articulated as a Christological implication of the essence of God as transcendent and immanent. As mentioned before, for Niebuhr, God's transcendence implies his freedom to give himself to the world in Christ in love, plainly manifested on the cross, and; his immanence implies his historical revelation whose climax is the death of Christ on the cross. This cross then becomes the climax of the Christian narrative dimension of Niebuhr's social ethics; the question, however, is that how does it relate to ethical issues? Foremost, the conception of myth in Niebuhr, which is "the relationship of the eternal to the temporal,"²⁵⁶ leads us to think about the relationship between the eschatology and history, and when the cross of Christ is viewed as a final revelation of the eternal God, it becomes an eschatological event manifested in history for disclosing the eternal God to mankind.²⁵⁷ The cross of Christ as an eschatological event is beyond human wisdom, as Niebuhr writes "human wisdom seeks to complete itself from the basis of its partial perspective..., but in Christ, the truth embodied in him becomes the basis of new wisdom."²⁵⁸ Lehmann says that the truth revealed in the cross which becomes the basis of the new wisdom is expressed in these two symbols, the Christian affirmation of Jesus as Son of God and as the

²⁵² R.H. Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 44.

²⁵³ Paul Lehmann, "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr," in *Reinhold Niebuhr; His Religious, Social, and Political Thought: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, ed. C.W. Kegley (Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 331-32.

²⁵⁴ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 61.

²⁵⁵ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 107-08.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁵⁷ The cross of Christ implicates both his death and his resurrection, which always refers to as an eschatological event. Both, however, cannot be separated, His resurrection shows that the reason for his death is to save, and his death shows the reason why those who belong to him have life in his resurrection. Cf. J. Moltmann and J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Fortress Press, 1993), 185-86.

²⁵⁸ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 62.

second Adam.²⁵⁹ Lehmann still asserts that these two affirmations connect the cross to the human experience, and as such, they have a historical meaning, which must be explored.²⁶⁰

The historical implication of Jesus as Son of God and second Adam,²⁶¹ leads to the questions on how he lived in history and how the human beings experienced his historical existence? The Gospel narratives document well on this, which we must shortly glimpse. We said before that Niebuhr's Christology is reverse instead of regular, which means from eschatology to history, from the cross to social dimension, Lehmann says it as from the Gospel to history.²⁶² Thus, when the eschatological event on Golgotha, the cross, is viewed as an ultimate event unveiling the essence of God as love, such God's love thus becomes the key to understanding the entire life of Jesus in history, as says Fackre that "the life, teaching, and death of Jesus embody the perfect law of love."²⁶³ How was such love manifested in his life? He lived in helping others, providing people with vital needs as far as he could, visiting and healing the sick, cleaning leprosy, raising the dead; this what says David Williams says that "Niebuhr tried to relate Jesus' love to social reality...concentrate on gospel and good works."²⁶⁴ To add, Jesus prioritized the forgiveness and self-denial for the benefit of others, and he did so for love instead of seeking outer approval. Niebuhr writes that "Jesus' attitude toward vindictiveness and his injunction to forgive the enemy reveals more clearly than any other element in his ethic his intransigence against forms of self-assertion which have social and moral approval in any natural morality."²⁶⁵ According to Niebuhr, this is a hallmark of Jesus' ethic; the reference point is always vertical but not horizontal, meaning God's love instead of world approval.²⁶⁶ Besides, Jesus also lived the ethic of nonresistance against evil; he taught about this in his sermon on the Mount and lived accordingly at his condemnation.²⁶⁷ Relating to love, he also lived on justice as he always rendered to others what was due to them.²⁶⁸ That is, in sum, how Jesus lived ethically his historical life, the awareness of having experienced it functions as motivation to live accordingly as far as one could do. That is indeed

²⁵⁹ Lehmann, "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr," 346.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 346-47.

²⁶¹ The theological treatise about them does not concern us here, but just their historical implication.

²⁶² Lehmann, "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr," 346.

²⁶³ G. Fackre, *The Promise of Reinhold Niebuhr, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 60.

²⁶⁴ D. Williams, *Christian Approaches to Poverty* (iUniverse, 2001).

²⁶⁵ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 45.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶⁸ T.L. Schubeck, *Love That Does Justice* (Orbis Books, 2015), n.p.

the moral obligation resulting from the awareness of experiencing the loving work of Christ, which, the following, we turn.

3.3.5.2) Moral Obligation Dimension

As said earlier, for the Christian narrative, the question is not only how Jesus showed love in his historical existence, but also how people were conscious of having experienced such love? We here, however, do not deal with it from the historical perspective of the Gospel narrative, instead, from the standpoint of Niebuhr's moral philosophy thereby the question about conscience plays an important role. He refers to it as "the sense of moral obligation laid upon one from beyond oneself and of moral unworthiness before a judge."²⁶⁹ It relates to what we have stated before that when the Christian narrative is preached, we see a perfect love which is impossibly attainable to us since we are finite creatures. Browning says that "the self-sacrificial love, exemplified by Christ's death on the cross is the highest expression of Christian morality, teaching us to lay down our lives for our neighbor."²⁷⁰ Our finitude, however, does not allow us to attain that perfection, and as such, we feel our ethics to be judged, it becomes known to us our imperfect ethics as we are confronted by the perfect one we heard from the Gospel.²⁷¹ Heimbach writes "similar to Niebuhr, I contend that conscience is a sense, or awareness, that our actions are known and judged from a standpoint beyond ourselves...it is an awareness, at the edge of conscious self-understanding, that our lives, are being examined from a transcendent perspective, by an authority we do not control, but cannot ignore."²⁷²

The moral obligation, however, lies mostly on the human response to the ethics of Jesus, even though not entirely, rather proximately. As we become conscious of the way God showed his love for us, the question now moves to the way we should live accordingly, for instance, if we feel forgiven by God, should we remain unforgiving others?²⁷³ This is what Dennis McCann says as "discriminate criticism", which he defines, "the ethic of Jesus serves as an ideal standard of approximation."²⁷⁴ The starting point for this is the cross of Christ itself, which, as mentioned before, asseverates both the nature of humankind as a sinner and the essence of God as love. Both cannot be separated in the study of the Christian morality, sensing the love of

²⁶⁹ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*, 131.

²⁷⁰ Browning, *Christian Ethics and the Moral Psychologies*, 28.

²⁷¹ R. Niebuhr, "Christian Politics and Communist Religion," in *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, ed. J. Lewis, et al. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), 470.

²⁷² Daniel R. Heimbach, "Understanding the Difference between Religious Liberty and Religious Autonomy," in *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty*, ed. T. White, J.G. Duesing, and M.B. Yarnell (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), n.p.

²⁷³ Compare to the parable of Jesus in Mathew 18: 23-35.

²⁷⁴ McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict*, 85.

God requires a deep awareness of being a sinner, as writes Sabella Jeremy, “our understandings of sin and grace, therefore, must take into account where the individual’s moral journey starts.”²⁷⁵ If we deeply feel our sinful nature, but despite so, we are aware of still experiencing the love of God, we are now morally suggested by our conscience to live in love to others irrespectively of any immoral acts done to us. Why is it an obligation? Pinckaers argues God as a source of the moral obligation,²⁷⁶ which must mean that he speaks to us by our conscience, the voice echoes inside of us but comes from outside of us. If we reject that voice, it remains to judge us. It is thus mandatory for us to follow the voice of our conscience in order to be freed from its moral judgment.²⁷⁷ We have said that love is the essence of God displayed on the cross, for which Christ was dead, and it is also the driving force for the entire social actions of Jesus in history; it can be said as such as the crown of the Christian ethics, with which we proceed.

3.3.5.3) Niebuhr on Christian Love

Love is the central topic on Niebuhr’s treatise about Christian ethics; he deals with it in broad contexts, like political, economic, social, and religious. Yet, we do not handle it one by one of those contexts, but by the concepts which could cover all of them. By so doing, we first have a look at the essential features of Niebuhr’s Christian love; then, love as forgiveness; after, love that does justice; and eventually, love and the social actions. In his treatise on love, Niebuhr embraces all these, which here we are going to view.

3.3.5.3.1) The characteristics of Christian Love

Foremost, it relates to the moral obligation mentioned above; feeling loved by God, we should be motivated to love our neighbor, as writes Lovin “we find ourselves impelled to act on behalf of others in ways which lead us to speak of love.”²⁷⁸ Another characteristic that parallels to this is that Christian love for Niebuhr is always in vertical dimension, he says “we are to forgive because God forgives; we are to love our enemies because God is impartial in his love, the points of reference are vertical and not horizontal, neither natural impulses nor social consequences are taken into consideration.”²⁷⁹ The most distinctive feature of Niebuhr’s

²⁷⁵ J. Sabella, *An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 133.

²⁷⁶ S. Pinckaers and M.T. Noble, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 342.

²⁷⁷ S.K. MacDonald, *Moral Theology and Suffering* (New York, Washington D.C, San Francisco, Berlin, Paris, etc.: Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated, 1995), 84.

²⁷⁸ R.W. Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 84.

²⁷⁹ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 45.

Christian love is that its agapeic nature, meaning its “self-sacrificiality”, he says that agape is essentially self-sacrifice.²⁸⁰ He defines this sacrifice as seeking a furtherer advantage instead of a brief one, as he says that “sacrifice essentially means the abandonment of short-range for long-range advantages, if the enemy is loved he will become a friend.”²⁸¹ We could say by this that, sacrifice-based love is not legally motivated, but it transcends the limits of the law, it is a form of love which cannot be embodied in any moral code, nor can it be achieved by the compulsion of a sense of obligation.²⁸² That is the perfect love, the impossible possibility, which remains an unattainable moral ideal that judging all man’s historical achievements, but can function nonetheless as an opening possibility for the Christian love to be proximately self-sacrificial in any historical contexts.²⁸³

3.3.5.3.2) Love as Forgiveness

Sacrificial love is unconditionally forgiving. In Niebuhr’s talk on Christian love, the question of forgiveness plays a crucial role. He says it as the crown of the Christian ethics, culminating its impossible possibility, meaning that its proximate possibility remains on the recognition of its impossibly moral attainment.²⁸⁴ For Niebuhr, it depends on both the acknowledgment of self’s sin and self’s enmity against God and the experience of God’s forgiving love despite such enmity. For instance, when we feel experiencing divine forgiveness, we should be morally indebted to forgive our brothers. McCarthy declares it this way, “one experiences being loved and forgiven by God which evokes faith and commitment as a disciple, it is a commitment to embody the reign of God so fully that mercy, forgiveness, and compassion precludes the very contemplation of doing violence to another person.”²⁸⁵

We remember here Niebuhr’s treatise on human sin, man’s rejection of his sinful nature and finitude, which results in unconsciousness of God’s forgiveness, and the impact of this is the high rate of the unforgivingness. The unforgiving mentality results in strife, which is very threat to humankind’s lives as sometimes causing great damage and casualties. Related to this, the question of forgiveness touches all areas of life, political, economic, and social; Musekura calls it as “a critical factor in the health and wellbeing of people and communities.”²⁸⁶ It is

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 14.

²⁸¹ Niebuhr and Brown, *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, 152.

²⁸² Ibid., 9.

²⁸³ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 15.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 119.

²⁸⁵ E.S. McCarthy and W. O’Neill, *Becoming Nonviolent Peacemakers: A Virtue Ethic for Catholic Social Teaching and U.S. Policy* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 84.

²⁸⁶ C. Musekura, *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness* (New York, Washington D.C, Berlin, Oxford, etc.: Peter Lang, 2010), 16.

strongly reminded, however, that the possibility of forgiveness does not reside in any psychological studies nor therapeutical,²⁸⁷ but merely provided by Christianity, as still says Masekura that it is a “restoration of the relationship between God, self, and others.”²⁸⁸ Niebuhr also writes about it, saying that, “the real task of persuading groups to encourage forgiveness...is a spiritual and a moral one and cannot be accomplished in a completely secular atmosphere.”²⁸⁹ The guarantee of the Christianity in promoting a forgiving mentality in man is its paschal message, the cross of Christ, where both man’s necessity of God’s forgiveness for his sin’s sake and God’s willingness to forgive for his love’s sake are boldly underlined.²⁹⁰ As man feels God’s forgiveness, he is now under the influence to live by it. Life in forgiveness assures life on justice; we turn to this in love that does justice.

3.3.5.3.3) Love and Justice

Additional to the question of forgiveness, justice also has an essential place in Niebuhr’s concept of love, he says that one form of love is the desire for justice.²⁹¹ The Niebuhrian interpreter Beckley asserts the Niebuhr’s thought on the principle of justice as resulting from the tension between the ideal of love and the actual human condition, and he sums it up as “utilize whatever intellectual, moral, religious, and political resources will produce the best consequences for approximating the social ideal entailed by Jesus’ ethic of love.”²⁹² Based on this, justice, says Beckley, is “a strategy for approximating the social ideal of love.”²⁹³ We can articulate it as the ideal of love socially manifested aiming at securing people with their goods for sustaining life. Living on justice in this way is that to live the ideal of love in a society intending basic security for lives sustainment. To make it possible, Niebuhr introduces another scheme, the idea of equality; he says that “equality is always the regulative principle of justice; and in the ideal of equality there is an echo of the law of love, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”²⁹⁴ Elucidating this, he claims that in case of the question to what extent the neighbor has a right to support his life through the privileges and opportunities of the common life, in

²⁸⁷ Eve Garrard says the benefit of forgiveness for the forgiver, but not the motive; he says that, “burden of rancor and hatred is lifted from the shoulders of those who forgive, but those who fail to forgive is trapped in a cycle of resentment”, E. Garrard and D. McNaughton, *Forgiveness: The Art of Living* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2014), viii.

²⁸⁸ Masekura, *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness*, 23.

²⁸⁹ Niebuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion?: A Study in the Social Resources and Limitations of Religion in Modern Life*, 156.

²⁹⁰ *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, 11.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁹² H. Beckley, *Passion for Justice: Retrieving the Legacies of Walter Rauschenbusch, John A. Ryan, and Reinhold Niebuhr* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 210.

²⁹³ Beckley says this as a principle operative in Niebuhr’s thought the rest of his entire life. *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 71.

responding to this, there is an equalitarian principle implication: “as much right as you.”²⁹⁵ For group relations, justice is the possibility of an ethical ideal of love. For Niebuhr, self-giving love is practically impossible in group relations; it is probably the existence of the high sense of obligation among the groups, but the way of expressing it is the justice, meaning, rendering to one another what is due to each one.²⁹⁶ Justice, as we said, is the possibility of ideal love lived in a society; logically, social action is related to it. We move on.

3.3.5.3.4) Love and the Social Praxis

In fact, Niebuhr does not talk much about social actions; his primary concern is not so much the social ethics in a diaconal way; instead, it is more ethics of Christian moral values which is both theologically grounded and socially lived. However, since the climax of such ethics is love, it then implies a social relationship.²⁹⁷ Love lived in a social relationship seeks wellness of the neighbor, and as such a good action is required, as says McKeogh, “the Christian ideal of love involves the well-being of others, ..., love of one’s neighbor requires actions.”²⁹⁸ Niebuhr himself states that the moral issues underlying the social struggle in industrial civilization are, in a sense, merely typical of a whole range of moral and social problems in which...social action is imperative.²⁹⁹ It means that social praxis is not completely out of Niebuhr’s mind although he speaks less about it.

Additionally, according to what we have said before, there is social praxis implied in the Christology of Niebuhr, which Paul Lehmann claims as a key to understanding his ethical thoughts. It derives from the cross of Christ, the eschatological event displaying the truth about Christ, both his otherworldliness and historical involvement. Both are embraced in Christ’s love, the divine nature revealed in the cross. The implication of such love in the historical involvement of Christ becomes key to understanding his entire historical life; that is, how that love, as divine filiation in Christ, directed his life? It is indisputable that his social action is one of the responses to that. For us today, we, not only believe Christ’s salvation and forgiveness but also are persuaded that in him our life finds its meaning and source both spiritually and bodily. If this is what we believe, it is strongly suggested that we should also help others who

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Niebuhr, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, 25.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 30.

²⁹⁸ C. McKeogh, *The Political Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr: A Pragmatic Approach to Just War* (Hamilton, New Zealand Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 31.

²⁹⁹ Niebuhr and Santurri, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 80.

are in deprivation of the vital needs for the sake of the love of Christ in us, and in such case, what we do is the service of love.³⁰⁰

3.4) Summary

“Impossible possibility” is a catchword compounding the entire Niebuhr’s theological insights on his social ethics. In this, he discussed the ideal love in the situation of human society which is sinful and immoral. The ideal love is manifested on the cross. The cross as such becomes historically revealer of God to humankind. It glances behind it the revelation, the historical act of God making Himself known to man. The cross on the one hand, denotes the divine transcendence which is beyond and inconceivable to man’s mind, but on the other hand, denotes his immanence, being involved in world history aiming at saving the lost humankind. It also discloses the nature of man as a sinner. Human sin is the denial of his creaturehood and finitude, and the attempt to usurp the place of the infinite God, the Creator. The sin of man in this way is manifested in pride, which could be displayed in three distinct types, the pride of power, the pride of knowledge, and pride of virtue. Those types of pride demonstrate man’s self-transcendence to be center of his own life, welfare, and existence, instead of God; that is, the act of turning away from God to self. Another way of human sin is the sensuality, meaning the inordinate act of giving the self the satisfaction from the sinful pleasures of the world.

Apart from the revelation, adjusting this situation is the second reason of the cross, that is so because the salvation from sin is flowing only from the cross of Christ. Within such salvation, there is both historical and eschatological implication. The historical implication lies mostly upon the ideal ethic of love mentioned above. For the finite man, it is impossibly moral attainable. However, it could function as a motive for living in the ethic of love in a society in a way that, considering the ideal love that Christ showed to us, we feel under the judgment for our unloving ethics by the voice of our conscience, the voice of God confronting us inside. Because of this, we are morally indebted to live proximately to the ideal ethic of love in a society, which implies forgiveness, life on justice, and diaconal social actions. Now, we have finished presenting Sobrino and Niebuhr. In what follows, we are going to discuss both.

³⁰⁰ Compare to “love and service” in T.D. Cooper, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Psychology: The Ambiguities of the Self* (Mercer University Press, 2009), 58.

IV) Discussing the Social Ethics of Sobrino and Niebuhr

4.1) Introduction

It is understandable from now that caring for the living condition of humankind in history is at the heart of Christianity. As introduced in the introduction, and also evidenced in the presentation of Sobrino and Niebuhr, it is part of the essence of Christianity, and as such, it needs to be narrowly studied and debated. Now, we are going to discuss it by critically evaluating in relation to the Bible texts and the overall Christian theology. Then, we will compare their theological insights to see the differences, similarities, and how both could be complementary public theologies. Finally, as the main theme debated in this research is related to the Christian theology on the way the Christian should live in the ordinary secular contexts in the world, it is worth exploring how Sobrino and Niebuhr could be interpreted in relation to such Christian theology. Let us start with the evaluation.

4.2) Critical Evaluation

By evaluating, we will try to leave behind what sounds already relevant to the Bible; it means that the critics go mostly to their theological concepts that seem to be debatable when comparing to what precisely the Scriptural texts say. For this, the followings are doubtful, the Jesuanic martyrs of Sobrino, Niebuhr's theology as always criticized as binitarian, and lately which will be common for both is the lack of consideration of the eschatological dimension of Christianity. Here then, the following questions will be closely approached: what does the Bible say about the Christian martyrdom, particularly in relation to Christian social ethics? How could binitarian theology lead to a certain type of pessimism? Also, eventually, is the living condition of humankind in the mundane historical existence the final word of the Christian religion? How should Christian theology be balanced between both the historical and the eschatological dimensions, without emphasizing just one aspect? Starting the discussion, let us primarily begin with Sobrino.

4.2.1) Sobrino and the Jesuanic Martyrs

My first critics on Sobrino is that his concept about the "Jesuanic martyrs," which is, as we said before, a way of Christian martyrdom sharing the same reason to the persecution and execution of Jesus. As mentioned earlier, it refers to those who were persecuted and killed as they endeavored to establish social justice and to defend the defenseless due to their Christian conviction. We have claimed that there is a political implication in Jesuanic martyrs, and that is the act of severely criticizing the government, the political leaders and the political structure

which ended up with persecution. By discussing this, we have to discern between ethologically and ontologically based persecution. Ethology is derived from the word “ethos,” and it refers to the aspects of human behavior as situated in a particular environment, with a special focus upon actions.³⁰¹ According to the LALT, particularly the El Salvadoran theologians, that is indeed one of the conditions of the Christian martyrdom, as claims Stålsett, “the crucified people consists of many persons who today actively take up the challenge and mission of establishing justice in the world, and who for that reason encounter opposition and persecution.”³⁰²

The Bible talks about Christian persecution and martyrdom indeed; the question, however, is that whether it is ethologically conditioned or ontologically. Are the Christians persecuted based upon what they do or who they are? Both cannot be separated, our Christian identity directs our behavior and actions, but when talking about martyrdom, we have to discern them. In the Bible, we see that the reference for the Christian martyrdom is always ontological, they are persecuted as being Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, see this for example in Math 5:12, John 15:18,19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13; 2 Tim 3:12, etc.; by summarizing it, Jensen says that “for Christians, martyrdom is the declaration of the essence of self: I am a Christian.”³⁰³ Since thus Christian martyrdom is not ethologically conditioned, but ontologically, it is then possible to live a Christian life ethologically in a way that does not have to result in persecution. For instance, for the social actions, we can do it humbly, not for the reason to run for power nor seeking secular popularization. Additionally, it is also possible to collaborate with the government and any political leaders irrespectively of the political parties. It can work even in striving to establish social justice; we can do that humbly and wisely.

It has been stated that there is a political implication in Jesuanic martyrs, and it relates to what we have previously argued about the Liberation theology as not only a religious movement but also political revolution. LALT is often warmly criticized for this, McGovern says that “liberation theology risks emptying the faith of its fullness and using it for questionable political goals,”³⁰⁴ and because of this, Niebuhr accused it as a kind of “soft

³⁰¹ Brennan Breed, "What Can a Text Do? Reception History as an Ethology of the Biblical Text," in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, ed. E. England and W.J. Lyons (London, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), n.p.

³⁰² Stålsett, *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, 154.

³⁰³ M.P. Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial* (Maiden Lane, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 3.

³⁰⁴ A.F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 47.

utopianism.”³⁰⁵ Apart from this, it is also mostly accused of having used the Marxist and Socialist ideas uncritically.³⁰⁶ Hence, closely analyzing its political concept, it seems that it goes further compared to what is written in the Bible about church and states relation, we can see it for instance in these references, Math 22:21; Rom 13:1-7; John 18:36; 1 Pet 2:13-17; Titus 3:1-2. Based on those texts, the Lutheran theology on two kingdoms seems to be Scriptural. Albeit, Sobrino’s concept about the prophetic evangelization remains, but it does not have to be done roughly the same way of the liberation theology, criticizing the political structure and hardly struggling for transforming it, and as such ending up with persecution from the states. Church prophetic role to the political affairs, however, does not have to be so, it can be a launching of public declaration for what seems to be unjust, unfair, impoverishing, and oppressive aiming at alarming the leaders. There will be another critic common for Sobrino and Niebuhr, but now, we proceed first to evaluate Niebuhr in particular.

4.2.2) Binitarian Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr

The Niebuhrian opponents always accuse his theology of binitarian and pessimist, Stanley Grenz states that although the cross of Christ seems to be the center of the theology of Niebuhr, his central theological motif was the human sin, and because of this, his proposal does lead to a certain type of pessimism.³⁰⁷ This is true indeed because even though Niebuhr talks much about the cross, the resurrection of Christ is mostly disregarded in his thought, and the implication of this in the life of believers is that the lack of hope for the sake of the Holy Spirit. That is what tells Grenz that “Niebuhr’s distrust of all social groups must be added the promise of Christ’s presence in the community of faith as it struggles by the power of the Holy Spirit.”³⁰⁸ As such, Niebuhr’s theology is viewed as binitarian as it just focuses on God and Christ, but there is no room left for the work of the Spirit since the resurrection of Christ is omitted. He thus seems not finding out the cross of Christ ontologically, but as a kind of instrument in understanding the exact human condition in view of the divine transcendence.³⁰⁹ Such understanding of the human condition, however, as stated by CFSO,³¹⁰ (the most severely Niebuhrian opponent) was one-sided. Gregory Vlastos (CFSO author), says that by the

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 55.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 59.

³⁰⁷ Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, 111-12.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 112.

³⁰⁹ Treating the cross ontologically must end up with the resurrection of the Lord, otherwise, the cross of Christ is not well treated as it is ontologically.

³¹⁰ The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (CFSO) is a Christian socialist organization which carried out the socio-economic research that informed positions of the democratic socialist party in Canada. See: T. Kroeker, *Christian Ethics and Political Economy in North America: A Critical Analysis* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 67-68.

empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, there is a power of mutuality or community, and the human freedom implies the ability to care for others, conceive a greater common good, and to enter into cooperative action.³¹¹ The lack of hope in the resurrection of Christ leads to the lack of eschatological hope, this is the concept that Niebuhr shares with Sobrino, and then I will evaluate them below.

4.2.3) Sobrino and Niebuhr and the Eschatological Dimension of Christianity

For Sobrino and Niebuhr, it seems that the historical existence of man is the final word of Christianity, that is why we have to seek strongly its wellness. Nevertheless, there is a question worth asking, is not there an eschatological hope for a devoted Christian who lives daily in deep poverty and as such on a deathbed? Since LALT and Christian realism hardly strove to eradicate poverty and wars as endangering mankind's historical existence, it seems that this is their propensity, as writes McGovern that (for the liberation theology), "God does act in history, and it tends to reduce salvation to earthly progress alone, neglecting eternal life."³¹² Accordingly, this research does not find any balance between the historical and eschatological dimensions of Christianity in them. For both, the essence of Christianity remains in world history. Before, we reported Sobrino saying that the essence of God is his relation to history, and for Niebuhr also, the dark transcendence mentioned above demonstrates that world history is the final word.

The case, however, is that besides the historical dimension, there is also an eschatological one, which is vital for the life of Christianity as says Hilarion Halfeyen that "in Christianity, eschatology plays an essential role that, without the eschatological dimension Christianity loses its meaning."³¹³ It is well said in the Bible, as we see in those passages, Rom 8:23-25; 1 John 2: 17; 1 Pet 1:5; 2:11; there is also the eschatological dimension in Esaique prophesy, for instance, Isa 2:1-5; 9:6; 11:6-9;55:12-13; and also some of the texts in Psalm, 72,89,120-134, etc., which although "originally spoken in the historical context of an existing monarchy, they were later invested with a future dimension that was eventually regarded as eschatological."³¹⁴ To add, there is also an eschatological belief in the credal statements saying that the church believes the eternal life. By summarizing the concept in such eschatology, Adley says it as a

³¹¹ Schweitzer, "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians," 57-58.

³¹² McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment*, 59.

³¹³ Hilarion Halfeyen, "Eschatology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. M.B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107.

³¹⁴ L.C. Allen, *A Theological Approach to the Old Testament: Major Themes and New Testament Connections* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 111-12.

kind of existence which is in contrast with our historical existence.³¹⁵ He argues it this way, “in a wide variety of passages in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, one finds reference to a condition of great happiness that is not identical to the ordinary life of here and now, that the eschatological dimension of life and experience which contrasts sharply with our present state of being.”³¹⁶ It means that there is for Christians an eschatological hope for the future eternity in which the eschatological God,³¹⁷ through his eschatological salvific act, will give eschatological salvation to his eschatological people in his eschatological Kingdom.³¹⁸ The guarantee for inhering this is to remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ until death whatever situation conditioning the earthly-historical existence.³¹⁹ We see by this, Christianity as a “double-faced” religion, struggling for humankind’s welfare historically and promising them an eternal life eschatologically. Despite the lack of balance between the two in Sobrino and Niebuhr, both are relevant in discussing its historical aspect, and to comprehend it more; we are going to compare them the following.

4.3) Comparative Analysis

4.3.1) Differences

In the scholarly arena, the comparison between both attracts many theological-ethical figures. By dealing with the differences, McCann claims that in viewing God and his relation to history, both contradict each other sharply.³²⁰ Theologically, such divergence is upon the cross of Christ, both Sobrino, and Niebuhr enhance the cross as basis of their theologies; yet, for Sobrino, such cross of Christ is conditioned historically, that is, the worldly historical events cause it; whereas for Niebuhr, it is conditioned by divine determination to reveal himself to the

³¹⁵ Eschatology is derived from the two Greek words “eschatos” and “logos”, and it literally refers to the end time. But on the other hand, it refers to the eternity.

³¹⁶ D.W. Hadley, "A Twofold Problem in the Twofold Eschatology of John Scottus Eriugena," in *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time: Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, [Held at] Maynooth and Dublin, August 16-20, 2002*, ed. M. Dunne, J.J. McEvoy, and Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies (Leuven: Presses Universitaires de Louvain - UCL, 2002), 413.

³¹⁷ The expression “Eschatological God” was used by Gregory of Nyssa, and it refers to God as eternal and as such the world history is in his hand. Richard Kearney, "Poetics of a Possible God: Faith or Philosophy," in *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh’s Eyes, and God: Essays in Honor of Patrick A. Heelan, S.J.*, ed. B.E. Babich (New York & Washington D.C: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 356.

³¹⁸ God’s eschatological salvific act denotes his act of rising Christ from the dead, his eschatological salvation refers to his eternal salvation, eschatological people refers to the church, and God’s eschatological Kingdom refers to his timelessly eternal Kingdom. Embracing this all Jennifer just says God as “God of eschatology” and it refers to the being of God. See: J.A. Herrick, *Does God Change?: Reconciling the Immutable God with the God of Love* (Universal Publishers, 2003), 17.

³¹⁹ C.f. O. Cullmann, ed. *Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament*, The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 420.

³²⁰ Cf. McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict*, 152.

world. We see thus that there are two opposite theological directions, the first one is from history to the cross and back to history, that is the theological direction of Sobrino which starts from the historical event, such event led to the cross, and final direction is back to history through the church. The second one is from the cross to history, this is the theological direction of Niebuhr which takes as starting point the divine revelation on the cross as demonstrating the divine love, and the final direction is the way how Christians live such love in history.

That brings us to the practical difference, for Sobrino it is ecclesiological-centered, while for Niebuhr it is God-centered. It means, we see in Sobrino the eschatological act of God in raising Christ from the dead which birthed the church; that church is viewed christologically, and the Christological ecclesiology implies the church as the body of Christ in history. The implication of this is that Christ through his historical body continues the historical salvation which he engaged himself during his worldly existence. The church thus should not be ignoring of that, and as such strongly suggested to live following the way of life of the historical Jesus, particularly the caring attitude to the poor and the oppressed. In Niebuhr, the case is sharply distinct; as mentioned above, his practice is God-centered; God is showing his love on the cross of Christ is the starting point. Such love is God's sacrificial love; it is the ideal ethic that assures the understanding of the entire life of Christ on earth, his forgiveness of sins, his life in justice and in helping others. As an ideal ethic, it is impossible for humankind to achieve in history; yet, the possibility of Christian ethics of love is flowing from it, which implies life in forgiving others and living on justice in a society. Besides, there is also a similarity between them, to which we turn next.

4.3.2) Similarity

Giving a clue for the similarity, Deane Ferm writes that “both emerged as responses to major social changes that accompanied the forces of modernization and industrialization, both came out of the particular context of grass-roots pastoral ministry, and both seek to identify God's action in history and proper human response.”³²¹ Although this seems to be a broad view, it can grant us a hint on the basic issues that both discussed, and that what is said here as “God's action in history.” This is also what we declared in the introduction that despite differences of the starting points for their theologies, as Sobrino is divine immanence, whereas Niebuhr is divine transcendence, both come to the meeting point: God's concern on the historical existence of man. When we talked before about Christianity as a “double-faced”

³²¹ D.W. Ferm, *Third World Liberation Theologies: An Introductory Survey* (Wipf & Stock, 2004), 114.

religion, the historical dimension is one of its faces, which seeks a holistic development and welfare of the entire human being. That is indeed the theological contribution of Sobrino and Niebuhr; the contexts make the abovementioned divergences, but what both fight against is the historically/socially conditioned incidents that devalorize the life of humankind. In what way such fight is displayed? Let us proceed to the complementarity between them.

4.3.3) Both as Complementary Public Theologies

Their complementarity lies upon the above-stated differences and similarity. We have said that the differences between both resulted from the two diverging contexts, which gave birth to each one. To better understand it well; thus, such contexts need to be briefly remembered. For the liberation theology, the context is framed socially and politico-economically; in this, the majority populace lived in the shadow of death due to the poverty and the social oppression, which results from the states politico-economic determination. For such situation indeed, the church was called upon to be a voice of the voiceless, seeking their liberation from their current conditions. By so doing, social action was prioritized, which added by being involved in political affairs to find out a way to change what seems to be impoverishing and oppressive. For Christian realism, on the other hand, the context is quite broader; for instance, the labor fights and the race riots in industrial centers like Detroit and Michigan, the collapse of the American economy and the ensuing social crisis, extending to the life-threatening international incidents, like the world wars, the world totalitarian regimes, the Holocaust, etc.³²² Niebuhr accused all these as caused by ungodly human ethics due to man's sin. Because of this, Niebuhr emphasized Christ ideal ethic of love and intended it to be a motive for humankind to live by, impossible to be entirely fulfilled but possible to live proximately.

By all these, we could see a kind of shared feature for the twofold contexts that the act of preying on the fellow human being although displayed in two different forms as the first one is in the form of impoverishment and oppression, whereas the second one generally in the devaluation of lives. Both were viewed as inhumane attitude toward others, and they are as such so inappropriately godless ethics that the Latin theology and the Christian realism heartedly strove to eradicate. In eradicating it, they are not mutually exclusive but could function as good partners as being two theological spectra discussing the theological issues involved.³²³ That showed primarily in the understanding of sin, which, for LALT, a politically

³²² M. Brown, *Tensions in Christian Ethics: An Introduction* (SPCK, 2011), n.p.

³²³ Barreto, "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue," 116.

oppressive structure, while for Niebuhr, it is more profoundly treated as regarded as an ultimate source of humankind's historical problems. In this, Christian realism could be a good help for Latin American theology. To solve a problem, the source must be well dug out; otherwise, no appropriate solutions would be found.

Additionally, we previously insisted that for Niebuhr, the cross of Christ denotes the ideal love of God, such ideal love is diffused through Jesus earthly life; yet, Niebuhr does not so view it in a perspective of Jesus' social praxis. For this, Sobrino is helpful to Niebuhr as he handles the social actions of Jesus for his love's sake that brought him death. Finally, what is cried out for in Latin American theology (liberation of the poor and the oppressed) is never historically achievable without taking for granted what is demanded in Christian realism (life in love, forgiveness, and justice); this means that Liberation theology is not distinct from Christian realism, but part of it, just as claims Raimundo Barreto that "Latin American liberation theology can be conceived as a kind of Christian realism."³²⁴

4.4) Social Ethics of Sobrino and Niebuhr in its Relation to the Overall Christian Theology

Social ethics of Christians is the theological theme discussed in this research. It is one of the theological branches which talks about how Christians live their Christian life in the world. Christians are those who follow Christ, and, as the Apostle Paul says, those who have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13). It is thus evident that their lifestyle or ethics should change depending upon the place where they are; in the kingdom of darkness, they live in hatred and thoughtlessness of others, but in the kingdom of Christ, life must be Christlike, love, compassion, and thoughtfulness of the fellow human beings. It means that being in the Kingdom of God requires another lifestyle which is opposed to the one lived in the kingdom of darkness from which Christians have been liberated. The following, it is going to be discussed some aspects of such ethics, and by so doing, it will be explored what the Bible says about it, how is it related to the Gospel of grace and salvation.

4.4.1) Christian's Good Works: What does the Bible say?

Self-giveness into good works is one of the ethics the Bible requires for those who are in the Kingdom of God. The Scripture talks much about this, in Ephesian 2:10 Paul says that "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before

³²⁴ *ibid.*, 117.

ordained that we should walk in them.” By this passage, it seems that good work for Christians is not optional but compulsory as a way God has set aside beforehand for Christians to walk as a response to their new situation of being in Christ. That what says John Paul Heil that “walking in good works which God has prepared for us, who have been chosen and created in Christ Jesus, is a way that we might be holy and blameless before God in love, a way to respond to the great love with which God loved us.”³²⁵ It is thus essential not in the way to gain salvation from God, rather, in the way of responding to God what he has done for us. In Galatians 5:22 the Apostle Paul still argues that “the fruit of the Spirit is love...” Additionally, the Apostle John says that “whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother has a need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says that “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Undoubtedly, life in love is one of such wills of God, as also emphasized by the parable in Mathew 25:41- 46, which talks about the fact that doing good works to the destitute and poor in this world is doing it to Christ. It could be compared with what Sobrino says about the poor as the new images of Christ in history. In view of these, it seems that there is tension between Law and Gospel in Christian life, let us look at it in detail.

4.4.2) The True Christian Life as a Life under the Gospel and Law

As seen above, good work is essential for Christianity as if it were used for a means of gaining divine salvation. However, basically, for the Christians, the assurance of salvation is the Gospel but not the law. Christianity is not a religion based on requirement; instead, on the act of givenness. It means the fact that God has given himself to the world by his Son Jesus Christ is the basis for the Christian religion, instead of what God requires from the humankind. That what tells Morrison that “God’s self-givenness is to be found in the created humanity of Jesus Christ as the final basis for analogical knowledge and relation between God and human beings in the world.”³²⁶ It does not mean, however, that the law is left behind, it is still there but it is not the basis for salvation, because salvation is by divine grace alone through faith. Law in Christian life has two usages; there are both civil use (*usus civilis*) and the theological use (*usus theologicus*).³²⁷ The civil use of the law is its usage in the sense that to refrain the

³²⁵ J.P. Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Atlanta, GA, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 106-07.

³²⁶ J.D. Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 148.

³²⁷ D.A. Brondos, *Redeeming the Gospel: The Christian Faith Reconsidered* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 22.

human beings in committing evil in society but engage themselves in doing good works for the benefit of their neighbors. David Brondos says it this way, “to some degree; human beings can fulfill the law in the sense of refraining from evil and doing good works in the civil realm, thereby attaining civil righteousness that avails before other human beings (*Coram hominibus*).”³²⁸ The theological use of the law is the sense of reminding the sinners their sinful nature and so lack of ability to save themselves that always in need of divine grace to be saved. That what still argues David, “it serves both as a mirror to show sinners their sin and moral impotence as well as a hammer to crush any self-righteousness on their part.”³²⁹

In such a case, we could see the fullness of Christian life as it is a life under the law and Gospel in a sense both are elucidated above. Actually, both are not alternative and as such not tensile, instead, complementary. The acceptance and respect of the law become the true marks of the act of receiving the true Gospel. That is indeed what Martin Luther says that the life of those who have been justified freely is characterized by both faith in God and love to neighbors. Both are the fulfillment of God’s commandments.³³⁰ We see here why Christianity is somehow challenging to comprehend, and most of the time misunderstanding occurs in explaining law and Gospel in Christian theology as the case for the moralism and antinomianism.

4.4.3) Misconception of Moralism and Antinomianism

Both moralism and antinomianism are the two-opposite misunderstandings of the relation between grace and law, faith and works in the discussion of the Christian ethics in Christian theology. Moralism is the view that salvation could be gained through good works and human behavior. It means that human beings can improve their positions before God by doing good works and behaving well. That what states Waal Dryden that “moralism transposes the challenge of the Gospel into a program of self-improvement, . . . , it is actually highly ambivalent to the reality of God’s grace and places the soteriological locus of control within the grasp of the human moral agent.”³³¹ That is, however, not according to the teaching of the Scripture, the Bible teaches that salvation is by divine grace alone received through faith (Eph 2:8; Tite 3:5).

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ M. Luther, *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament*, ed. T. Bachmann and H.T. Lehmann, vol. Vol. 35-38 (Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House ; Fortress Press, 1959), 120.

³³¹ J. de Waal Dryden, *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2018), n.p.

Antinomianism, on the other side, is the concept that because we are saved by grace, law and good works do not count anymore. According to Waal Dryden, such a view comes from Martin Luther as he enhanced the doctrine of justification in which faith operates in contradistinction to work/law. In such understanding, there is a great dichotomy between grace and law, faith and works, and for the question of soteriology both are alternate as the basis.³³² It is thus logical that if salvation is based on grace and faith, there is no need for law and works anymore. This is right, but it is worth remembering that here law and works are defined in a way differently from how both have been understood above. According to the discussion above, grace and law cannot be separated, the same to faith and works, the Gospel of grace liberates the believers freely so that they could live according to the law, and the good works become the framework of the true faith. For the New Testament studies, it is not the Pauline law-grace debate, but the Jamic faith-work discussion (James 2:14-26).³³³ That is just according to what Jesus says that “the tree is known by the fruit.” (Math 12:33). In this case, there seems a soteriological problem in antinomianism, that is, the fact of having been saved by grace but disrespecting the law, and faith without works which simply means lack of faith. How is that?

4.4.4) Does Christian’s Good Work have anything to do with Salvation?

Here, close attention must be paid; otherwise, salvation by work would be unavoidable. That, however, is not the intention of this subtitle, but the point is to discuss the case of someone who has been saved by grace and has faith in Jesus Christ, but his life is not relevant to that fact. He disrespects the law and careless about the good works, how about the salvation in such a case? Someone might say that this is God’s business not ours, but the Bible allows us to discuss it, that is why this research does so. It could be interpreted in different ways, Paul and James, for instance, despite intending to come to the same viewpoint, interpret it differently. Paul the Apostle deals with it in his point of the subjective aspect of salvation, in which he asserts that salvation in Christ transforms the humankind inwardly and renews the relationship among human beings.³³⁴ He handles it pneumatologically and argues that it is not an issue required to believers but comes automatically as long as they have the Holy Spirit, the Pneumatic Christ dwells in them. Christians, in this case, are passive without thinking of what

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Not the law and grace in the Apostle Paul, but the faith and works discussion in the Epistle of James.

³³⁴ W. Lee, *The Experience of God’s Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ’s Life* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1987), 59.

to do or how to behave as being Christian. The rest Paul does is to list some aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, and that what is seen in the parenetic parts of all his epistles. Although Paul does not discuss whether it is related to salvation or not, it is glimpsed in his interpretation that the fact of receiving the salvation of Christ is conditioned by the inward transformation and the loving and mutually caring relationship with others. If not, Christ's salvation would not be well-received yet. We see by this, good works as related to salvation, not in the sense salvation by works, but the good works conditioning the fact of being saved freely by grace.

It is explicit enough in James. Unlike the Apostle Paul who generally considers the believers as passive in the question of ethics, James emphatically speaks that they are active.³³⁵ It could be stated that it is one of the essential points he was willing to address his listeners, and he starts saying it in chap. 1:22 which says, "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves." (NRSV) He continues in verse 27 that the pure religion for God is to care for the orphans and the widows in their distress. He develops the point by giving an illustration in chap. 2:14-20, and there he provides a hypothetical example (verse 15-16) about responding to the need of neighbors (their nakedness or lack of food) with words without actions. He thus says that this is nonsense, and in verse 17 he says faith by itself without works is dead.³³⁶ As the texts continue, James speaks severely such faith as similar to the faith of the devil. It is thus explicit here the good work which is manifested as the guaranteeing the genuineness and credibility of faith in Christ for salvation. Thus, both Paul and James come to the one meeting point on the inseparability of faith and good works, but just the way of articulating it makes them different, undoubtedly due to the contexts of the recipients of their epistles.

It is as such evident that what Sobrino and Niebuhr discuss in their social ethics is a topic which is at the heart of the overall Christian ethics and Christian theology. Both, however, deal with it depending upon the local contexts and work out hard for it to be more theologically grounded. That is the reason for the emergence of the liberation Christology and the Christian realism. The question about politics is related to this, we move on.

³³⁵ Their differences are surely based upon the contexts of the recipients to whom each one wrote their epistles.

³³⁶ P.J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 85-86.

4.5) Christian Theology and the Secular Government

Christian theology also discusses the issue of politics. The Bible talks about it and the first thing glanced there about the government is that it is an institution established after the Fall whose purpose is to maintain the external order in the human society and to serve justice for the people to live in peace.³³⁷ Like the church, the authorities as well are divine servants to take care for the humankind in secular realm (Rom 13:1-7), which the church should obey, provided that they require nothing against the will of God.³³⁸ It is thus out of the Biblical understanding of the secular authority the thinking of the area of politics as a demonic sphere that the church should not concern.³³⁹ Mutual domination between church and state, however, must be avoided; because according to the Lutheran tradition that is the problem of the “papocaesarism” and “caesaropapism” of the medieval Catholicism that led the church into decay.³⁴⁰ Yet, it does not mean that the Christianity should not have anything to do with the life of a state, she does have since the one God worshipped in the church is the same to the God cares for people secularly by the government. To add, Paul’s appeal to the church to be subject to the governing authorities is not unconditional, but he also warns the Christians to reflect the limit of the acceptance. Such warning is nonsense without the church closely overseeing whether the government functions under the Christian values which center upon the faith in God the Creator and service to people in love.³⁴¹

The question of the laity of state does not have anything to do with such Christian values. The term “laity” is derived from the German word “Laien,” and it refers to amateurishness and lack of knowledge on something.³⁴² Thus, the concept in laity of a state is just to avoid the mutual interference and confusion between the authority of the church and the state for the internal affairs due to the lack of competence and knowledge on other’s own business. So, it does not hinder the Christian values to be the general principle directing the governmental policies if they are really intended to be a real service of love to the ordinary people, instead of

³³⁷ Eike Wolgast, "Luther's Treatment of Political and Societal Life," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb & Irene Dingel and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 399.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 400.

³³⁹ Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdom is twofold, “dualistic in the eschatological dimension of antagonistic conflict between God’s kingdom (regnum Dei) and the Devil’s kingdom (regnum diaboli). Second, it became binary in juxtaposing two equally significant types of God’s governance,” church and state. See: *ibid.*, 398.

³⁴⁰ S.M. Feldman, *Please Don't Wish Me a Merry Christmas: A Critical History of the Separation of Church and State* (New York & London: NYU Press, 1998), 62.

³⁴¹ C.f. Edward Norman, "Power and the State" in *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Peter Byrne & Leslie Houlden (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 781.

³⁴² T. Hoebel, *Laity and Participation: A Theology of Being the Church*, vol. 29, Religion and Discourse (Oxford, Berlin, New York, et cetera: Peter Lang, 2006), 335.

aiming at enriching the few ones holding power. Only the Christian values could provide a serving mentality the political leaders should have in governing a state. In both Liberation theology and Christian realism, we see political involvement. As written in the evaluation, it is critical in liberation theology because in relation to the Christian theology about the church and state relation, it is noticeable the drawing back of the medieval papocaesarism, the church's interference in the internal affairs of the government.³⁴³ For this case, it seems that Christian theology of the separation of the two kingdoms is not so well observed, it is thus a risk for Christianity to go astray similarly to the medieval Christendom. Christian moral value and ethic of love which Christian politicians should live in an area of politics in Christian realism are not only supported by Christian theology but also strongly demanded.

4.6) Summary

By summarizing, I could say that some issues in Sobrino and Niebuhr do open for discussion. For Sobrino, I call into question his Jesuanic martyrs' concept which argues that the Christian martyrdom as ethically conditioned rather than ontologically. According to the Biblical passages, however, Christians face persecution for the primary and fundamental fact that they belong to Jesus, followers of Christ, instead of what they could achieve historically in their Christian life. For Niebuhr, his theology that seems to be binitarian falls into a hot criticism. Such binitarian theology is both unpneumatological and unecclesiological. The cross of Christ presents the ideally self-sacrificial love of God. Indeed, Christ was dead for the sake of such love, but he has resurrected, and his resurrection brought forth the church where the Holy Spirit is actively at work rendering the believers to be victorious over the power of sin. For both Sobrino and Niebuhr, there is no balance between the historical and eschatological dimensions of Christianity. In Christianity, though the mundane existence of man is truly concerned, the final journey and destiny are eschatological, the eternal life.

In comparing the two, there are differences, similarity, and complementarities. The differences lie in their developing contexts which are divergent. Due to that distinct contexts, a theoretical approach is different, and the practical alike. Facing the context of poverty, Sobrino theoretically treats Christology with diaconal attitude orientation and political engagement, and practically incited the church to follow such attitude of Christ and live by it accordingly as she is the body of Christ in history. Niebuhr, however, by affronting the unloving and egotic contexts in the world, enhances the divine disinterested character in his sacrificial love for the creatures, and intends it to be a moral lesson for Christians that they

³⁴³ It is, however, not surprising because traditionally liberation theology belongs to Catholicism.

would live the ethic of love in a disinterested way without any selfish motives. Besides, there is similarity which lies on their accentuation upon the historical aspect of Christianity, that God seeks the holistic wellness for human beings, this is their meeting point despite the opposite point of departures of their theologies (immanence and transcendence). Yet, it is worth reminding that none of them has a complete description of the subjects involved, that is why both are complementary and could be good associates in discussing Christianity in its historical implication.

In relation with the overall Christian theology, Sobrino and Niebuhr share a common theological view with the Christian ethics that: Christians have been saved freely by divine grace, such divine grace has liberated them freely so that they could live their lives in serving their neighbors.

V) General Conclusion

The implication of Christianity in the Struggle against Poverty

5.1) Introduction

Now, we are back to the main point and the principal concern of this research, the implication of Christianity in the fight against poverty. This is the fundamental point because, as said in previous chapters, in the South Christianity thrives among the poor and the poverty is a kind of scenario that every day puts the lives of people in danger. According to the collected data, in Sobrino, Niebuhr, and in the Christian theology about the Christian life in the world, Christianity does have something to say and to do in the struggle against poverty. Both Sobrino and Niebuhr provide us with the theological basis for that prior to approach it pragmatically. Now, before the practical approach of the church in the fight against poverty, it will be boldly underlined the theological motives for doing so. We start with the Christology of Sobrino.

5.2) Theoretical Analysis for the Theological Motives

5.2.1) Sobrino on Constitutive Relatedness between the Crucified and the crucified

All Sobrino says about the Christian compassionate attitude toward the poor could be framed within this constitutive relatedness between the Crucified and the crucified. In fact, it is a theological meaning of the parable of Jesus in Mathew 25:34-45, in which theology finds its historical vantage point and history finds its theological sense. At the heart of the ideology is the death of Christ on the cross, which Sobrino views from the historical standpoint. Such history is the care of Jesus toward those who were marginalized and downtrodden of his day, which is symbolized here in Mathew 25:34-45 as the naked, hungry, thirsty, prisoners, sick. As Jesus cared for those people during his earthly ministry, he affronted the oppressive authorities, and that led his execution. It is seen indeed here the interweaving of theology and history, that is, the act of theologizing history and historicizing theology. Sobrino thus in constitutive relatedness gives historical meaning to the theological event. Since the historical event in the society where Jesus lived is still happening today, that people are oppressed, poor, and marginalized, Sobrino thus moves on saying that in the context of poverty of today there is theological meaning. That what he says the poor as the new images of the Crucified Christ. It is not surprising then that when it is said here in Mathew that what is done to the poor is done to Jesus, and what is not done to them is not done to Him as well (vs. 40, 45). Jesus was dead, but he has risen, and the fruit of his resurrection is the church. The church thus replaces the historical existence of Jesus; hence, the church is the historical existence of the risen Christ (cf.

body of Christ). Because of this, she must be at the disposal of serving the poor, if she neglects to do so, she is running the risk of losing her identity as a body of Christ. In such case, what Jesus says in Mathew 25:45-46 also happens to her, that, “truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me, go away into eternal punishment.” (NIV). We see here Sobrino’s strong theological motive for the church implication in the fight against poverty; apart from it, we have also one in Niebuhr

5.2.2) Niebuhr on the Nature of Man and the Divine Love

Niebuhr’s entire thoughts about the practical implication of the Christian faith could be framed within this simple question: How does God’s love to you, despite your sin, shape how you deal with others and their mistakes? Niebuhr articulates such simple question theologically, deeply deals with the seriousness of human nature as a sinner. Human beings as sinners usurp God in their attempts to control the world history and think of themselves as the only solution to their own problems. Such act of usurping God in his divinity is the peak of the human sin, as human beings do not accept the fact that they are limited, creatures, but God is their creator. By this way, it could be stated that human beings are enemy of God as creatures trying to take the place of the creator. Despite such enmity, however, God still loves them, and the uttermost way that God showed such love to the humankind is the cross where his self-giveness to them through his Son was manifested. That is the self-sacrificial love which is recorded in the Bible/Gospels in a describable way. It is observed behind the cross the divine transcendence and immanence, that is, God’s otherworldly being and his worldly involvement. God’s self-sacrificial love is otherworldly because no worldly beings, even human, could have such kind of love. The theological point here is the fact that the enmity of human beings against God in the way mentioned above, but despite so, they are always loved by God; and the way God showed his love to them is His self-giveness on the cross to break the enmity. When thus talking about the theological motive for the Christian social practice in Niebuhr, it is the triumph of God’s love over the enmity of human; that is, divine constant love despite the enmity between Him who loves and those whom He loves. Christians should love, even their enemies, their social practice is the love in action. Love is the condition determining Christian life in the world. The way it shapes human beings to deal with one another is the next point will be elucidated.

5.3) A Practical Attitude of the Church in the Fight against Poverty

Before proceeding with it, let us remind the social contexts briefly in the South, which have been introduced in the introduction. The South countries are those which are developing in the third world. As argued in the introduction, they shared an interconnected histories, and that what states Jean Grugel in *Claiming Justice in the Global South*, that politically, the government is “poor and ineffective, with high barriers to participation.”³⁴⁴ Additional to that, Haroon Khan accuses them as “fragile states” which fail to provide for the welfare for their citizens, characterized by increasing political violence, civil war, use of terror against their citizens, high level of corruption, rising infant mortality, food shortages, high unemployment, inflation, extreme poverty, absence of rule of law, economic collapse, etc.³⁴⁵ It is evident by this the politically and socio-economically interwoven problems.

5.3.1) Sobrino Practical Attitude

5.3.1.1) The Church and Social Works

Tracing back to Sobrino’s principles, we could say that the church can address practically those issues. Foremost, we have to think of the church as the historical body of Christ through which the historical Jesus continues his historical salvation. At the heart of such salvation is the diaconal ministry of the church. Two principles of Sobrino could be drawn as guidelines here, the first one is the principle of solidarity. As clarified before, solidarity is that the poor and the nonpoor being with one another, mutually bearing one another, giving to each other and receiving from each other the best. There is both individualistic and ecclesiastic application of solidarity. The individualistic application means the individual Christian’s self-commitment to care for those that are homeless, beggars, paupers, prisoners. Being in solidarity with them means to help them in case of possibility, to think of the way of getting them rid of their condition of pauperdom. This is something could be done by Christians individually or by a group of Christians. It is reminded, however, that the theological motive for so doing lies upon what was said above that such kind of people are those with whom the Crucified Christ identified himself, they are the crucified people, the images of Christ in history. When then Christians do such diaconal service, they do it not simply to human beings, but with an

³⁴⁴ J. Grugel et al., *Demanding Justice in the Global South: Claiming Rights* (London, UK: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 7.

³⁴⁵ H.A. Khan, *The Idea of Good Governance and the Politics of the Global South: An Analysis of Its Effects* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2015), n.p.

imagination of doing it to Christ and for Christ (cf. Math 25: 34-39). The ecclesiastic application of solidarity is that the church as an institution charges with a task of constructing an infrastructure depending upon the needs of the community and aiming the welfare of all that are socially vulnerable. The theological motive for doing this is similar to the one above. Such diaconal ministry is also related to the pastoral approach of Sobrino and the pastoral evangelization in the perspective of the liberation theology. That is the act of preaching the loving God to the poor and make such love to be tangible through social actions. To add to that, social justice also another issue.

5.3.1.2) The Church and the Social Justice

The principle of solidarity mentioned above is related to the fight against social injustice. Defining Social Justice, Cannon says, “Social justice has to do with the way that material resources and social advantages are distributed and made accessible in society, it is manifested when all people have equal access to resources and opportunities, such as health care, employment, and education.”³⁴⁶ Considering this, it seems that in the country where poverty is extremely dominant, the material resources of such country is not accessible to the majority. Social injustice thus is one of the causes of poverty because a country is poor when they are many unemployed, children uneducated, not enough health care for the majority. Additionally, there is abuse to the poor, women, children; there is also discrimination due to social classes, and gender. Those kinds of people are those that are victims of the social injustice with whom the church must be in solidarity and stand to be a voice of the voiceless. Being in solidarity with them, the church prays for them, speaks, intervenes and acts on their behalf making their crying voice heard. Like the diaconal service, this also could be performed by both the individual Christian and the church as an institution. The church and politics are related to that.

5.3.1.3) The Church and Politics

Sobrino’s approach to politics is based upon his view of poverty as impoverishment being conditioned by the political structure. To work through it then its basic root must be craved and dealt with irrespectively of the cost. It caused the so-called Jesuanic martyrs (as stated before), those who worked through the impoverishing act of the government, confronting to the authorities and subsequently persecuted. It is observed by this the act of fighting against

³⁴⁶ M.E. Cannon and J.M. Perkins, *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* (Downers Grove, Illinois InterVarsity Press, 2010), 31.

poverty which is sans frontiers until it would be overcome. Following the principle of Sobrino in such case, these are what we could say, firstly, the church must deeply analyze the root of poverty. In a poor country, poverty might be conditioned by various circumstances. Yet, it is hardly never that the government is not included as the cause of it, not necessarily in the way of impoverishment. And even the political leaders might not be aware of the impoverishing effect of the way they govern the country as they somehow have good intention in mind. For this then, the practical lesson from Sobrino is that the church must oversee the way the government governs the country. Additionally, the church must work out in eradicating the root of poverty whatever it might be and regardless whether it even costs a life. The church, however, should not be involved in politics for the respect of the difference between both the spiritual and the secular authorities. Yet, the general policies of the states and the constitution governing the country should be laid down under the Christian values, the only values guaranteeing the serving mentality for the leaders. Niebuhr talks more about this as we see the following.

5.3.2) Application of the Christian Faith for Niebuhr

Now, we have to repeat the question above which was said as framing Niebuhr's entire thoughts: How does God's love to you despite your sin, shape how you deal with others and their mistakes? We have explained God's love to humankind despite their sins, but now we proceed with how that love shapes the way the humankind deal with one another. For Niebuhr, it is not automatically, but to come to it, there are steps to reflect and be processed. The first is that human beings feel that they experience the love of God in their everyday lives. Second, as they feel experiencing divine love, they are now strongly suggested by their consciences to live such love in relation with one another. Third, once such love is lived in relation to others, it is displayed in forgiveness, justice, and good works. Let us look at these steps one by one.

5.3.2.1) How to make the Human Beings to Feel Experiencing Divine love?

The love of God is well documented in the Bible. The Bible shows the humankind that they are enemy of God since they continually attempt to be usurpers of God, the creator. Despite such enmity, God still loves them and the triumph of His love over the enmity against those He loves is the content of the entire Biblical message. The practical lesson for the church then in this way is that she must preach the pure Gospel, not in a way she prefers it to be but in the way what it is essentially as seen in the Scriptures, the triumph of divine love. The proof of

such love was manifested once upon a time in history when the Son of God was surrendered Himself to be crucified on the cross to save his enemy. Until now it is still preached and those who are willing to reconcile to God could repent from their sins and receive Christ as Lord and Savior in their lives. Insofar they do so, they could experience divine love in their everyday lives. The love of God they experience shapes afterward the way they deal with one another because the voice of conscience suggests it. Let us move on to that.

5.3.2.2) The Inward Voice of Conscience

This is the voice speaks to humankind from their inner being about how they should treat others after having been treated lovingly by God. According to Niebuhr, such voice is simply the voice of God suggesting the human beings that they should deal with one another by love irrespectively of imperfection, the same way God deals with them by his triumphant love. We see in the Bible the consequence of the willful disregard of this suggestion, in Mathew 18:23-33, there is a parable of Jesus about the forgiven servant, but afterward becomes unforgiving, and his master put him in jail. The Apostle John strictly argues that saying oneself as experiencing divine love but refusing to be directed by that love to help others in need simply means not having the love nor experiencing it (1 John 3:17). Niebuhr, however, does not say such divine self-sacrificial love is fully imitable; it is so ideal and perfect that remains inimitable to the imperfect human beings. Yet, it could function as shaping the way we deal with others to be more loving. This is the divine self-sacrificial love as an impossible possibility. When everyone follows the voice of their consciences to live love in relation with others as feeling experiencing God's love, imagine how a society could be transformed.

5.3.2.3) Once Love is lived in Relation with Others in Society

For Niebuhr, once the divine love is experienced, it shapes the way human beings deal with one another in three different but related aspects, forgiveness, justice, and good works. The love of God is forgiving, that is why we always experience divine forgiveness as long as we repent from our sins because he loves us. His love is also a love that seeks justice in society, and self-giving for the social works. Those are the ways Jesus lived the love of God during his earthly ministry, and those who have him as Lord and Savior could live it this way as well. The practical lesson for the Christians and the church here is that, since they are identified as those who have Christ as Lord, they should live divine love proximately how the historical Jesus lived it, both Christians and the church should be forgiving, live justice, voice of the voiceless,

and self-giving into social services. These two latter ones are related to Sobrino's approach, showing that both Sobrino and Niebuhr are very good associates instead of exclusive. Those are the responses for the question above that "how God's love to us despite our faults, shapes the way we deal with others despite their mistakes?" Niebuhr responds that we should forgive, we should always seek justice, and we should always be eager to help others in case of need.

5.4) Summary

To sum up, this research is aimed at discussing the theological issues involved in the historical condition of the humankind in the South part of the world. Such a condition is poverty. It is so deadly that against which both liberation Christology of Sobrino and Christian realism of Niebuhr have tried to deal with by theoretically theological analysis and the practical approach. By struggling against poverty, church and Christians should be in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, helping, defending, and advocating for them. By doing so, a diaconal ministry in the form of an organized work plan aiming at supporting the poor is necessary. To add, the church should preach the pure Gospel, the love of God which assures life in fraternity among the humankind irrespectively of social classes and genders. As God so loves the human beings that He has given the best in him to them regardless of their sins, the same to them, they should love one another and give one another the best regardless of imperfection and the social conditions. Once Christians in the South live their Christian life this way, we could expect a better society to live. It is noticed, however, that all those above-stated practical approaches are just a general view, but the most pragmatcal ways in applying the outcome of the theoretical investigation of this thesis in a specific place need a narrowly empirical analysis. That, however, is a door this research opens for a further study.

Bibliography

- Ahn, I. *Position and Responsibility: Jurgen Habermas, Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Co-Reconstruction of the Positional Imperative*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- Allen, L.C. *A Theological Approach to the Old Testament: Major Themes and New Testament Connections*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014.
- Bahmann, M.K. *A Preference for the Poor: Latin American Liberation Theology from a Protestant Perspective*. University Press of America, 2005.
- Barreto, Raimundo. "Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue." *ResearchGate* XV, no. January 2003 (2003): 95-122.
- Beasley-Murray, G.R. *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.
- Beckley, H. *Passion for Justice: Retrieving the Legacies of Walter Rauschenbusch, John A. Ryan, and Reinhold Niebuhr*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- Berryman, P. *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America--and Beyond*. Temple University Press, 1987.
- Boff, L. *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*. New York: SPCK, 1980.
- Boff, L., and J.W. Diercksmeier. *Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012.
- Bonhoeffer, D. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Touchstone, 2012.
- Breed, Brennan. "What Can a Text Do? Reception History as an Ethology of the Biblical Text." In *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, edited by E. England and W.J. Lyons. London, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- Brondos, D.A. *Redeeming the Gospel: The Christian Faith Reconsidered*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Brown, C.C. *Niebuhr and His Age: Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Role and Legacy*. USA: Bloomsbury, 2002.
- Brown, M. *Tensions in Christian Ethics: An Introduction*. SPCK, 2011.
- Browning, D.S. *Christian Ethics and the Moral Psychologies*. Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.
- . "Human Dignity, Human Complexity, and Human Goods." In *God and Human Dignity*, edited by R.K. Soulen and L. Woodhead. Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.

- Burks, Andrew Mason. "Roman Slavery: A Study of Roman Society and Its Dependence on Slaves. ." East Tennessee State University 2008.
- C, E.A.N. *Liberation Theology*. Moody Press, 1985.
- Cannon, M.E., and J.M. Perkins. *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*. Downers Grove, Illinois InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Carnell, E.J. *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007.
- Cooper, T.D. *Reinhold Niebuhr and Psychology: The Ambiguities of the Self*. Mercer University Press, 2009.
- . *Sin, Pride & Self-Acceptance: The Problem of Identity in Theology & Psychology*. InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Cullmann, O., ed. *Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament*. Edited by C.H. Dodd and W.D. Davies, *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- de Waal Dryden, J. *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2018.
- deSilva, D.A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Elizondo, Virgillio. "Emergence of a World Church and the Lrruption of the Poor." In *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, edited by G. Baum. Maryknoll, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999.
- Emedi, Pablo-George Ishimilenga. "The Local Church as an Agent of Social Transformation in a Poor Community." University of Pretoria 2010.
- Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion. , Ill.* Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Fackre, G. *The Promise of Reinhold Niebuhr, Third Edition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.
- Faggioli, M., and D.S. Yocum. *Sorting out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements*. Liturgical Press, 2014.
- Feldman, S.M. *Please Don't Wish Me a Merry Christmas: A Critical History of the Separation of Church and State*. New York & London: NYU Press, 1998.
- Ferm, D.W. *Third World Liberation Theologies: An Introductory Survey*. Wipf & Stock, 2004.
- Finstuen, A.S. *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

- Garrard, E., and D. McNaughton. *Forgiveness: The Art of Living*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2014.
- Geisler, Norman L. ; MacKenzie, Ralph E. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals : Agreements and Differences*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995.
- Gelin, A. *The Poor of Yahweh*. Liturgical Press, 1964.
- Gilkey, L. *On Niebuhr: A Theological Study*. University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Glanzberg, Michael. "Truth." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, edited by E.N. Zalta and S. Abramsky. USA, Australia, Netherlands Stanford University. The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2018.
- Goodman, R.B. *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*. New York, London: Routledge, 1995.
- Grenz, S.J., and R.E. Olson. *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*. InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Grugel, J., J.N. Singh, L. Fontana, and A. Uhlin. *Demanding Justice in the Global South: Claiming Rights*. London, UK: Springer International Publishing, 2016.
- Gutierrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Maryknoll, New York. Edited by Sister Caridad and John Eagleson. Orbis Books, 1988.
- Hadley, D.W. "A Twofold Problem in the Twofold Eschatology of John Scottus Eriugena." In *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time: Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, [Held at] Maynooth and Dublin, August 16-20, 2002*, edited by M. Dunne, J.J. McEvoy and Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies. Leuven: Presses Universitaires de Louvain - UCL, 2002.
- Halfeyen, Hilarion. "Eschatology." In *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, edited by M.B. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Hall, Douglas John. "The Logic of the Cross: Niebuhr's Foundational Theology." In *Reinhold Niebuhr Revisited: Engagements with an American Original*, edited by D. Rice and M.E. Marty. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.
- Hamilton, K.M., and J.B. Moulaison. *The Doctrine of Humanity in the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013.
- Hartin, P.J. *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James*. collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Hasan, R. *Religion and Development in the Global South*. Springer International Publishing, 2017.
- Heil, J.P. *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*. Atlanta, GA, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

- Heimbach, Daniel R. "Understanding the Difference between Religious Liberty and Religious Autonomy." In *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty*, edited by T. White, J.G. Duesing and M.B. Yarnell. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2007.
- Herrick, J.A. *Does God Change?: Reconciling the Immutable God with the God of Love*. Universal Publishers, 2003.
- Hoebel, T. *Laity and Participation: A Theology of Being the Church*. Religion and Discourse. Vol. 29, Oxford, Berlin, New York, et cetera: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Holder, R.W., and P.B. Josephson. *The Irony of Barack Obama: Barack Obama, Reinhold Niebuhr and the Problem of Christian Statecraft*. Taylor & Francis, 2016.
- Horne, J.R. *The Moral Mystic*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.
- Jenkins, P. *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- . *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.
- Jensen, M.P. *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial*. Maiden Lane, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.
- Jeremias, J. *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* Translated by J. Bowden. Vol. 1, Salamanca SCM Press, 2012.
- Josephson, P.B., and R.W. Holder. *Reinhold Niebuhr in Theory and Practice: Christian Realism and Democracy in America in the Twenty-First Century*. Lexington Books, 2018.
- Kain, P.J. *Hegel and the Other: A Study of the Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2012.
- Kearney, Richard. "Poetics of a Possible God: Faith or Philosophy." In *Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God: Essays in Honor of Patrick A. Heelan, S.J.*, edited by B.E. Babich. New York & Washington D.C: Springer Netherlands, 2013.
- Keiser, Reinhard. "Reinhold Niebuhr." In *New World Encyclopedia*, edited by Frank Kaufmann. St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2015.
- Khan, H.A. *The Idea of Good Governance and the Politics of the Global South: An Analysis of Its Effects*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2015.
- Kim, S. *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.
- Knight, Henry H. *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*. Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 1992.

- Knitter, P.F. *Introducing Theologies of Religion*. Orbis Books, 2014.
- Kroeker, T. *Christian Ethics and Political Economy in North America: A Critical Analysis*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
- Kwok, P. "Teaching Theology from a Global Perspective ". In *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*, edited by P. Kwok, González-Andrieu, C. and D.N. Hopkins. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- Lamport, M.A., P. Jenkins, K. Tahaafe-Williams, J. Welby, D.L. Robert, D. Maxwell, P. Freston, F. Yang, and G. Kings. "Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South." Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018.
- Lee, J.H. *Reinhold Niebuhr on World Politics in a Nuclear Age*. Nashville, TN: Salem Publishing Solutions, Incorporated, 2012.
- Lee, W. *The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*. Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1987.
- Lehmann, Paul. "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr." In *Reinhold Niebuhr; His Religious, Social, and Political Thought: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, edited by C.W. Kegley. Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- Lovin, R.W. *Christian Realism and the New Realities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Lundin, R.W. *Alfred Adler's Basic Concepts and Implications*. Taylor & Francis, 2015.
- Luther, M. *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament*. Edited by T. Bachmann and H.T. Lehmann. Vol. Vol. 35-38 Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House ; Fortress Press, 1959.
- Luther, Martin. "The Large Catechism." In *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Theodore Gerhardt Tappert. Ohio: Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, 1917.
- MacDonald, S.K. *Moral Theology and Suffering*. New York, Washington D.C, San Francisco, Berlin, Pars, etc.: Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated, 1995.
- McCann, D.P. *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict*. Wipf & Stock Pub, 2001.
- McCarthy, E.S., and W. O'Neill. *Becoming Nonviolent Peacemakers: A Virtue Ethic for Catholic Social Teaching and U.S. Policy*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012.
- McGovern, A.F. *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009.
- McKeogh, C. *The Political Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr: A Pragmatic Approach to Just War*. Hamilton, New Zealand Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016.

- Miles, R.L. *The Bonds of Freedom: Feminist Theology and Christian Realism*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Miller, Alexander. "Realism." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, edited by E.N. Zalta and S. Abramsky. USA, Australia, Netherlands: Stanford University. The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2003.
- Moltmann, J., and J. Moltmann. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Fortress Press, 1993.
- Morris, D.A. *Virtue and Irony in American Democracy: Revisiting Dewey and Niebuhr*. Lexington Books, 2015.
- Morrison, J.D. *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.
- Murray, L.A. *Liberal Protestantism and Science*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Musekura, C. *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness*. New York, Washington D.C, Berlin, Oxford, etc.: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Naqvi, S.N.H. *Perspectives on Morality and Human Well-Being: A Contribution to Islamic Economics*. Nairobi, Kenya: Kube Publishing Limited, 2016.
- Niebuhr, R. "Christian Politics and Communist Religion." In *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, edited by J. Lewis, K. Polanyi, D.K. Kitchin, J. Needham and C.E. Raven. London: Victor Gollancz, 1935.
- . *Does Civilization Need Religion?: A Study in the Social Resources and Limitations of Religion in Modern Life*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010.
- . *Faith and History - a Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History*. Read Books Limited, 2013.
- . *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*. Edited by D.B. Robertson. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- . *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation : Human Nature*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- . *The Self and the Dramas of History*. Toronto, Ontario: CHIZINE PUBN, 2017.
- Niebuhr, R., and R.M.A. Brown. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*. Yale University Press, 1987.
- Niebuhr, R., and G. Dorrien. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Niebuhr, R., and E.N. Santurri. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

- Niebuhr, R., C. West, and L.B. Gilkey. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.
- Nietzsche, F. *The Will to Power*. Endymion Press, 2018.
- Norman, Edward. "Power and the Sate ". In *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*, edited by Peter Byrne & Leslie Houlden. London and New York: Routledge, 1995
- Pannenberg, W. *Systematic Theology*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2004.
- Pannenberg, W., and N.H. Gregersen. *Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*. Templeton Press, 2008.
- Pearce, K.L. "Mereological Idealism." In *New Essays in Metaphysics*, edited by T. Goldschmidt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Pinckaers, S., and M.T. Noble. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Washigton D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Pixley, J.V., and C. Boff. *Liberation Theology: The Bible, the Church, and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor*. Great Britain: Orbis Books, 1989.
- Pope-Levison, P. *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*. American University Studies Vol. 69, New York, Bern, Frankfurt, Paris: Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated, 1991.
- Pottenger, J.R. *The Political Theory of Liberation Theology: Toward a Reconvergence of Social Values and Social Sciences*. State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Ritschl, A., H.R. Mackintosh, and A.B. Macaulay. *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*. WIPF & STOCK PUBL, 2004.
- Robinson, Daniel Sommer. "Idealism." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, edited by etc. Patricia Bauer Adam Augustin. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite, 2014.
- Romero, O.A. *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements. Introductory Essays by Ignacio Martin-Baro and Jon Sobrino*. Translated by Michael J. Walsh. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985.
- Rukspollmuang, Chanita. "Situational Analysis of Education for International Understanding in Thailand." In *Comparative Science: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by N. Popov and A.W. Wiseman. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2015.
- Ryan, A. *The Making of Modern Liberalism*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Sabella, J. *An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017.

- Sample, T. *Human Nature, Interest, and Power: A Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Thought*. Cascade Books, 2013.
- Schubeck, T.L. *Love That Does Justice*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- Schubeck, Thomas. "Liberation Theology." In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, edited by Erwin; Bromiley Fahlbusch, Geoffrey William. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999, 2000.
- Schwarz, H. *Eschatology*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- Schweitzer, Donald. "The Great Depression: The Response of North American Theologians." In *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, edited by G. Baum. Maryknoll, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999.
- Segundo, J.L. *Liberation of Theology*. Wipf and Stock Pub., 2002.
- Smith, Christian. *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Sobrino, J. *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- . *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*. Wipf and Stock Pub., 2002.
- . *Jesus in Latin America*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004.
- . *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. Orbis Books, 1993.
- . *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- . *Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- . "Systematic Christology : Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God." In *Systematic Theology: Perspective from Liberation Theology*, edited by Ignacio Ellacuria Jon Sobrino. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- . *The True Church and the Poor*. Wipf & Stock, 2004.
- . *Where Is God?: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- . *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*. Orbis Books, 2015.
- Sobrino, J., and R. Lassalle-Klein. *Jon Sobrino: Spiritual Writings*. Orbis Books, 2018.
- Stålsett, S.J. *The Crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*. Peter Lang, 2003.
- Stalsett, Sturla J. "Liberation Theology." In *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, edited by Svein Rise & Stale Johannes Kristiansen. Surrey UK & Burlington USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited & Ashgate Publishing Compnay, 2013.

- Stone, R.H. *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Stroup, G.W. *Before God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004.
- Terracini, P. *John Stoward Moyes and the Social Gospel: A Study in Christian Social Engagement*. Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris AU, 2015.
- Tichi, Cecelia. *Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America (and What They Teach Us)* USA: ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited, 2010.
- Tillich, P. *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*. Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Tombs, D. *Latin American Liberation Theology*. Brill Academic Publishers, 2002.
- Turner, J.D. *An Introduction to Liberation Theology*. University Press of America, 1994.
- Williams, D. *Christian Approaches to Poverty*. iUniverse, 2001.
- Wolgast, Eike. "Luther's Treatment of Political and Societal Life." In *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, edited by Robert Kolb & Irene Dingel and L'ubomir Batka. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.