

CURRENT THEOLOGY

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST: BALTHASAR AND SOBRINO

PAUL E. RITT

St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Mass.

The New Testament affirmation "Jesus is Lord" is at the heart of Christian faith. From its early post-Easter period, the community of Jesus' disciples proclaimed that "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus" who was crucified (Acts 2:36). In the light of the resurrection, the title "lord" conveyed the notion that Jesus' name is "above every name" (Phil 2:9) and that, highly exalted by God, Jesus reigns supreme over a kingdom in which humanity is delivered from the dominion of darkness and is graciously given redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:13-14). The idea of lordship communicated the Christian belief that God has "put all things in subjection" under Jesus (1 Cor 15:27), who reigns as head over all things, "far above all rule and authority and power and domination" (Eph 1:21). The concept of Jesus' lordship expressed the early Church's convictions concerning Jesus' dominion over history and his power to destroy everything opposed to the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:24). Joseph Fitzmyer summarizes well the NT writers' use of the title "lord" by suggesting that Jesus' lordship meant for them "his actual dominion over men [and women] precisely in his glorious, risen condition as an influence vitally affecting the lives of Christians."¹

Despite the centrality of the affirmation of Jesus' lordship in the NT literature, Catholic Christologists of the 20th century have generally not dealt directly with the concept of Jesus' lordship. Contemporary Catholic authors regularly refer to Jesus as the Lord but rarely examine the meaning and implications of this title. Catholic scholars have been preoccupied with important issues such as reinterpreting what was taught by the Council of Chalcedon, drawing out the soteriological implications of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and analyzing the relationship

¹ Joseph Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary 2: The New Testament and Topical Articles*, ed. Fitzmyer, Raymond Brown, and Roland Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 812. For background material on the Christological title "lord," see Fitzmyer, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament *Kyrios*-Title," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979) 115-42. See also Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 487-91.

of Christ and the world religions. Underlying all these issues, however, is the foundational question of Jesus' lordship. In 1980 the International Theological Commission noted explicitly in *Select Questions on Christology* that post-Vatican II Catholic Christology is underdeveloped in this area of systematic reflection on the lordship of Jesus Christ.² Indeed, one of the concluding recommendations of this document is a call for further study on the theme of Jesus' lordship over all creation.

Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jon Sobrino stand out as two Catholic scholars who have taken up this issue. Representing vastly different theological perspectives, Balthasar and Sobrino afford diverse insights into the meaning of Jesus' lordship in both its cosmic and human dimensions. The goal of this article is threefold: to analyze the concept of lordship in each author's Christology, to offer a brief comparison of the respective positions on lordship, and to suggest a possible rapprochement between the two perspectives, bringing together the mystical and political elements needed in any adequate treatment of Jesus' lordship.

BALTHASAR

Christology is the foundational discipline in the massive corpus of interdisciplinary literature produced by Hans Urs von Balthasar over the span of half a century.³ The late Swiss theologian, who died two days before he was to be formally installed into the college of cardinals, regarded Christology as the archetypal discipline on which all theological endeavors depend. In his masterful trilogy, *Herrlichkeit*, *Theodramatik*, and *Theologik*, Balthasar devotes much attention to the supremacy of Jesus Christ in the order of creation.⁴ Because Balthasar's foundational

² International Theological Commission, *Select Questions on Christology* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1980) 19-20.

³ A full bibliography of Balthasar's writings for the period 1925-80 is provided in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: Bibliographie 1925-1980* by Cornelia Capol (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1981).

⁴ *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik* was published by Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln, 1961-69. As of now, three volumes of *Herrlichkeit* have been published by Ignatius Press in San Francisco under the title *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. A listing of the volumes in German with the corresponding English translation follows (first arabic figure is volume, following arabic figure is part of volume).

1: *Schau der Gestalt*, 1961; English translation = 1: *Seeing the Form*, 1982. 2/1: *Fächer der Stile: Klerikale Stile*, 1962; English, 2: *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*, 1984. 2/2: *Fächer der Stile: Laien Stile*, 1963; English, 3: *Studies in Theological Styles: Lay Styles*, 1987. 3/1: *Im Raum der Metaphysik*, 1965; no English translation yet. 3/2-1: *Der alter Bund*, 1966; no English translation yet. 3/2-2: *Der neuer Bund*, 1969; no English translation yet. Note: where an English translation is available, it will be cited as *Glory of the Lord* followed by the volume number of the English volume. Otherwise the German original will be cited.

Theodramatik was published by Johannes Verlag, 1973-83. No English translation is yet

methodological option is for a recovery of the beautiful as an indispensable category for theological discourse, I shall focus mainly on the first part of the trilogy (*Herrlichkeit*), in which he describes his theological aesthetics.

In the language of his theological aesthetics, Balthasar calls Jesus the "Christ-form"⁵ or the "archetype of beauty"⁶ on the canvas of creation. Jesus Christ is the form or *Gestalt* through which God's glory is fully communicated. Balthasar regards the Christ-form first and foremost in terms of its ontological supremacy among all created forms. In the symmetry of its proportions between what is expressed (the divine) and the figure of expression (the human), the Christ-form is the aesthetic model of all beauty. Access to this knowledge concerning the supremacy of the Christ-form is available through prayer and contemplation. Contemplating the Christ-form in prayer, the believer perceives beauty itself, God's glory radiating in the figure of Jesus Christ. The Christ-form has supremacy over all other forms of revelation, such as creation, biblical figures, and ecclesial structures, because these forms do not have the ontological constitution of the Christ-form; the Christ-form alone manifests the fulness of divine splendor.

Balthasar makes use of two categories to explicate the idea of Jesus' lordship in the language of his theological aesthetics. The first is *Gestaltungskraft* or form-giving power; Jesus the Lord is understood as the shaping power of love. The second is *norm of history*; Jesus the Lord is called the center of history, the fulfilment of the meaning of history. Both categories of lordship reinterpret the ancient notion of recapitulation: "Whatever God used as an instrument for his son's coming was taken up by him in the great recapitulation brought to pass in [Jesus Christ]."⁷ Jesus' lordship is seen in terms of his recapitulation of created reality. In his use of Irenaeus' familiar rubric, Balthasar translates the idea of recapitulation as a shaping of love and a centering of history.

As *Gestaltungskraft*, Jesus the Lord gives form to the totally unconditional and free love of God, and thereby shapes and perfects all forms of love by the power of this absolute love. The Christ-form, perfectly

available. The volumes in German are as follows: 1: *Prolegomena*, 1973. 2/1: *Die Personen des Spiels: Der Mensch in Gott*, 1976. 2/2: *Die Personen des Spiels: Die Personen in Christus*, 1978. 3: *Die Handlung*, 1980. 4: *Das Endspiel*, 1983.

Three volumes of *Theologik* have been published by Johannes Verlag. The titles are as follows: 1: *Wahrheit der Welt*, 1985. 2: *Die Wahrheit Gottes*, 1985. 3: *Der Geist der Wahrheit*, 1987.

⁵ Balthasar, *Pneuma und Institution* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1974) 49–51; *Glory of the Lord* 1, 459.

⁶ *Glory of the Lord* 1, 477.

⁷ Balthasar, *Word and Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964) 55.

proportioned as it unites the *forma Dei* and the *forma servi*, is the criterion and perfect form of love by which all partial forms of love are configured and shaped. Jesus' attitude of humble obedience, his self-emptying fiat unto death, is this ultimate form of love that shapes all imperfect forms of love and masters lovelessness itself.⁸ Love that is disordered or defective due to sin is molded by the absolute love shown by Jesus on the cross; even love without any form, or lovelessness itself, "must submit to his shaping power."⁹

A text from *Man in History: A Theological Study* illustrates Balthasar's use of *Gestaltungskraft* to convey the meaning of Jesus' lordship in his theological aesthetics. Speaking of human love within a Christian context, he observes: "Love, in faith, by abiding leaves the shaping of the whole to the Lord. [Jesus Christ] himself is its wholeness. He draws to himself the best, most central elements in it, and thus, what remains behind on earth is something definitively fragmentary, possibly even just ash, while all the fire is with the Lord."¹⁰ As Lord, Jesus shapes love, integrating the fragments of love into the wholeness of absolute love. Jesus' shaping power consists in his capacity to mold all partial forms of loving, love that is somehow disordered or dispersed because of sin, to a whole form of loving, love that reflects the splendor of his own absolute love. Only formlessness itself, or that which is definitively fragmentary, fails to reflect a glimmer of the radiance of absolute love. That is to say, using Balthasar's image, only ash fails to communicate a spark of the divine fire kindled on earth by Jesus' love. Only that which refuses to be molded by *Gestaltungskraft* remains disconnected from the unifying love emanating from the Christ-form. In this text Balthasar interprets Jesus' lordship as a dominion of love. His love is that which shapes, molds, and perfects all forms of loving.

In his theology of history Balthasar surfaces another key category through which he understands the lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "fulfillment of the meaning of history"¹¹ or the "norm of history."¹² By summarizing history and giving it its true comprehensive meaning, Jesus norms history, i.e. renders the whole of history intelligible. The question of the meaning of history is not reducible to the meaning of human life

⁸ Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 103. Balthasar, *Spiritus Creator* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1967) 156-57.

⁹ *Glory of the Lord* 1, 679.

¹⁰ Balthasar, *Man in History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 99. This book is also entitled *A Theological Anthropology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

¹¹ Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961) 63.

¹² *A Theology of History* 19. See also Balthasar, "In Retrospect," *Communio* 2 (1975) 205; Michael Proterra, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theologian," *Communio* 2 (1975) 281; Pedro Escobar, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: Christologian," *Communio* 2 (1975) 305-9.

or the aggregate of meanings embodied in the lives of people and the cultures in which they live. The universal that interprets history must give meaning to the origin, existence, and destiny of the human race as a "physical and ontic whole."¹³ Humanity cannot give this universal meaning to the whole of history because an individual or group of individuals constitutes only a partial instance of the sequence of concrete events. God cannot give this universal meaning of history as a whole because God is not interior to history, i.e. God does not need history for God's own self-comprehension. The only one who can provide the definitive interpretation of the meaning of history is the concrete universal, the human-God Jesus Christ. Fully historical through his incarnation, fully universal as the Logos, Jesus is the norm of history: "The historical life of the Logos—to which his death, Resurrection and ascension belong—is, as such, that very world of ideas, which, directly or reductively, gives the norm for all history, yet not as coming forth from some non-historical height above, but from the living center of history itself."¹⁴

In calling Jesus Christ the living center of history, Balthasar clarifies the relationship between the history of the world and salvation history. All history is salvation history in the sense that everything historical has meaning only in relation to the concrete universal, Jesus Christ. However, secular history and salvation history are not identical; the latter makes a claim on the former, giving the history of the world direction and purpose. Sacred history, normed by the Lord Jesus, centers and directs, i.e. illumines, secular history throughout the process of its movement from God and towards God.

In the concluding chapter of *A Theology of History*, entitled "History under the Norm of Christ," Balthasar calls Christ "Lord of history."¹⁵ Balthasar argues that there is only one history, and its fulfilment "both immanent and transcendent [is] in the *Kyrios*."¹⁶ In his lordship Jesus is "superior to all the powers of world history."¹⁷ As Leo O'Donovan notes, there are two aspects to Balthasar's notion of Christ as fulfilment or master of history: the ascending, immanent aspect and the descending, transcendent.¹⁸ The ascending, immanent aspect means that the final meaning of history is not imposed from above, from a transcendent outside. In other words, history has its own immanent form. The descending, transcendent aspect means that in descending into the Godforsak-

¹³ *Man in History* 107.

¹⁴ *A Theology of History* 18–19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 147.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 139.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 144.

¹⁸ Leo O'Donovan, "Evolution under the Sign of the Cross," *TS* 32 (1971) 613–14.

eness of death and hell, and then returning to heaven, Jesus transcends history's immanent form and gives it new meaning. The Christological fact must be seen as the union of what God destines for it (from above) with history's own promise and interior line of development (from within). In the context of the concluding section of *A Theology of History*, Balthasar understands Jesus' lordship as his dominion over both aspects of history. That is to say, Jesus the Lord fulfils history's interior line of development, but also transcends and confronts history as its judge or measure.¹⁹

Balthasar understands the lordship of Jesus in terms of the Christ-form " 'drawing all things to itself,' dictating the themes of history in virtue of its pre-eminence over all things, and in virtue of its absolute character, confronting history with a clear-cut either-or."²⁰ In his lordship Jesus recapitulates all history into his own history. Medard Kehl makes this point concerning the second category of lordship in Balthasar's Christology: "The general 'logos' of history (i.e. anything in the world that manifests something of reason, of natural regularity and moral norm, of meaning and value, of development and freedom) is integrated and brought to completion in the one particular Logos, the incarnate Word of God."²¹ As Logos, the Lord Jesus integrates the general logos of history in his own concrete history. In his lordship Jesus is the norm and fulfilment of history.

For Balthasar, Jesus' lordship means a shaping of love in and through his own absolute love; lordship also entails the norming and integrating of history in Jesus' own concrete history. As Lord, Jesus perfects love and gives intelligibility to history. In a particular way Balthasar locates the lordship of Jesus on the cross, where Jesus' lordship is defined in terms of servanthood: "His lordship lies in his taking upon himself, in the full freedom of love, the place of a servant, the humiliating and finally killing task of a servant."²² The decisive mark of Jesus' lordship is his servant's work on the cross, the climactic expression of a life of pure obedience. Through the final manifestation of his utter "existence-in-receptivity" (*Existenz im Empfang*)²³ on the cross, Jesus shows forth his masterhood in servanthood. In his obedience unto death Jesus gathers back the world's sin and disobedience and gathers into the Father all

¹⁹ *Word and Revelation* 41.

²⁰ *A Theology of History* 135.

²¹ Medard Kehl, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Portrait," in *The Von Balthasar Reader*, ed. Kehl and Werner Löser (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 29.

²² *Man in History* 318. See also *Herrlichkeit* 3/2-2: *Der neuer Bund* 134; "Kenose," in *Pneuma und Institution* 119-32.

²³ *A Theology of History* 25-45. For commentary on this theme, see Kehl, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Portrait" 30.

that belongs to the servant, including pain suffered out of love and trials endured in patience.²⁴ In the tragedy of his own suffering and death on the cross, Jesus creates a "totally different existence"²⁵ for humanity. Thus "for Christians, there is no mark of lordship than the cross."²⁶ On the cross Jesus demonstrates his power to perfect all forms of loving and to give meaning to every moment of history.

It is quite evident in Balthasar's Christology that the lordship of Jesus Christ bears ramifications for the entire cosmos as well as for humanity; the whole order of creation is affected by Jesus' lordship. Consequently there are specific cosmic and human dimensions of Jesus' dominion over all things.

According to Balthasar, the cosmos renders testimony to one single truth: Jesus is Lord.²⁷ This resounding cosmic testimony to Jesus' lordship is manifested in creation's willingness to receive and express the saving signs of grace throughout history and to let itself be permeated bodily by God. Each particle of creation is a form of nature which is open to receive its final form from above through grace. Nature has tendencies both to order and to chaos, but under the influence of the incarnate Logos passes beyond itself through its consciousness into the region of the Absolute. This means that each created form is called by grace to share with the Son of God his role as image, appearance, and glorification of God. In its openness to contain figures of revelation or forms of grace in history, creation acknowledges submission to its Lord.

Creation's attestation to Christ's lordship is stifled, however, by what Balthasar calls the cosmic "forces of chaos" or disorder which have a stranglehold on all created forms.²⁸ In the language of the NT, these factors are powers (*dynameis*) or ruling principles (*archai*) such as sin and death. Christ's lordship in the cosmos entails an overcoming and submission of these cosmic powers and a freeing of creation to give expression to the glory of the Creator: "... as eschatological Lord of the cosmos he sets himself over the realms in which they hold sway."²⁹ On the cross Jesus abolishes the power which is death (2 Tim 1:10). In his

²⁴ *Man in History* 322. See also Balthasar, *The Threefold Garland* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982) 71.

²⁵ *Theodramatik* 1, 47.

²⁶ *Man in History* 319.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 83. See also *Herrlichkeit* 3/1, 313, and *Theologik* 2, 235. See also O'Donovan, "Evolution" 604-8.

²⁸ For what follows see *Theodramatik* 3, esp. "Die Macht" 135-46, and "Das Böse" 146-54. See also *The Glory of the Lord* 1, 660-76. Cf. Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), for background exegetical analysis for Balthasar's position on Jesus' confrontation with the powers.

²⁹ *Glory of the Lord* 1, 661.

descent into the Godforsakenness of hell, Christ destroys the power of darkness (Lk 22:53). Exalted at the right hand of God, Christ reigns as king until every authority and power, including death (the last enemy), is placed in subjection to him (1 Cor 15:24-28). Balthasar suggests that in Christ's death and resurrection the cosmic powers are definitively silenced, i.e. deposed and robbed of their control over the cosmos: "[They are] subjected to the lordship of Christ by being unmasked and having their threatening and opaque masquerade brought out into the light. Their devouring, all rending nature is left to devour and rend itself apart . . ."³⁰ As Lord of the cosmos, Jesus exposes the cosmic powers as formless, disordered entities, and he subjects them to his own shaping power within the cosmos.

Balthasar understands the human dimensions of lordship in terms of Jesus perfecting humanity's love of its Creator, and Jesus' headship of the Church. One of the tenets of Balthasar's anthropology is the perfectibility of humanity. Though humanity is the highest form of creation, it is by nature imperfect, never achieving perfection because of its sin and disobedience. Despite its lofty status in creation, humanity is fraught with contradictions that frustrate its capacity to love the Creator. Humanity is self-alienated, unable to reach total integration because of the corrupting forces of eros and hubris. Death is the ultimate power or force of disintegration in the human condition; death is the final obstacle that prevents humanity from a perfect, enduring love of God. In his lordship Jesus perfects humanity's love of its Creator, integrating in the form of his absolute love humanity's imperfect and partial forms of love. Balthasar calls Jesus humanity's "figure of fulfillment."³¹ In his utter obedience to the Father, Jesus achieves perfect "creatureliness,"³² perfecting all humanity's imperfect forms of love in his own pure love of the Creator. Jesus' death on the cross, the decisive mark of his lordship over humanity, reveals that his is the perfect expression of human love, "the measure of everything human in all its dimensions."³³ As Lord, Jesus abides as the standard of human behavior. In addition, the Lord Jesus' descent into hell creates solidarity with the dead and forges an indescribable opening of the way to the Father.³⁴

Jesus Christ's "perfecting" love is not detached from the problems of this world. Balthasar insists that living in the light of the risen Lord

³⁰ Ibid. 663.

³¹ *Man in History* 86.

³² *Glory of the Lord* 1, 327.

³³ Balthasar, *Does Jesus Know Us? Do We Know Him?* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983) 39.

³⁴ Balthasar, "The Descent into Hell," *Chicago Studies* 23 (1984) 235.

means "taking part in the total effort of humanity towards the humanizing of the world."³⁵ This total effort includes imbuing the structures of the world with the perfect love of the Lord Jesus.³⁶

Balthasar's concept of Jesus' lordship also includes an ecclesiological element. As Lord, Jesus is head of his body, the Church. Balthasar interprets the images of head and body in terms of the nuptial relationship made explicit in Eph 5:21-33: "In this setting, 'Head' means the ruling partner, the lord, in a marriage; 'body' means completion and unification in the physical nuptial order."³⁷ Christ's headship of the Church is seen in terms of the husband's headship of the wife in a marriage. Just as Eve is taken from Adam's rib to be his helpmate in generating the human race, the Church is poured forth from Jesus' side to give birth to a new creation (Jn 19:34). The Church, purified on the cross and made glorious without spot or wrinkle, lives out its bridal existence in an essentially receptive mode. In Balthasar's view, the Church can never seek an autonomous form, "over against" its Lord.³⁸ In its faith surrender under the impulse of the Lord's grace, the Church is what Balthasar calls the material, feminine principle of the Christ-form; conversely, grace giving itself and imprinting itself on believers is the formal, male principle of the Christ-form.³⁹ As the Church abides in obedience to its Lord, it is shaped more and more according to the Marian concept of discipleship: *Ecce ancilla Domini*.⁴⁰ Mary is the archetype of the Church's willingness to bear the Christ-form in body and spirit and to renounce all things for the sake of the Lord.⁴¹

In summary: Balthasar understands the lordship of Jesus in terms of a superior person acting powerfully in history. The superiority of Jesus' person is perceived as the supremacy of the all-encompassing *Gestalt* through which all forms are recapitulated. Jesus the Lord is *Gestaltungskraft*, the form-giving power in creation; Jesus' lordship is also expressed in his norming and fulfilling of history. The principal cosmic consequence of Jesus' lordship is the overcoming of the cosmic powers opposed to the reign of God. The human dimensions of Jesus' lordship are the perfecting of human love and Jesus' headship of the Church. Balthasar's concept of lordship is a creative rendering of the ancient notion of recapitulation. Through prayer and contemplation, the believer perceives the lordship

³⁵ Balthasar, *Engagement with God* (London: SPCK, 1975) 87.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 84; see also *Spiritus Creator* 320.

³⁷ Balthasar, *Church and World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 117.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 23.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 72.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 73.

⁴¹ *The Threefold Garland* 22, 43-50.

of Jesus as the supremacy of the all-encompassing Christ-form. The key to understanding Balthasar's idea of lordship is the perception of the ontological supremacy of the Christ-form. All of Jesus' functions as Lord flow from his identity as the pre-eminent figure of glory.

SOBRINO

In some ways the title "lord" would seem to be problematic for a Latin American liberation theologian. For example, the Uruguayan Jesuit Juan Luis Segundo describes a lord as one who wills to dominate based on antagonism toward the interests of another class.⁴² In the context of social reality in Latin America, "lord" can indicate a relationship of dominance and dependency in the sense that one who is lord enslaves another. The title "lord" can carry the meaning of a representative of a ruling class who supports the oppression of the "ruled" classes. Segundo even implies that the term "lordship" can communicate the idea of an exclusivist mastership or an enslaving dominion over the universe.⁴³ Thus one would not expect to find extensive use of the biblical title "lord" in Latin American liberation Christologies.

Surprisingly, Sobrino, the Spanish Jesuit who works in El Salvador, uses the title "lord" regularly, though not extensively, in his two major Christological works, *Christology at the Crossroads* and (its sequel) *Jesus in Latin America*.⁴⁴ He contends that the title "lord" can convey the notion of the authentic sovereignty of Jesus Christ, but only when Jesus' lordship is understood in functional terms, i.e. what Jesus *does* in a concrete situation of oppression such as the one in present-day Latin America. Jesus' dominion must be seen in relation to what he accomplishes for the poor of that region. Thus Jesus' lordship refers not as much to the exalted status of a person as to the superiority of a person's service in the kingdom of God. This means that the title "lord" must be linked to the service of the historical Jesus who engaged in partisan activity on behalf of the poor of his time:

It is to the poor that he addresses his mission in a special, privileged manner, it is with them that he lives; it is for them that he posits the signs of the coming of the kingdom—miracles, the expulsion of demons, wondrous food and drink. It is from a starting point among the poor that he denounces the basic sin and tears

⁴² Juan Luis Segundo, *Faith and Ideologies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984) 212.

⁴³ Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974) 22.

⁴⁴ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), and *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987). For succinct commentaries on Sobrino's Christology, see Michael Cook, "Jesus from the Other Side of History: Christology in Latin America," *TS* 44 (1983) 271-75, and pertinent sections in Claus Bussman, *Who Do You Say? Jesus Christ in Latin American Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985).

away the mask from rationalizations of that sin.⁴⁵

Sobrino begins consideration of every Christological question, including that of lordship, with the historical Jesus as the starting point: "Put in positive terms, our approach here asserts that both for reflection and for life it is the historical Jesus who is the key providing access to the total Christ."⁴⁶ The "total Christ" can be comprehended only in connection with Jesus' actual course toward fulfilment as the risen Christ. Any Christologist who disconnects the historical Jesus from the risen Christ fragments the "total Christ" and forgets that the Christ of Easter faith is none other than the historical Jesus who showed a partiality for the oppressed of the world. For Sobrino, fundamental contact with Jesus' actual course toward fulfilment as the risen Christ comes not through "static contemplation" but through "active praxis," the following of Jesus through concrete service that realizes the kingdom of God in social reality.⁴⁷ In other words, following Jesus (rather than contemplating Jesus or thinking about Jesus) affords the primary epistemological access to the understanding of the "total Christ."

Unlike Balthasar, Sobrino undertakes an explicit analysis of the meaning of the title "lord" in the biblical texts. For example, he asserts that Paul uses the title "lord" to bring Jesus into the closest possible relationship with God; the title "lord" stresses Jesus' divine reality, his transcendent character.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Sobrino claims that the title "lord" refers not only to Jesus' divinity but to his glorified humanity in light of the resurrection:

The New Testament proclaims Jesus as the eschatological Lord. This poses a double question, what is meant by lordship, and how does one come to be Lord? The New Testament asserts that it is in virtue of his glorified humanity, and not only his divinity, that Christ is now the one to whom God has subjected all things (1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:9; Ephesians 1:22) and that he has been constituted Lord because of his abasement even to the cross.⁴⁹

In analyzing the biblical concept of lordship, Sobrino emphasizes the interrelationship of the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. The latter must not overwhelm the former so that the Lord becomes an ahistorical being, a construct of faith.

⁴⁵ *Jesus in Latin America* 13.

⁴⁶ *Christology at the Crossroads* 352.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 36. Sobrino discusses the differences between European theology and Latin American liberation theology in chap. 1 of his book *The True Church and the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984).

⁴⁸ *Christology at the Crossroads* 269-70, 378.

⁴⁹ *Jesus in Latin America* 37-38.

In a particular way Sobrino asserts that the risen Lord is the crucified Jesus.⁵⁰ The ascribing of lordship to Jesus refers to the overcoming of the scandal of Jesus' abandonment by God on the cross.⁵¹ On the cross the Father abandons the Son to the ultimate consequence of evil in the human condition (death); the Father suffers the death of the Son, thus taking on all the sorrow and pain of human history and creating an ultimate solidarity with humanity.⁵² The exalted Lord is not just any human being or any Christ but the crucified Jesus of Nazareth who dies abandoned by God but in fidelity to his partisan proclamation of the kingdom of God. Referring to the idea of lordship in the Book of Revelation, Sobrino points out that "the 'Lord' of that book is the 'slain lamb' who possesses the power of the historical Jesus."⁵³

Despite the centrality of the cross in Sobrino's Christology, he maintains that the title "lord" is a postpaschal appellation: "It is a fundamental dictum of Christian faith that the risen Jesus is the Lord . . ."⁵⁴ The scandal of Jesus' abandonment by God on the cross does not have the last word in the gospel of liberating grace. The resurrection means that God confirms the partisan praxis of Jesus and that Jesus stands in a distinctive relationship to God. In the resurrection Jesus' proexistence, his existence for humanity, is universalized. No longer is his praxis confined to partisan activity on behalf of the poor of his time. God's action in raising Jesus signifies an eschatological revitalization of humanity; in the resurrection of Jesus all have been offered a new life based on hope and oriented toward the future.

The main category through which Sobrino understands Jesus' lordship is *power*. Jesus' lordship is grasped in terms of the power that "mediates God and helps to construct a better society."⁵⁵ The power of Jesus involves prophetic praxis that communicates God's love for the poor; this power is love expressed in the historical Jesus' self-surrender and service in the transformation of social reality into the kingdom of God. Jesus' power is truth spoken in prophecy, and love communicated in the praxis of responding to the cries of society's oppressed. The power possessed by the Lord Jesus is not an arbitrary power that dominates and enslaves people but "a power embodied in truth and love, in proclamation and denunciation."⁵⁶ In proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus defines God

⁵⁰ *The True Church and the Poor* 89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Sobrino, "Tesis sobre una cristología histórica," *Estudios Centroamericanos* 30 (1975) 470; see also *Christology at the Crossroads* 371.

⁵³ *Christology at the Crossroads* 383.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 297.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 383.

as a liberative power that has become a historicized love in a concrete situation of oppression;⁵⁷ in denouncing the Pharisees and others for their improper use of power, Jesus condemns power that produces a division between those who hold it and those who suffer from its use.⁵⁸ The kind of power Jesus wields is service, not imposition. Jesus' lordship is expressed in his kingly service of the lowly; in this service Jesus mediates the God of life.

Sobrino discusses the cosmic aspects of Jesus' lordship in terms of the biblical images of the "kingdom of God" and "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1).⁵⁹ The cosmic lordship of Jesus receives its direction and content from the concrete renewal brought about by Jesus in the human condition. Jesus struggled resolutely against what Sobrino calls the "divinities of death,"⁶⁰ those social forces that dehumanize human beings and cause their death. Thus the cosmic lordship of Jesus refers mainly to the liberation of the cosmos from these false divinities; Jesus' lordship empowers the progressive coming-to-be of the kingdom of God in social reality. Through the praxis of Jesus earthly realities are renewed according to the specifications of the kingdom of God. As a result of this renewal "the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them" (Lk 7:22). Briefly put, "lordship is liberation"⁶¹ from the gods of oppression throughout the cosmos. Jesus' cosmic lordship unfolds concretely in the exercise of political power for the transformation of social structures and patterns of behavior that enslave the poor. His lordship entails the liberating transformation of a bad situation, the overcoming of an oppressive situation, and the regeneration of the world for the sake of the poor whom the historical Jesus served and sought to liberate.⁶² By restructuring social reality for the benefit of the poor, Jesus uses political power to realize the reign of God in history and to effect an eschatological transformation of the cosmos into a new heaven and a new earth. In his use of power to transmute social reality, Jesus is eschatological Lord of the cosmos.

The human dimensions of Jesus' lordship focus on the renewal of the believer's personal freedom.⁶³ The risen Jesus sets the believer's freedom free from the selfishness that impedes service on behalf of the poor. The

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 377.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 53.

⁵⁹ *Jesus in Latin America* 155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 101.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 38.

⁶² *Christology at the Crossroads* 47; *Jesus in Latin America* 38–39.

⁶³ *Jesus in Latin America* 39.

Lord Jesus frees the believer for an encounter with him in discipleship, an encounter that is freeing and joyful. Jesus' resurrection introduces believers into the historical process by which he came to be Lord:

The content of this process, described as a process of abasement, is only too familiar: one must become incarnate in the world of the poor, proclaim to the poor the good news, come forward in their defense, denounce and unmask the mighty, take on the lot of the poor, and the ultimate consequence of that solidarity, the cross.⁶⁴

The present lordship of Jesus is shown in the fact that there are new men and women in history who are retracing the way of the cross and creating a new social reality for the crucified of every generation, the world's poor. Sobrino argues that Jesus' lordship is not exercised simply in the acknowledgment of his dominion by believers. Jesus' lordship is exercised *in actu* through the liberating praxis of believers: "Christ's lordship, then, is manifested in the note of service attaching to the lives of believers and the efficacy of that service for the world."⁶⁵ The followers of Jesus give form to his lordship and render it verifiable and effective by giving life to history's crucified, those whose existence is threatened and whose lives are oppressed. Although the present lordship of Jesus is exercised *in actu* through the praxis of his disciples, it will not be fully realized until the end of the ages.

There is also an ecclesial aspect to Jesus' liberating lordship of humanity. The crucified Lord brings into existence what Sobrino calls the "Church of the poor."⁶⁶ The Church of the poor is not simply the Church for the poor, or part of the whole Church that coexists with the nonpoor. The Church of the poor is the Church that is formed on the basis of the poor and finds in them the principle of its structure, organization, and mission. The Church of the poor does not regard the poor as part of itself, but thinks of them as the center of the whole. Just as the historical Jesus focused his ministry on the poor and their plight, the Church must concentrate its mission on the place where the Lord is to be found according to Matthew 25, i.e. in the lives of the least of the King's brothers and sisters.

Sobrino maintains that the Church of the poor is the true (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) Church arising from the resurrection of the crucified Jesus.⁶⁷ A church that focuses on the Lord of glory without identifying this Lord as the crucified Jesus is a triumphalistic church, a

⁶⁴ Ibid. 155.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *The True Church and the Poor* 84-98.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 98-104.

church that claims to save people merely by informing them of sublime truths, a church that considers itself a depository of divine power. The Church of the poor remembers that the Lord is the one who ministered to the poor, confronted the mighty, and was put to death for his unwavering commitment to the oppressed.

The Lord Jesus creates a community that follows him in trying to make the kingdom of God a reality within history.⁶⁸ This following of Jesus takes the form of a constant humanization of the human at all levels and situations. The Church of the poor humanizes in a specific way which Sobrino refers to as Christianization: "In Christian language this means that structures must be humanized along the lines of the reign of God so that they may promote the satisfaction of elementary needs, basic equality among human beings, solidarity among them, and sharing of power."⁶⁹ Christianization entails prophecy that denounces dehumanizing social structures and causes opposition, rejection, and persecution from the mighty. The Church actualizes the political power of its Lord by building the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed in word and deed. This actualization of the Lord's power involves conflict because sin holds a destructive power in history and takes the form of oppression. The Church of the poor is a community that struggles against the divinities of death that prevent establishment of a kingdom of justice and peace for everyone. In this struggle to liberate the poor from the gods of oppression, the Church brings new life to the world's crucified, and in the process actualizes the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In summary: Sobrino understands the lordship of Jesus as the powerful action of a superior person in history. The risen Lord is the historical Jesus who inaugurated the kingdom of God through his partisan praxis, which aims at a transformation of social reality. Jesus becomes Lord through a process of abasement in which he pours himself out in service of the poor, is abandoned by God on the cross, and then is vindicated in the resurrection, which Sobrino interprets as the universalization of Jesus' existence for humanity. Lordship is seen as power used to bring about the kingdom of God in social reality; Jesus' lordship is actualized in the historical praxis of his disciples. The cosmic aspects of lordship are understood as liberation from the social forces of oppression and a renewal of social realities; the human aspects include a renewal of the believer's personal freedom, a creation of the Church of the poor, and a Christianization of humanity. Sobrino's concept of lordship is functional; Jesus' lordship is understood in terms of the superiority of Jesus' action in realizing God's reign in history.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 204.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 188.

COMPARISON

At first glance it seems that the positions of Balthasar and Sobrino on the question of Jesus' lordship are irreconcilable. Indeed, their respective methodologies and hermeneutical options take them in different directions on this Christological issue and many others as well.

Balthasar argues that Jesus is Lord of aesthetic form, humanity's figure of fulfilment, the one who recapitulates love in his own perfect love and norms history in his own history. Jesus' lordship is perceived by the believer as a supremacy of form, a dominion of *gestalts* in the order of creation. Balthasar suggests that the cosmic and human dimensions of Jesus' lordship are distinct; Jesus' cosmic lordship is not exhausted by his transformation of the human condition and social structures.

Using the terminology set forth by Monika Hellwig, one could say that, for Balthasar, Jesus exercises his lordship of creation in a way that is primarily prior to and independent of human response.⁷⁰ Jesus' lordship precedes human acknowledgment of his dominion; the effective exercise of his lordship does not depend on human performance, though his lordship calls for acknowledgment and action. The believer acknowledges the "prior" lordship of Jesus Christ by perceiving in contemplation the glory of God radiating from the Christ-form. The believer responds to this fundamental perception of splendor by acting freely in obedience to the will of God. Such action includes social praxis on behalf of those deprived of basic human rights. However, Balthasar considers perception of Jesus' lordship to be the principal human response to the beauty reflected in the Christ-form; action that seeks to transform social reality into the kingdom of God is secondary or derivative in that it flows out of this initial faith perception of Jesus' lordship. The Swiss theologian's concept of lordship is primarily ontological, i.e. it focuses on Jesus' identity or status as Lord of creation. In Balthasar's Christology Jesus' identity (as the figure of fulfilment) determines his function as recapitulating Lord of love and history.

Sobrino understands Jesus' lordship in terms of the power that overcomes the power of oppressors and establishes the kingdom of God on earth. Once again drawing on the terminology afforded by Hellwig, one could say that Jesus exercises his lordship throughout the cosmos in a way that is coconstituted by human agency.⁷¹ Jesus' lordship is exercised in and through human agency; his lordship is put into effect in the

⁷⁰ Monika Hellwig, "Christology and Attitudes toward Social Structures," *Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems*, ed. Thomas Clarke (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist, 1980) 15 (overall, 13-34).

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 15.

believer's following of Jesus. The believer acknowledges Jesus' lordship by following him in the process of abasement, which entails a kingly service unto death on behalf of the poor. Jesus' lordship is actualized when the kingdom of God is realized through the effective use of political power. In other words, the actualization of Jesus' reign as Lord depends on the response of those who follow him. His lordship is enacted in history through the agency of those who seek to bring about the kingdom of God for all, especially for the oppressed. In Sobrino's Christology it seems that apart from the liberating praxis of Jesus' disciples Jesus himself exercises no real power; he presides only as a figurehead ruler in the kingdom of God. The cosmic and human dimensions of Jesus' lordship are basically interchangeable in Sobrino's Christology; everything that Jesus brings about in the cosmos has a direct impact on the transformation of social reality in the human condition. Sobrino's concept of lordship is decidedly functional, i.e. it focuses on Jesus' activity as the Lord who serves, and on the activity of Jesus' disciples who continue to realize the kingdom of God in history. For Sobrino, Jesus' activity determines his identity as Lord and not vice versa.

The differences between Balthasar and Sobrino are clear-cut. The former emphasizes contemplation of Jesus' dominion as the primary access to knowledge of his lordship, the independence of Jesus' lordship from the believer's acknowledgment of it, and the ontological aspects of Jesus' identity as Lord. The latter underscores praxis as the epistemological source by which Jesus' lordship is understood, the interrelationship of Jesus' activity as Lord and his disciples' efforts to actualize his lordship, and the functional aspects of Jesus' lordship.

Despite all the differences, there are some notable similarities. Each author connects the idea of Jesus' lordship with abasement or kenosis. Balthasar emphasizes Jesus' existence-in-receptivity and obedience unto death as characteristics of his identity as Lord; Sobrino regards Jesus as the one who becomes Lord in a process of abasement that involves a pouring-out of love on behalf of the poor. For both, the cross is the ultimate sign of Jesus' kingly service in the event of salvation. Both agree that Jesus' lordship means that the powers inimical to the kingdom of God (the "forces of chaos" or the "divinities of death") are subdued and that the order of creation is renewed. Both maintain that Jesus is Lord of the Church in that he creates and sustains a community of disciples. With many differences and some similarities, can these perspectives on lordship be merged in any way?

SYNTHESIS

At the risk of oversimplification, I suggest that an adequate contemporary perspective on the lordship of Jesus needs to incorporate elements

from the Christologies of both Balthasar and Sobrino. In other words, a contemporary understanding of Jesus' lordship should include aspects of the "mystical" approach taken by Balthasar and elements of the "political" approach favored by Sobrino.⁷² By "mystical" I mean an approach which focuses on prayer and the contemplation of Jesus' lordship; by "political" I mean an approach which emphasizes praxis and the social dimensions of lordship. Neither approach should exclude elements of the other, as Balthasar demonstrates in his inclusion of the need for humanizing behavior on the part of those who acknowledge Jesus' lordship, and as Sobrino implies in his emphasis on Jesus' power to renew a person's freedom. Exclusive concentration on the mystical approach tends toward a gnosticism: Jesus' lordship has meaning only for those believers who perceive his sovereignty in prayer and contemplation. Overemphasis on the political approach tends toward a secular humanism: Jesus' lordship has meaning only when political power is utilized effectively for the benefit of the lowly, or Jesus' lordship has relevance only in relation to a transformation of social systems.

Balthasar makes an important contribution toward a deeper understanding of Jesus' lordship by emphasizing a mystical approach which highlights contemplation and perception of Jesus' dominion. Balthasar makes the direct correlation between perceiving Jesus' sovereignty in prayer and articulating the various aspects of this lordship. Through contemplation of the significance of Jesus, the believer grasps the dominion of Jesus over all forms of love and every temporal existence in history. In the words of Henri de Lubac, "faith contemplates this [perfect] figure [of revelation] and its contemplation is prayer."⁷³ In an age when Christology is preoccupied with historical-critical exegesis of the biblical texts, hermeneutics, and dialogue with the social sciences, Balthasar's Christology is a compelling reminder of the importance of prayer and contemplation in any effort to disclose the meaning of Jesus' lordship in the contemporary world. His approach to the concept of Jesus' lordship focuses on Christology's need to meet in prayer the one who is said to have pre-eminence in the order of creation. Through prayer one is able to perceive the love of Jesus as that which surpasses all love and marks every moment of history. In contemplation the believer is caught up by the splendor of God radiating from the life of Jesus, and lives obediently,

⁷² Edward Schillebeeckx refers to the "mystical" and "political" elements of Christian salvation in *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1980) 804-10. See also *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith* (Concilium 96; New York: Herder and Herder, 1974).

⁷³ Henri de Lubac, "A Witness of Christ in the Church: Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* 2 (1975) 237.

enraptured by the brilliance of this divine light. Prayerful recognition of Jesus' lordship is indispensable for Christian discipleship and Christian theology.

A contemporary approach to the lordship of Jesus Christ should also take into account the political approach of Sobrino. The meaning of Jesus' supreme authority cannot be restricted to personal and prayerful acknowledgment of his lordship over the cosmos and the Church. By insisting on praxis as an epistemological source for understanding Jesus' lordship, Sobrino focuses attention on the social-political ramifications of Jesus' saving activity. The nature of the lordship of Christ can be understood fully only when it is grasped in connection with the praxis of the historical Jesus and the praxis of his disciples. Though the title "lord" is a post-Easter designation, it can be understood properly only in connection with the ministry of the historical Jesus, who showed a predilection for the poor in his proclamation of the kingdom of God. Through his praxis Jesus mediates God's liberating love, which occasions the renewal of the believer's personal freedom and ultimately the transformation of social realities. By engaging in partisan praxis for the poor, Jesus' disciples acknowledge his lordship and contribute to a transformation of the world through their effective love.

In my judgment, Sobrino's political approach to the idea of lordship needs a nuance in the light of what is taught in official Church documents such as *Gaudium et spes*: "Christ did not entrust to his Church a proper mission in the political, economic, or social order; the purpose he assigned to it is a religious one."⁷⁴ The lordship of Jesus cannot be restricted to his dominion over the social order; the kingdom of God cannot be reduced to an effective political program or economic justice. Nevertheless, *Gaudium et spes* also points out that earthly progress in the better ordering of human society is of vital concern to the kingdom of God.⁷⁵ Following its Lord, the Church must have solicitude for humanity's temporal welfare, especially where there is great deprivation or exploitation.⁷⁶ Jesus' lordship entails more than his dominion over individuals and their personal salvation. It involves the transformation of human society into the family of God.⁷⁷ In recent years there has been much discussion regarding the specific ways in which it is best for the Church to carry out its role (under the headship of Jesus) in socio-economic-political issues facing society. It seems to me that a comment made by Avery Dulles on this discussion is pertinent here: "The Church must walk a

⁷⁴ *Gaudium et spes* 42.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 39.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 42.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 40.

fine line between sectarian withdrawal from the world and secularist absorption into it. Depending on which is the greater temptation at a particular time, Catholic practice, as a corrective, may have to lean more in one direction or the other."⁷⁸ Sobrino's idea of lordship' is perhaps conceived too narrowly in terms of political power. His perspective is helpful, though, in making it clear that the Church's mission entails concrete activity within the secular world on behalf of the poor. The Church, following its Lord, sides with the poor.

A synthesis of the mystical and political approaches to Jesus' lordship strives to interrelate prayer and social praxis, faith-perception of Jesus' lordship and social activity consistent with the realization of the kingdom. A mystical-political approach also seeks to include both the ontological and the functional facets of Jesus' lordship. This entails a merger between Christological and soteriological concerns. In other words, assertions about the ultimate significance of Jesus' identity or status as Lord should be connected with claims about Jesus' exercise of lordship in history and in glory. "Lord" is not just an honorific title attributed to Jesus when an individual or community prays. The affirmation of Jesus' lordship beckons the community of disciples to concrete activity that manifests Jesus' dominion.

A partnership between the mystical and political elements facilitates the incorporation of both the personal and the structural components of his lordship. Through prayer and contemplation one discovers that Jesus is Lord of believing people, and one acknowledges that Jesus exercises his lordship over individual and communal lives. Through social praxis the individual and community extend the personal aspects of lordship to a reordering of patterns of behavior and a transformation of social structures. According to this train of thought, Jesus exercises his lordship over social realities by calling women and men to a conversion of heart that impels human activity to a transformation of these structures.

Finally, a mystical-political approach to the lordship of Jesus seeks to specify and interrelate both the cosmic and the human dimensions of Jesus' lordship. The NT professes Jesus' lordship over all things created in heaven and on earth (Col 1:16). Therefore the idea of lordship should both distinguish and interrelate the cosmic and human dimensions of his sovereignty. Jesus exercises authority over the universe as well as over humanity. His death and resurrection tame the cosmic forces of sin and death, and transform humankind and its destiny. Neither a concrete reduction of the cosmic dimensions to the human (the danger of the political approach) nor an abstract absorption of the human into the

⁷⁸ Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 66-67.

cosmic (the temptation of the mystical approach) is suitable in a mystical-political approach. Both the cosmic and the human dimensions of lordship need to be specified and interrelated in a contemporary perspective on the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Balthasar and Sobrino make significant contributions to a deeper contemporary understanding of Jesus' lordship. They afford insight from totally different vantage points into the meaning of the NT affirmation "Jesus is Lord." The contrast of their views on the lordship of Jesus is striking, to say the least. Yet they agree that the concept of Jesus' lordship still carries meaning for the believing Christian. In suggesting a mystical-political approach to the idea of Jesus' lordship, I have sought to outline a possible synthesis that incorporates elements of both positions.

The concept of Jesus' dominion over all creation is so central to the Christian faith that it merits far more attention than it has received in contemporary Catholic Christology. As Dulles noted in an article published in 1980, the term "lordship" is "still capable of conveying to believers the religious idea of God's gracious sovereignty."⁷⁹ Balthasar and Sobrino have interpreted this term in their respective Christologies. The concept of Jesus' lordship awaits further elucidation.

⁷⁹ Dulles, "Earthen Vessels: Institution and Charism in the Church," in *Above Every Name* 155.