

Liberation through Reconciliation: Jon Sobrino's Christological Spirituality. By O. Ernesto Valiente. New York: Fordham University, 2015. Pp. 272. \$95; \$35.

Many books have been written on liberation theology as a social phenomenon, often with particular attention focused on the growth of base communities or other political concerns. Others pay particular attention to specific theological questions emerging from specific historical struggles or with respect to certain outstanding leaders like the recently beatified bishop and martyr, Oscar Romero. Likewise, numerous works have analyzed the contributions of major theologians associated with liberation theology, including Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo, Ignacio Ellacuría, Leonardo Boff, and Enrique Dussel.

V. adds another name to the list of Latin American thinkers to receive focused attention in a published monograph—Jon Sobrino. V. joins a group of impressive North American interpreters that includes Harvey Cox, Robert McAfee Brown, Rebecca Chopp, George McGovern, Roger Haight, Roberto Goizueta, and Michael Lee, among others, who explore the deep logic and fundamental method of liberation theology while unfolding that logic primarily in the work of one major thinker. In so doing, V. has produced one of the most lucid and important books on liberation theology in years.

Although this volume is not the first book-length monograph on the theology of Jon Sobrino, it is the first study of this quality to offer an original interpretation of the Salvadoran Jesuit, one of the most prolific and influential Catholic theologians of his generation and the most important commentator on the witness of Archbishop Romero. Moreover, Sobrino achieved notoriety after receiving a “notification” from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) for “certain imprecisions and errors” said to be found in his two-volume Christology. Hence, his writings are of interest for anyone exploring the issue of theology, power, and ecclesiastical sanctions in the post-conciliar situation. All this makes the publication of this work especially timely and welcome.

V. offers a fresh exploration of liberation theology that includes a thoughtful and succinct reflection on the historical context of El Salvador, including its protracted civil wars with its numerous victims and martyrs. His unique contribution emerges at the intersection of two complementary viewpoints. First, directly confronting historical suffering, V. produces a masterful reflection on liberation theology through the soteriological lens of reconciliation. Naturally, liberation theology (as its name implies) primarily views Christian faith through historical liberation, which in turn serves as its primary analogue for salvation. “Reconciliation,” although not at cross-purposes with liberation, represents a different metaphor for and approach to salvation. Moreover, as V. significantly notes, proposals for a “theology of reconciliation” were put forward by powerful Latin American opponents of liberation theology who wanted to blunt and co-opt that movement’s energy and achievements.

Second, while considering liberation through the lens of reconciliation gives a whole new perspective to the praxis of liberation and the meaning of liberation theology, viewing reconciliation through the lens of liberation and, above all, through “the preferential option for the oppressed, marginalized and materially poor” sheds light on

a whole new theological understanding and spiritual experience of the grace of reconciliation. As a crucial Christian symbol, reconciliation typically receives attention from a wide range of other disciplines (moral theology, social ethics, sacramental theology, political theory, sociology, psychology, social psychology, and the like). V. complements these approaches with a theology of reconciliation that unifies themes from fundamental, systematic, and spiritual theology around the pathos of Sobrino's Christology. Analyzing reconciliation in the light of liberation enables V. to retrieve the deep soteriological valence of a term too often privatized, spiritualized, or reduced to ethics. In so doing, he initiates fresh approaches to all the central themes of theology, including God, Jesus Christ, salvation, church, history, and spirituality.

Finally, the scholars who directly impacted Vatican II, such as Marie-Dominique Chenu, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karl Rahner, highlight the need to overcome the modern schism between theology and spirituality. While addressing this challenge is not the primary object of V.'s study, his book makes important contributions to the ongoing productive confrontation with this schism. He does so precisely by lifting up Sobrino's development of a systematic theology thoroughly rooted in Christian discipleship, and a discipleship (spirituality) thoroughly rooted in historical reality. When V., like Sobrino, speaks of *liberación con espíritu*, he employs an Ignatian approach to spirituality that is precisely geared to take history with utter seriousness and thereby rediscover discipleship, the historical following of Jesus as the very essence of spirituality.

Kevin F. Burke, S.J.

Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University