

11-1-2019

Robert Lassalle-Klein, Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuria, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America

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Recommended Citation

Luzarraga, Ramon "Robert Lassalle-Klein, Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuria, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America," *Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology*. Vol. 21 : No. 2 , Article 6. (2019) :177-180

Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt/vol21/iss2/6>

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Robert Lassalle-Klein. *Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014. 376 pp. \$34.00 Paper. ISBN: 978-1-62698-063-1.

Robert Lassalle-Klein presents an intellectual history of the development of Latin American liberation theology at one of the centers of this development, El Salvador. His is also a work of intellectual archeology in which he exposes the manifold layers of this theology's composition and the diverse cultural, ecclesiological, historical, philosophical, political, spiritual, and theological sources that informed its development. The persons at the center of this theological enterprise are the Jesuit and lay professors of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) José Simeón Cañas, most notably Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., and Jon Sobrino, S.J.

The project this particular Jesuit community and university faculty attempted was not an abstract theological adventure. Its intent was to bring theology and philosophy into direct encounter with the lived reality of the Salvadoran people who were caught in the throes of an oppressive socio-political structure and of the suffering imposed by this reality. In the crossfire of a civil war, rebels fought to overthrow the status quo while the Salvadoran elites and military battled to maintain it. The Jesuits produced a concrete theology designed to do nothing less than liberate the Salvadoran people from this nexus of oppression and suffering and take them off their crosses. Ellacuría, five of his brother Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter were murdered by the Salvadoran military in 1989 as a consequence of the UCA's efforts.

This book is divided into three parts. Part One begins with a chapter on the spiritual and intellectual conversion of the Jesuits of El Salvador in the years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the Latin American bishops' Medellín conference (1968). Seeing the

shortcomings of the developmentalist agenda and the breakdown of reform movements that promised to change Salvadoran society, the Jesuits concluded that the authentic development of the people of El Salvador was consistently frustrated by an oppressive socio-political status quo. In response, the Jesuits in El Salvador transformed their self-understanding as a Roman Catholic religious congregation, the formation of their priests and brothers, and the orientation of their ministries to embrace the integral liberation of the Salvadoran people among whom they ministered. The second and third chapters illustrate how the Jesuits' conversion led to and was influenced by the founding and the work of the Universidad Centroamericana. This university, the first major Jesuit apostolate in El Salvador, was built to fulfill this new mission. It was not meant simply to educate and train students, but to conscientize the students and, through its research and outreach programs, the people of El Salvador, as to their authentic identity as human beings with God-given dignity. The UCA's work, led by Ellacuría, gave El Salvador a new means of analyzing the concrete social and political situation of the country; it proposed either the means toward finding a just solution or concrete proposals to help solve El Salvador's myriad problems and to nurture and support the institutions of civil society outside of government as a "Third Force" to develop a more just society. The third chapter surveys the history of successes, failures, and great suffering the UCA's faculty and Jesuit community went through to fulfill this mission, especially during the Salvadoran Civil War.

Part Two is the theoretical heart of the book. Its four chapters provide a superb, densely detailed summary of the fundamental theology of Ellacuría, which was the major catalyst behind the work of the Jesuits and the UCA explained in Part One. The first chapter is an exposition of the spiritual foundation of the Jesuits' and Ellacuría's work. Miguel Elizondo, S.J.'s interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, applied over a series of Central

American provincial retreats, opened Ellacuría and his brother Jesuits to see their vocation as Jesuits as a concrete and historicized call from God to meet the crucified people of El Salvador, take them off their cross, and accompany them into God's future of freedom and life. The next three chapters in Part Two speak to what Lassalle-Klein argues are the four most important figures who influenced the development of Ellacuría's theology: the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Ellacuría's brother Jesuit, the theologian Karl Rahner, and the man whom Rahner described as his own teacher, German the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Here Lassalle-Klein demonstrates how Ellacuría melds their thought with Romero's pastoral example to love and trust the poor and their lived experience, to articulate an understanding of the human person as an integrated metaphysical being, able in time, in history, and in everyday living to "apprehend the absolute dimension of reality," to see God's activity mediated in and through the world, and to respond to God acting through and among the poor in their concrete, daily lived experiences.

Part Three addresses a theological question. How do Ellacuría and his Jesuit UCA colleague Jon Sobrino speak about having faith in Jesus Christ in the face of a suffering people who, throughout the history of El Salvador, have witnessed their hopes dashed, their aspirations for a better life crushed, and their lives prematurely cut short by poverty and murder? Their answer is a contextual christology. Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection are a sign of God's incarnate Word. Human beings encounter Jesus in concrete human history and are invited to respond to him. If human beings say yes to Jesus, they affirm a relationship to his continuing presence in human history, which endures today and will continue until the Second Coming. This affirmation of Jesus' identity, and entering into relationship with him, mean that one must respond to his call to remove the poor from their crosses. Human history and salvation history

become one because the coming of Jesus is not an isolated, one-off event in the past, but a constant. Lassalle-Klein argues that Ellacuría and Sobrino's findings carry value for all contextual theologies working in historical, political, and social contexts that resemble El Salvador's either in whole or in part.

Many will profit from reading this book: professors and graduate students working in fundamental theology, liberation theology, Latin American intellectual history, and the theology of Ellacuría and Rahner. The book also offers to theologians and philosophers a useful summary and expansion of the core ideas of Xavier Zubiri and how those got applied by the person Zubiri himself hailed as "his best student." Advanced undergraduate majors in theology and philosophy will find this book a challenging but rewarding read in preparation for thesis work or graduate study. Lassalle-Klein's extensive and generous footnotes invite and assist the reader in navigating, understanding, and researching the complex interplay of thought presented in *Blood and Ink*. Regardless of whether readers may agree or disagree with all or part of Lassalle-Klein's analysis or conclusions concerning Ellacuría's and Sobrino's theological project, they will complete the book knowing they have received an education.

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