



Theology Department
Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology

“WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG”:
A Theological Synthesis of the Christian
Understanding of Suffering and Hope

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Madrid, June 2016

*For those whose
suffering has
been the fount of hope
of Christ on earth.*

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I. Introduction

1. *Nature and Purpose of the Study*

“When I am weak, then I am strong” (cf. 2 Cor 12:10): these words of the Apostle Paul will resound in the whole of the study as we traverse the reality of suffering and the mystery of hope that gives every man a sense of meaning and direction towards God. Indeed, suffering can be valued as a vital tool that will lead to the revelation that Christ has of God as profoundly imbued on the cross. It is then a vital function in exercising Theology from the revealed mystery of Christ crucified and a deeper acknowledgement of how God has been taking part in the reality of life in the whole of human history. It is therefore an invitation to look up to the cross and be formed in the unique history of salvation where we become imitators of the Crucified¹, the eternal Word of God, who assumed our life and our death as his own, in our sufferings and joys, despair and hope so that, through his death, we may become co-partakers in God’s eternal life. The Sacred Scriptures is a strong testimony of this love God has for us. Through Christ, salvation is revealed by his Church up to this time onwards (DV 7).

From a personal remark, this initiative brings me to comprehend and, in the same manner, awakens my sense of understanding suffering as a way of God’s revelation of his love and hope for men — to live like St. Paul before the mystery of the cross and the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:11) and be able to transmit in any possible means his salvific presence amidst the hopelessness and complexities of the world. Being brought up in a world where poverty is a focal problem and the calamities which our nation and in everywhere destruct the potential capacity of man to live a life worthy of being human, I myself would ask, where is God when human beings suffer? : a question that can also be heard from the news or even from the people that surround me. Where is God in the unending wars, in the suffering refugees, in the crises (both spiritual and sociopolitical and economic), in the Nazi concentration camp, in hungry people of Africa, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing, in the World Trade Center September 11 terrorist attack, etc.? Where is God in my deepest troubles? Questions that are hard to answer. In my pastoral life, only silence leads me to every query of every person I encounter. However, God is with us; he loves and saves us and, hence, suffering has something to say: it has something to teach and

¹ K. RAHNER, *Dio e Rivelazione*, Rome 1981, 231-250.

to tell us. It must have a purpose and it should be contained in the mystery of our existence with God. Our pastoral action and mission should bring the message of hope of God for us by looking at Christ who also suffered and died to show us of God's constant communion with his people and that through our presence and our mission, we convey the presence of God as his instruments of love for one another.

Henceforth, this paper would try to discover the real image of God in the world where suffering exists: a God who is in constant solidarity with us, who suffers for us and who does not punish us for our sins (rejecting our false conception of God in the Old Testament), rather, God's new covenant in Christ, in his incarnation, his passion, death and resurrection proves that our God offers the sense of human suffering. Through this, the hope of salvation and liberation becomes a consolation for all especially to those who have faith in him. Moreover, it presents to us how God becomes sensible to human suffering and how the presence of Christ gives us the courage to hope in a God who also suffers in his life and death because of his love for us. He becomes the strength in our weaknesses: "He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1Pe 2:24). Therefore, our God is a God of hope in the midst of our suffering that Christ himself brought us. He is the way who leads and brings us to the eternal happiness with the Father. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). She, the Church, in her sacraments and mission and through our participation, the hope of God, is made present in the world amidst suffering and the hope in the salvific design of God in our history.

Furthermore, the nature of this synthesis is fundamentally rooted from the theological expositions learned throughout the whole period of the academic formation. This has an aim of responding to the need of comprehending the most profound roots of the reality of his/her faith. By utilizing the fundamental modes of the theological method,² this paper would try to achieve its finality by giving the real essence of the Truth that faith has manifested from the revelation (the Sacred Scriptures and the Magisterium): the *auditus fidei*. Moreover, it aims to internally and systematically base its fundamental exposition from Christ Crucified as a central element in the promise of salvation and from there we can reconsider its Trinitarian dimension vis-à-vis its own manner of transmitting it to human experience. This is dogmatically rooted in the

² Á. CORDOVILLA, *El Ejercicio de Teología*, Salamanca 2007, 99-109.

intellectus fidei. Lastly, the hope that is brought by the mystery of Christ's suffering is better expressed in the life of men through the active participation of the Church in the salvific mission of God through her sacraments, liturgical celebrations, and Christian formation (*actio fidei*). To concretely establish the method, this study commences from operating the concept of suffering and hope by centering it to the suffering of Christ on the cross—revealing from it the wisdom and power of God (cf. 1 Cor 1-2). Secondly, it envisages the idea of the hopeful response of God in the suffering of his creation. Thirdly, it conveys a sense of hope in the eschatological process in the definitive consummation as a new creation.

2. Suffering Defined

In a general sense, suffering may be defined as “a serious pain which a person feels in their body or their mind... things that cause them pain or unhappiness.”³ Or, it is “any experience that contradicts man's wishes and arouses unpleasant feelings, as adversity, trouble, sickness, persecution, etc.”⁴

However, suffering is understood in Theology in a diverse perspective but of a singular centrality, which is God through the suffering of Christ. This theme embraces all areas of Theology and it needs a deeper sense of interpretation. It can be understood as a generic concept that brings out a very painful experience and picturing out that the history of humanity is a chain of an infinite pain.⁵ This could provoke the sensation that human suffering can be a strong confrontation against the existence of God. Although this concept will be broadly discussed on the following chapters, it is but proper to give a more specific and general definition to the very understanding of suffering in distinct Christian theological contexts.

In the context of faith, Sacred Scriptures take it seriously the reality of suffering.⁶ The Old Testament is replete with mourning, afflictions and grievances against natural and social upheavals that bring out a strong reaction from the people against their leader (Gen 41:55) and prophets against tyrannies. There were even moanings against God (e.g., Ex 2:23ff; 14:10; Jg 3:9). However, the judgment

³ J. SINCLAIR (ed.), *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, London 1988, 1462.

⁴ J. STEINMUELLER-K. SULLIVAN, *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia. Old Testament*, New York 1956, 1041.

⁵ G. LANGEMEYER, *Sufrimiento*, in: W. BEINERT, *Diccionario de teología dogmática*, Barcelona 1990, 669-670.

⁶ X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Vocabulario de Teología Bíblica*, Barcelona ²1972, 872-877.

pronounced on suffering does not point out to evil itself. Although it is so much evident in the Book of Job (14:1) and other experiences of pain and hopelessness about life's miseries and even up to questioning and even cursing God of it,⁷ still it directs towards its sense on the mystery of God that could hardly be encountered in an abstract doctrine or consoling responses but rather to have a sufficient reason to also live in suffering without desperation and giving up of its sense of humanity.⁸ On the other hand, sin is also instilled as one of the major causes of suffering (i.e., Prv 13:8; Gn 12:17ff; Js 7:6-13) and even those who are dear to God are not spared from suffering.⁹ However, we find God rescuing his people from different kinds of affliction and curing them in the coming messianic era (i.e., Sir 38; Is 33:24; 26:19; 29:18; 61:2; 19:22; 53:4).

On the other hand, we encounter a transforming image and meaning of suffering in the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is not far from the suffering of humanity (i.e., Mt 11:4; cf. Lk 4:18ff, etc.) because he does not only cure physical suffering or deliver one from social exclusions but he also cures the spirit of men who have led themselves away from God and consoles them (Jn 11:21-32). His passion, death, and resurrection make perfect his salvific mission. Moreover, St. Paul was made as excellent imitator of Christ in his sufferings as an apostle (Gal 6:17; 1 Cor 2 2:1-5; 2 Cor 11:23-29; Phil 1:30; 2 Tim 1:11-12; etc). His teachings on suffering become a model for every Christian community: suffering as a result of identifying themselves with Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 29-30; 2 Tim 3:12) in faith, hope and love and to share in his glory (Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 4:14; 2 Thes 1:7) This attitude implies a calling to conversion, purification of sinful habits, fidelity in the true exercise of freedom, united in the salvific work of Christ and self-sacrificial love.¹⁰

Furthermore, in considering the personal dimensions of suffering, we can define it as “a specific state of severe distress induced by the loss of integrity, intactness, cohesiveness, or wholeness of a person, or by a threat that the person believes will result in the dissolution of his or her integrity.”¹¹ In this manner, we find personal reactions in

⁷ Cf. Am 3:6; Is 1:8; Ps 10:4; 14:1; 73:11; Job 2:9.

⁸ A. BONORA, *Mal/Dolor*, in: P. ROSSANO-G. RAVASI-A. GIRLANDA (dirs.), *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Madrid 1990, 1095-1096.

⁹ Let us consider the characters of Abraham (Gn 22); Job (1,11; 2:5); Tobit (12:13-15); in the case of Jeremiah's conversion (Jer 15:10-19) and in a profound experience of sacrifice and suffering of the Servant of Yahweh in Is 53.

¹⁰ J. M. MCDERMOTT, *Sufrimiento*, in: R. LATOURELLE-R. FISICHELLA-S. PIÉ-NINOT, *Diccionario de Teología Fundamental*, Madrid 1992, 1400.

¹¹ E. J. CASELL, *Pain and Suffering*, in: W. T. REICH (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* vol. 4, New York 1995, 1899.

three factors:¹² our concrete personality (sensitivity to physical or moral suffering); our culture (which manifests from our own compartments); and our concrete faith (a personalized faith). Hence, it is an essential meaning of suffering for every person to be compassionate with the one who suffers –a sympathy and nearness to one’s pain–¹³ until when the eschatological victory brought by Christ is fulfilled: for God “will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away” (Rv 21:4).

3. Why is there suffering?: A Philosophico-Theological Overview

Suffering is a mysterious part of man’s life. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (1984), is very much insistent on drawing the whole topic in questioning the existence of evil in the world with “*why?*” The pontiff said that “It is a question about the cause, the reason, and equally, about the purpose of suffering, and, in brief, a question about its meaning” (SD 9). Suffering may be differentiated from pain but everything boils down to the concept of evil. Henceforth, let us not set aside the reality of hopelessness that surrounds us: hunger, war, infanticide, problem on immigration, sickness, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, poverty, etc.

Augustine’s notion of suffering asserts on his idea of sin in order to protect God from being accused of as origin of evil and suffering. He claims that, “all the evils in the world, this includes pain and suffering as well as moral evil, is caused by sin and the punishment for sin.”¹⁴ On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas creates two distinctions:¹⁵ the natural evil (*malum poenae*) and the moral evil (*malum culpae*). The former is immediately construed on understanding causality, as a consequence and an accidental form, the harmony of the universe also causes the corruption of things (ST I, 49, 2). In other words, it is a loss of a necessary part for the integrity of one thing. The latter has its sole origin on humans alone caused by his deficient will in act that does not correspond to the rules (ST I, 49, 1, a.3). However, God is not the direct cause of moral evil though he permits it only for man to exist and preserve his liberty. Through the

¹² C. A. BERNARD, *Sufrimiento. Enfoque teológico*, in: J. C. BERMEJO–F. ÁLVAREZ (dirs.), *Pastoral de la Salud y Bioética*, Madrid 2009, 1680-1681.

¹³ E. BUCH CAMÍ, *Sufrimiento*, in: M. MORENO VILLA, *Diccionario de Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, Madrid 1997, 1130.

¹⁴ *Confessionum*, 7.3 (5) CSEL 33, 144 as cited by J. WONG, *Christianity and Human Suffering in this World, with Special Emphasis on St. Augustine's Doctrine on Original Sin*, Rome 1988, 20.

¹⁵ R. RYAN, *Sufrimiento*, en L. DIEZ MORENO–R. RYAN–A. LIPPI (dirs.), *Pasión de Jesucristo*, Madrid 2015, 1257.

original sin, the originary justice is lost and thus causes the soul in its nature as ignorant, weak, malicious, and replete with concupiscence and thus he is subject to death and all forms of suffering. On the other hand, God does not suffer change, as it may be contrary to his nature, in his being immutable and impassible. Hence, God has compassion to his creatures, alleviating them from their suffering and being close to them through the incarnation of Jesus.

However, suffering has also led to the question of God and his attributions. Categories of interpretations have also emerged:¹⁶ Marxism coins it to alienation, exploitation, class conflict, etc. (evil is universally present in the nature as a motor itself, a “spirit” of the material); “absurd character” is how Sartre and Camus would describe it; Max Weber’s theory on the Religious Rejections of the World¹⁷ commences from the frustration of the expectations of the sense and that it requires suffering to search for transcendence. From the perspectives in the Rational Theodicy¹⁸, we underline Leibniz’ rational construction of the best of all possible worlds and Hegel’s theodicy of history. For Leibniz, evil and suffering are concomitant phenomenon essential to lift the whole to a higher position. Rational laws of non-contradiction and composability bind God’s will.¹⁹ Thus, in the best possible world suffering can be justified in the ultimate goodness of the whole. On the other hand, Hegel’s logic of history always corresponds to the will of God (which Feuerbach and Marx hardly accept). However, moving to Nietzsche,²⁰ his expression “God is dead” denies the vital power in the interior of man. So he stretches out his argument towards the necessity of the “Will to Power,” a desire for life that is personally constructed towards his/her own happiness.

On the other hand, we also find relevant Viktor Frankl’s take on suffering: “If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human

¹⁶ J. GEVAERT, *El Problema del hombre. Introducción a la Antropología filosófica*, Salamanca 1981, 268.

¹⁷ R. N. BELLAH, *Max Weber and World-Denying Love: A Look at the Historical Sociology of Religion*: Journal of the American Academy of Religion Vol. 67, No. 2, (June 1999), 277-304.

¹⁸ G. DE SCHRIJVER, *From Theodicy to Anthropology. The Contemporary Acceptance of Nietzsche and the Problem of Suffering*, in: J. LAMBRECHT–R. F. COLLINS (eds.), *God and Human Suffering*, Louvain 1992, 95-119.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 96.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 102-103.

life cannot be complete.”²¹ The suffering of “I” has a sense and “the acquisition of the capacity of suffering is an act of Self-configuration.”²²

Therefore, suffering is a very complex question that transcends the anthropological category of man and requires a reflection not to reveal its ultimate cause but to give it a profound sense in which this paper tries to develop.

²¹ V. FRANKL, *Man's Search for Meaning*, New York 1985, 88.

²² V. FRANKL, *El hombre doliente. Fundamentos antropológicos de la psicoterapia*, Barcelona 1987, 250.

PART ONE

GOD: HOPE IN A SUFFERING WORLD

II. Suffering of the Son of God

1. *Suffering as Christological access to a historical knowledge of God*

a. *Questions on Jesus and the tasks of Christology*

In Theology, we introduce the concept of faith as an intrinsic moment that seeks to comprehend. The expression of St. Augustine unrelentingly emphasizes that in our way towards understanding or acquiring the knowledge of God is faith and understanding is its reward: “Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”¹ In order to attain such illumination on this quest of faith, we look over to what Christology can offer. Christology is being defined as “the branch of theology which deals about taking into account in a reasoned and articulated way for the present time the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God, in which this belief in the aim of truth may be publicly viable.”² The centrality of this discipline can be observed through the revelation of the truth of God and of man that Christology can offer. Hence, it is very much relevant to dig deeper into who Jesus is as Christ (Mt 16:16; 20:31; 1 Jn 2:22; Acts 9:22) by means of drawing from his personal history (his life and deeds) and his proposition of universal truth: his historical reality as Jesus, his salvific role in the people of God as the Messiah and the Christ, and his very relation with God as the Son.³ In this manner, the confession of Jesus as Christ remits to the understanding of Jesus of Nazareth as Christ sent by God, one and only, and irreplaceable. In view of this, the confession projects that he is the Messiah anointed by the Holy Spirit, the salvation of all and history’s eschatological fullness.⁴

We find such outspoken contemporary problems in Christology on shattering the unity of the humanity and the *Logos* of Christ: a “new Nestorianism” or “neonestorianism.”⁵ The Gospels reflect the certainty that Jesus is the only begotten Son and that he was sent by the Father for the salvation of the world. The humanity of the Son is true and singular. Therefore, for Christology to be sustainable, the sufficiency of

¹ F. A. MURPHY–B. M. MEZEI–K. OAKES, *Illuminating Faith. An Invitation to Theology*, New York 2015, 11-13.

² G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología-Soteriología-Mariología*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La Lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 279.

³ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Cristología*, Madrid 2001, 3-4.

⁴ Cf. W. KASPER, *Jesús, el Cristo*, Salamanca 2006, 40.

⁵ Cf. G. URÍBARRI, *La singular humanidad de Jesucristo. El tema mayor de la cristología contemporánea*, Madrid 2008, 58-62; 388-394.

the reflected and developed self-consciousness about his identity and mission must be given. Throughout history, the study of Christology was weighed down by putting more pertinence to the ontological aspect which led to a drain of the significance of the truth and the life of the Incarnate. Moreover, the preoccupation for stressing the historical axis leads to a consideration of Jesus' humanity without stressing the ontological aspect of the incarnation. Hence we find the need for the kerygmatic reading of Jesus of Nazareth relevant in trying to recover the very essence of the unity and the integrity of the humanity, the salvific promise, the history of Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Word Incarnate.⁶

b. The Suffering of the Son of God gives light to challenges in Christology

In our attempt to emphasize the value of the suffering of Christ in the development of our Christological understanding, we underline the gist of Christology from the ontological axis of the historical Jesus with a kerygmatic reading in considering Jesus in the context of faith provided by revelation through the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition. God has come to us through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He also experienced crying, pain, and death: he is also flesh. His suffering on the cross illumines the darkness of our immense doubt as to how God puts himself in solidarity with men. In our way of presenting Christ incarnate who also suffers with and for men, we can trace the mystery of the Word incarnate in his life, his suffering and death on the cross, and his resurrection. The message of the cross of Christ becomes a fundamental identity of the first Christian community and from the cross to the resurrection and the exaltation; the image of Christ crucified and resurrected becomes the central and pertinent element in the practice of faith and worship of every Christian.

By giving value to the suffering of Christ, we encounter the reality of suffering as a way of redemption and that through suffering, Christ redeems us. Suffering already has a sense of salvation because Christ assumed it and triumphed over it: "We must hold that what is said, that the Lord of glory was crucified (1 Cor 2:8), cannot be understood in respect of Him being the Lord of glory, but in respect of this that He was a human being who could suffer."⁷ From the historical point of view, we find that the death of Christ on the cross seems insignificant given the fact that it represents failure,

⁶ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 282-286.

⁷ ST IIIa q.46 a.12 ad 1 as cited by M.-R. HOOGLAND, *God, Passion and Power. Thomas Aquinas on Christ Crucified and the Almighty of God*, Peeters Leuven 2003, 78.

but that on our way of following Jesus and exercising our faith, we look up to the victory of Christ from his suffering, death, and his resurrection: God was with him throughout his earthly existence, but did not let the accompanying suffering to triumph; rather, he was constituted the Lord and Judge to bring us to his glory. Thus, by giving significance to suffering which the Son of God has proved meaningful, we can see the great love he has for us. In the Last Supper and on the cross, this love of God for us is given and overflows on us (via the marks of his wounds and unbearable pains), to triumph over the yokes of our sins and to liberate us.⁸ In this manner, our understanding of suffering becomes a mode of presenting more systematically its Christological dimension from the historical Jesus to the Christ of our faith which Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition have their great involvement.

2. The Suffering of Christ brings Hope to Suffering Humanity

a. Christ's Life and Ministry

H.S. Reimarus' idea of the correct understanding of Jesus, considering that there is a great disruption between the preaching of Jesus and the later preaching of his disciples, means situating him in the constraints of the Jewish period, making it a springboard of the whole period of Christ's preaching.⁹ The beginning of the public ministry of Jesus is linked to that of John the Baptist as his disciplines formed a question that would signify a big pretension of the messiahship of Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (Mt 11:3). Jesus' response in verse 5 ("the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them") may appear indirect but it deals with the messianic signs of the epoch. On the other hand, we also note Jesus' interrogation regarding his identity that provokes his disciples' knowledge of him. Peter would lucidly reveal: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter said in reply, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'" (Mt 16:15-16). Jesus brings hope and includes the poor in his authentication of the Gospel. This projects the fact that the future of the Kingdom of God is at hand in him and with him: the messianic

⁸ Cf. G. URÍBARRI, *La singular humanidad*, 54-56.

⁹ Cf. G. URÍBARRI, *Un resumen condensado de la pretensión de Jesús: La respuesta a los discípulos del Bautista (Mt 11,2-6 y Lc 7, 18-23)*: *Proyección* 221 (2006) 45.

hope of the kingdom.¹⁰ The baptism of Jesus with the anointing by the Holy Spirit initiates the messianic ministry of Jesus (cf. Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14; Acts 10:37-38).

On the other hand, one of the characteristics of Jesus' tradition in his centrality is the announcement of the Kingdom of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). Both Mk 1:14-15¹¹ and Mt 4:17 signify that the Kingdom of God is already at hand. The history of Israel is at its peak at the coming of Christ where God is now fulfilling his promises¹² just as Is 52:6-7 had described the reign of God. The Old Testament also testifies to the message of Jesus as according to the divine promises and the prophetic hope (in the context of expectation)¹³ that describe an eschatological renewal of Israel. This kingdom is associated in the figure of God as Father (which is explicit in the Our Father) and Jesus' trust and obedience to the Father and his kingdom, which brings us the hope of the *parousia* where he is identified as the exalted *kyrios*.¹⁴ Hence, Jesus is the Messenger of the coming of the Kingdom, the Revealer of its content and demands, and the expressive Figure and Place to where man can have a full access.¹⁵

The evangelical figure of Jesus and his bringing of an eschatological realization can be directly and inseparably recognized in the miracles done by Jesus. We find in the accounts of his curing the sick his victory over sin: healing the sick (Mk 1:34), or healing all peoples (Mt 8:16) or the realization of the Old Testament's promise which per Mt 11:5-6 is recapitulated: "the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." We also encounter the expulsion of demons from the possessed persons in which Jesus'

¹⁰ J. MOLTMANN, *El Dios crucificado. El Dios crucificado. La cruz de Cristo como base y crítica de la teología cristiana*, Salamanca ³2009, 126-127.

¹¹ Mark, in his presentation of the emergence of the Kingdom of God, wanted to show that the Kingdom of God is not reduced only to a concrete space but to all (S. GUIJARRO, *Los cuatro evangelios*, Salamanca 2010, 227).

¹² J. L. SICRE, *De David al Mesías*, Estella 1995, 407-417.

¹³ Dunn recapitulates the following expectations that may have provoked among Jews in the projection of Jesus' kingdom: the hope of return from the exile (Deut 30:1-10), renewed and abundant prosperity (Deut 30:5,9), restoration of paradise (Is 11:6-8; Ez 36:35; 1 En 25:4-6, etc.); the hope of the "messianic age"; a renewed covenant (Is 44:3-4; Jer 31:31-34; Ez 36:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:1; Zech 14:16-21; etc.); the return of Yahweh to Zion (Is 24:23; Ez 43:2-7; Zech 2:10-12; Mal 3:1; etc.); Israel's vindication and some speculation and disagreement on the future of other nations/Gentiles; broadening of inheriting the land (Is 60:21); a climatic period of tribulation (Dan 12:1-2); cosmic disturbances (Is 13:9-10; Jer 4:23; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; etc.); the hope for a defeat of Satan and evil; final judgment; belief in the resurrection as thought explicitly in the latter half of the Second Temple period; Sheol/Hades as place of retribution for the wicked. For further discussion, see J. D. G. DUNN, *Jesus Remembered* vol. 1, Grand Rapids 2003, 393-396.

¹⁴ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 317.

¹⁵ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *o.c.*, 49.

exorcism signals the triumph of God's kingdom over Satan's (we utilize for example Lk 11:19-20/Mt 12:27-28 in which the two key terms are noted—spirit/kingdom of God: “But if it is by the finger of God that [I] drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” which brings out a message of Jesus' liberation of his people from the slavery of Satan). Jesus also manifested the image of the kingdom in his giving food to those who are hungry and healing the disciples' fear during the tempest on the lake. The synoptic Gospels recount 20 miracles of Jesus for the benefit of one or of a group, and the Johannine Gospel adds 8 miracle episodes that characterize the prodigious character of Jesus.¹⁶ Furthermore, the power of God in humiliation, concealment, ambiguity, and human scandal appear in the miracles of Jesus.¹⁷ They also serve as an invitation for the following of Christ and do miracles like him (Mk 6:7; Mt 10:1; Lk 9:1). Lastly, the miracles of Jesus are the signs for the faith in which miracles and faith go hand-in-hand¹⁸ and that faith is trusting in the omnipotence and providence of God.

The context of the teachings of Jesus has its nucleus on the coming of the Kingdom (cf. Lk 17:21). The eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus is summarized in the beatitudes (Mt 13:16-17; Lk 10:23-24). Jesus also employs parables: “With many much parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it” (Mk 4:33). Thus, there is a need to hear, believe, and understand the words of Jesus not from a mere tradition or theory but through the hearer who takes them from the bosom of the world where the Kingdom is planted.¹⁹ It can be remitted to everyday experiences: the grain of fruit, the sowing and harvesting, the treasure and the pearl (presence of the Kingdom), the fig tree and the vineyard, the farmer and the owner of the house, the coming of the groom or the thief (futuristic character). This becomes an overture to the questioning of the messiahship of Jesus: “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (Lk 9:18).

The majestic titles of Jesus as the “Messiah,” the “Lord,” “Son of Man” and the “Son of God” among others require people's direct conception of Jesus, their attribution to him and the quiet realization of his existence in the light of his mission.²⁰ The Gospels put into the lips of Jesus the title of the Messiah²¹ as a fulfillment of the Old

¹⁶ Cf. R. FABRIS, *Jesús de Nazaret. Historia e interpretación*, Salamanca 1992, 135-136.

¹⁷ Cf. Mt 11:6; 12:27; Mk 3:22.

¹⁸ Cf. W. KASPER, *o.c.*, 163-165.

¹⁹ G. BORNKAMM, *Jesús de Nazaret*, Salamanca 1975, 74-75.

²⁰ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *o.c.*, 72.

²¹ Reimarus would posit it as Jesus' interpretation of himself as a political messiah; W. Wrede and R. Bultmann maintain their idea of the messiah in the Gospels as a dogmatic addition to the christian community while Schweitzer, rejecting the idea of non-messianic life of Jesus of Wrede and Bultmann,

Testament promises. This perception, together with the announcing of the coming of the Kingdom (the Son of Man—earthly, suffering, and heavenly) in his soteriological and eschatological dimensions are perceived in the messianic conception of Jesus,²² which opens to a Trinitarian perspective of his messianic kingship as *Kyrios* (in his enthronement at the right hand of the Father in Ps 110:1 as equally divine; the *kenosis* (hymn of Phil 2:6-11, his hyper-exaltation as the Lord) and the divine filiation (ontological perspective of the Son of God) reveal the profound identity of Jesus, the Son sent by the Father, incarnated through the power of the Holy Spirit, died and resurrected that, through the love and the surrendering of the Son, he may reveal the mystery of God and make us as adopted sons through the Holy Spirit.²³ Jesus becomes the knowledge, the authority and the judgment of God. All who will invoke in his name will be saved (cf. Hos 3:5; Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13) and thus the salvific presence of God is made in his death and resurrection.

b. *Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross*

There is no doubt that Jesus died violently²⁴ on the cross. The kerygmatic version tells us: “who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets” (1Thes 2:15); this is affirmed in a theologically influenced pronouncement: “This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him” (Acts 2:23). We find that the motives of the conflict and death of Christ is his message of God and Jesus’ very own identity which entered into conflict with the circle of leaders of his people but that the decisive scandal is not on his personal attitude over the people but on his pretension supplements his act in the name and on behalf of God.²⁵ H. Schürmann²⁶ has already posited the possibility of the death of Jesus from the scandals he generated in the Jewish society. The message of the coming of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus was contrary to all messianic options hoped for by the Jewish people, especially since Jesus does not adhere to Pharisaic interpretation and the theocratic projects of groups such as the Sadducees and the Zealots.

accepts the *titulus crucis* (Mk 15:26 par) as an illuminating motive of the death of Christ (W. KASPER, *Jesús, el Cristo*, 175-176).

²² G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología*, 332. We also take into full consideration the soteriological interpretation of Jesus’ death in the Last Supper.

²³ *Ibid.*, 346.

²⁴ Cf. Lk 13:34 and par; 11:49 and par; Mk 12:6-8.

²⁵ H. KESSLER, *Manual de Cristología*, Barcelona 2003, 72.

²⁶ H. SCHÜRMAN, *El destino de Jesús: su vida y su muerte*, Salamanca 2003, 121.

We have to develop such exposition by mounting some fundamental factors that led to the accusation of Jesus up to his death on the cross. It is but apt to reflect on both religious and political condemnations.²⁷ The religious condemnation posits the Jewish authorities' accusation of him against the interpretations of the Torah (specifically Dt 13 and other related passages and their rabbinic interpretations) and the agenda at that time that point to the thinking that Jesus "leads Israel astray."²⁸ This includes (1) the messianic claim of Jesus which creates a scandal against Jewish teachings such as his message of the kingdom, his knowledge of the Torah, the will of God, and the like as seen in the interrogations before the high priest (viz. accusations against Jesus as a false prophet who led astray the people of Israel and for blasphemy in claiming himself the "Son of God" [Jn 19:7]) on his Christic identity;²⁹ before the soldiers' mockery (Mk 15:17-20); before the mockery of the high priests and the magistrates (i.e.: Mk 51:31); before the question "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Mk 15:2; Jn 18:33) of Pontius Pilate and the *titulus crucis*. (2) His critique of the Temple shows his intention to end it by proclaiming an end to the sacrificial and liturgical operations, speaking "false" prophecies against the Temple and confessing his messianic aspirations: "You will see the 'son of man' 'sitting at the right hand of Power' (the new eon) and coming on the clouds of heaven."³⁰ Such is that it becomes the "blow against the central symbol not only of national life but also of Yahweh's presence with his people."³¹ Crucifixion as a Roman charge means maximum degradation and humiliation for those accused as rebels against Rome.³² On the other hand, there is the political condemnation of Jesus done under the authority of Pontius Pilate not only for the sake of civil peace but also to placate the gods of Rome from whom the *pax Romana* emanates.³³ The *titulus crucis* conveys paradoxically the official, juridical, and political authority of the messianic identity of Jesus. This entails that worldly power cannot lead to the knowledge of the truth and thus cannot have its own definitive eschatological validity.

The eschatological perspective of the death of Jesus is clear in the Last Supper account (Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-25): the story of Jesus' life and the eventuality of his death during the Passover meal. This account does not only determine

²⁷ G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología*, 296-300.

²⁸ N. T. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Minneapolis 1996, 547-552.

²⁹ Mt 26:63; Lk 22:67.

³⁰ Mt 26:64/Mk 14:62; cf. Lk 22:69.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 551.

³² *Ibid.*, 543-544.

³³ J. SOBRINO, *Jesucristo liberador. Lectura histórico-teológica de Jesús de Nazaret*, Madrid 1991, 270.

the imminent death of Jesus but also foresees the coming of the *basileia tou Theou*.³⁴ The words proclaimed by Jesus contain a theological essence of the Eucharist as “body surrendered and blood shed” that will be given up for “you” that speaks of the new covenant offered by Christ.³⁵ Just as the old covenant used blood to seal it, Christ’s blood is offered for God’s new covenant as the Servant of Yahweh.³⁶ The body offered is for the *many* which connotes a sacrifice for all.³⁷ We also encounter in the words of Jesus the formula “*hypér*”³⁸ or “*peri*” (Mt 28:28, “because of”), which means “for,” “in favor of,” “in defense of.” Hence, the death of Jesus is identified with that of the one who suffered and died as Servant of Yahweh for the purpose of service and self-surrender for the Kingdom of God. Jesus anticipated and interpreted his death as offering and intercession for all; he incorporated his universal salvific worth through the bread and wine and entrusted it as a memory to the apostles until he comes again (cf. 1 Cor 11:26) in order for men to be beneficiaries of this new covenant of the new people.³⁹

On the cross, these words were heard from the lips of Jesus, “‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’” which is translated, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46). Jesus used this line from Ps 22: a lamentation that ends in thanksgiving. In the suffering, one experiences the abandonment of God. However, in the suffering and the anguish of death, the just feels the Lordship of God from the beginning, which saves and brings him into a new life.⁴⁰ This psalmic text becomes an expression of prayer which assures a religious man that he will be heard while he is waiting for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. Moreover, Jesus proclaims this psalm for him to assume the torment, not only of Israel, but also of all men who suffer in this world for the unfelt presence of God in their lives—identifying with Israel in pain, and the humanity who suffer for the “darkness of God” and assuming their outcry, torment, and helplessness and at the same time, transforming suffering into salvation for all.⁴¹ Moreover, this feeling of the abandonment of God in the suffering of Christ can be

³⁴ Cf. W. KASPER, *o.c.*, 199.

³⁵ G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología*, 293.

³⁶ Cf. Is 42:6; 49:8.

³⁷ J. RATZINGER–BENEDICT XVI, *Jesús de Nazaret. Desde la Entrada en Jerusalén hasta la Resurrección*, Madrid 2011, 163.

³⁸ In G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología*, 295, the emphasis of it is mainly found in 1 Cor 1:24; Lk 22:19-20; Mk 14:24.

³⁹ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *o.c.*, 91-92.

⁴⁰ Cf. W. KASPER, *o.c.*, 200.

⁴¹ Cf. J. RATZINGER–BENEDICT XVI, *o.c.*, 250.

interpreted as an event between Jesus and his Father: an event between God and God,⁴² which will be discussed further in the succeeding chapter.

The death of Christ on the cross is the supreme concretization of the coming of the eschatological Kingdom of God, a full realization of the Kingdom in this *eon* through human weakness, poverty, the love through the abandonment, the fullness in the emptiness, and the life through death.⁴³ Through the death of Christ, suffering becomes a means of strength and power through the love and obedience felt in the abandonment and the hope that is transformed alive in the eschatological promise of salvation and reconciliation of the Kingdom. The salvific meaning already had the “pre-structure” in the conduct and proclamation of Jesus that is pro-existent. This means that Christ, in his earthly existence, becomes the parable and representative of the existence of God and his Kingdom (given that the pro-existence of Jesus has its pre-existent dimension).⁴⁴

c. The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead and His Exultation

The words of Paul have a clear testimony of the pertinence of the Christian faith and human life: “And if Christ has not been raised, then empty [too] is our preaching; empty, too, your faith” (1 Cor 15:14). Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus is clearly affirmed through the Christian Paschal message as an event from the earthly world to the new and incorruptible life with God (given that this event is already taken into account and has occurred in this world).⁴⁵ The resurrection of Jesus proves his genuine Lordship over the cosmos, the history of the world and that which transformed the Christian faith when the disciples witnessed the resurrection proving that Jesus is alive and is the life-giver (1 Cor 15:44b-45).⁴⁶

The fundamental confession we have of the resurrection is 1 Cor 15:3-8⁴⁷ which was taken by Paul from the first community of Damascus or Jerusalem, probably three to six years after the death of Christ. This contains the three events of our faith: his death, resurrection, and apparition: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the

⁴² J. MOLTSMANN, *o.c.*, 182.

⁴³ W. KASPER, *o.c.*, 201.

⁴⁴ H. SCHÜRSMANN, *o.c.*, 204-205.

⁴⁵ W. PANNENBERG, *Teología sistemática II*, Madrid 1996, 389.

⁴⁶ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 301.

⁴⁷ The discussion is fundamentally outlined and reflected from G. URRIBARI, *Cristología*, 303-307.

scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3b-4). Three formulas are based from it: Christ died (which certifies his real death with reference to his burial⁴⁸) and resurrected (with reference to his apparitions) “for our sins,” “in accordance with the scriptures” and “on the third day.” “Christ died for our sins:” the formula ὑπὲρ (the salvation is for us: the gift of Christ for us, becoming “pro-existent” in his life and death for his brothers in the same way that he lives for the Father)⁴⁹ can be found together with the strong word ἁμαρτιῶν, the sin that leads us away from God. On the other hand, it mentions “that he was buried” (without mentioning the empty tomb that cannot be used as a proof of the resurrection but only as a sign and reference to it⁵⁰), determinant of a story that has already occurred. This speaks of the Christ who salvifically died for us, who was buried and is now resurrected. The expression “On the third day” connotes the element of time that covers the historicity of an empty tomb and the event of the apparitions.⁵¹ Mk 10:34; 8:31 bring us to the eschatological actuation of Yahweh with a series of testimonies. Moreover, Mt 12:40 uses the reference of the sign of Jonah, whose three-day captivity in the belly of a huge fish is also alluded to in Lk 11:29ff and Mt 16:4. It can also be paralleled with the edification of the new temple (Mk 14:58); the effect of consummation in Lk 13:32-33 or the announcement of the passion and the resurrection of Jesus. The third day evokes the eschatological actuation of Yahweh. The repetition of “according to the scriptures” underlines the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy read and seen by the very first christian communities and are all about the salvific design of God.

Moreover, the resurrected Christ lives for God (Rom 6:9ff) and he appears as exalted and filled with the divine power (Cf. Mt 28:16ff). The witnesses of the apparitions (cf. Lk 24:34; Acts 9:17; 13:31; 26:16) manifest the revelatory character of God: first to Cephas (1 Cor 15:5) which underlines his primacy and juridical authority. The Gospels such as Mk’s account of the empty tomb as witnessed by the women (including Mary Magdalene), which can be alluded as their having told later to Peter and to the Twelve.⁵² Also, Jesus appeared to five hundred brothers at once that can be thought of as the community’s relationship with the resurrected Christ. The person of James who has a leadership role in Jerusalem (Gal 1:19; Mt 13:55; Acts 12:17; etc.) is

⁴⁸ H. KESSLER, *o.c.*, 80.

⁴⁹ Cf. B. SESBOÛÉ, *Jesucristo, el único mediador: Ensayo sobre la redención y la salvación* t. I, Salamanca 1990, 133.

⁵⁰ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teología de los tres días. El Misterio Pascual*, Madrid 2000, 203.

⁵¹ Taking into consideration J. Kremer’s idea of it. Cf. *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵² Cf. J. RATZINGER–BENEDICT XVI, *o.c.*, 304-305.

also included. Then, he appeared to all the apostles and to Paul (Gal 1:11-19; 2:9; 1 Cor 9:1; Acts 9:3-9; 22:3-21; 26:12-20) who had a personal encounter with Christ and was converted to faith in Jesus, his Lord and Savior.

The tradition is firm that, on his death, Jesus' body was given an apposite burial (Mk 15:42-47 pars.). The absence of the body of Christ is a sign that, in the light of the preceding and proceeding experience of the encounter of Jesus alive, it has its own importance, that is, "those who were involved in the episode, those who experienced the impact of the event, those who in speaking of what they had thus seen and heard gave the tradition its definitive and lasting shape."⁵³ The resurrection of Jesus is a corporal resurrection.⁵⁴ This is to avoid the Christological Docetism which is contrary to the faith in the incarnation (Jn 1:14): a hypostatic union.⁵⁵ Moreover, its contrast with the crucifixion could not appear in a clearer manner: Jesus is not only risen, but is also glorified.⁵⁶ It is clearly pictured out: "which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph 1:20-21). His resurrection consists in his glorification and this is made possible because he has gone through and triumphed over the humiliating death of the cross. It is also the *firstfruits* of bringing the dead to life, the freedom from sin, law, and death.⁵⁷ The apparitions convey our vital communion with the resurrected Christ who gives us his Spirit, vivifies us through our faith, and helps us enter into the eschatological time of the believer, the sacraments, and the Church.

3. Suffering of Christ in the Salvific Design of God

a) Suffering in the New Testament Christology

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God that is the gist of the Gospel preaching of Christ reflects that God establishes a mutual relationship especially with those who suffer. The death and resurrection of Christ was fulfilled in a staurological way (his

⁵³ J. D. G. DUNN, *o.c.*, 832.

⁵⁴ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *o.c.*, 133.

⁵⁵ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 309.

⁵⁶ R. PENNA, *I ritratti originali di Gesù il Cristo. Inizi e sviluppi della cristologia neotestamentaria I. Gli inizi*, Cinisello Balsamo³1996, 194.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *La Humanidad Nueva. Ensayo de Cristología*, Santander 1984, 154-155.

death on the cross and his sacrificing of his life on the cross) that the Kingdom of God⁵⁸ is acknowledged as the kingdom of the end of time and of the salvific presence of Yahweh in his people.⁵⁹ The Kingdom of God is shown in the Gospel accounts through the person of Jesus, his words and actions (which we have already discussed): in the healing, driving out of demons (cf. Lk 13:32; Mt 12:28), bringing the dead back to life (Lk 7:16), calming of the storm (Mk 4:37-41), and the sharing of the great feast (Lk 14:15-24; Mt 22:1-10) as a part of his salvific mission.

We find the transforming image of Christ⁶⁰ as he sought out the sick and the needy without any moral recompense, prejudices, or prerequisites. He called the people into solidarity with the suffering with good deeds and hope. Moreover, it can also serve as a means of purification (repentance from sin: cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 13:3; 15:7; Acts 3:19). The suffering and death of Christ point to a new life. We have already witnessed the suffering and death of Christ: up to the arrest of Jesus (Mk 14:1-42) and from the arrest onwards (Mk 14:43-15:39/47) in which the sorrow and pain are a major part. There also, in particular, in Marcan tradition on Jesus' suffering and death: 15:24b; 29a; 34b; 35-36 basing it from Ps 22:19; 22:8; 22:2 and 69:22; in view of darkness (Mk 15:33) and the temple (Mk 15:38). The Christian communities have had a hard time understanding the crucifixion of Jesus. Even Paul testifies to the difficulty: "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:18, 23). Later, Paul's revelation of the death of Christ according to the scriptures (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8) served to explain such a mysterious event in their faith and for their salvation.

Accepting this mystery can mean that in the resurrection of Jesus, one can find God in someone who suffers even up to death on the cross.⁶¹ Take for example, in the Gospel of Mk 5:25, 29, a woman who suffered hemorrhages who has faith not only in Jesus but also in Christ who died and resurrected (referring such affliction in the suffering of Christ on the cross). The verb "to suffer" with the adverb "much" refers to both the experiences of the woman and of Jesus (cf. Mk 5:26; 18:31; 19:12). The body

⁵⁸ All deeds and words of Jesus are directly related with the proclamation of the Kingdom. Cf. R. E. BROWN, *Introducción a la Cristología del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca 2001, 41.

⁵⁹ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 294.

⁶⁰ R. MICHIELS, *Jesus and Suffering – The Suffering of Jesus*, in: J. LAMBRECHT–R. F. COLLINS (eds.), *God and Human Suffering*, Louvain 1992, 33-34.

⁶¹ R. RYAN, *Sufrimiento*, en L. DIEZ MORENO–R. RYAN–A. LIPPI (dirs.), *Pasión de Jesucristo*, Madrid 2015, 1254.

and blood in this account point out to the relationship between the two sufferings.⁶² The Paschal mystery situates the suffering of the believer in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In their worship rituals, as in the Acts of the Martyrs, the martyrs speak of Christ, the crucified man (as God and their worship of him), as they approach martyrdom.⁶³ This is seen even before in Paul's proof that his suffering and afflictions are instruments of establishing a profound union with Christ (i.e. 2 Cor 11:16-12, 10; Gal 2:19-20). The first letter of Peter gives us the idea that the sufferings of Christ reveal himself as a true example and power: "When he suffered, he did not threaten" (1 Pt 2:23); "He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24); "But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly" (1 Pt 4:13). Thus, Christians may find solace from their sufferings which is brought by Christ who was crucified, died, and was resurrected because of his love for us. It is then a matter of having a more profound faith in him in order to be a living example of this wisdom brought by Christ out of suffering.

b. Dogmatic considerations

Through the incarnation of Christ, our image of the Son (that we too are the image of Him), we are being capable of drawing ourselves to the mystery of God (from *Deus capax hominis* to *homo capax Dei*).

The councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople I (381) shed light on the ontological trinity.⁶⁴ It reflected more on the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit: in the *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Jesus is the eternal Word and the only-begotten Son. The Nicene Christological stance declares its negation on Arians' burdening of the Logos and its will with the weakness of the flesh. The idea of the Arian subordinationism is deeply rooted in emphasizing the transcendence of the ungenerated God from whom the generated Son or Logos is derived. The Father God cannot suffer and Jesus has suffered (there has to be an inferior level). On the contrary, the Nicean faith's affirmation of the *homoousious* can be conceived in a way that it fits Christ's identity but it can give a

⁶² E. ESTÉVEZ LÓPEZ, *Mediadoras de sanación. Encuentros entre Jesús y las mujeres: Una nueva mirada*, Madrid 2008, 59-60.

⁶³ R. BAUCKHAM, *Jesus and the God of Israel. God Crucified and Others Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, Grand Rapids 2009, 145.

⁶⁴ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 349.

situation distant from his categories (i.e., the sufferings of God). However, the said concept leads to combat with absolute reason the pain of creation in Christ: this pain-of-God does not mean new and profound wisdom but the protest of God against the world of men and the denial of this world by God. The Nicean faith posits that God himself suffered. This idea condemns the self-sufficiency of human wisdom and the assumption of the suffering of God expresses the *consubstantial* affirmation of Nicea in its summary of faith.⁶⁵

On the other hand, Athanasius, by virtue of the *communicatio idiomatum*, regards the Logos as the real personal agent in the passion and Death of Christ held as crucial for redemption.⁶⁶ He raises these Arian arguments⁶⁷ and shows that these “human characteristics” of Christ did not prejudice his transcendence and immutability. In 381, with the Cappadocian Fathers, *ousia* (one unique divine substance) was defined to be possessed by three persons.⁶⁸ This ran counter to the Apollinaristic argument on the confusion and the affirmation of a difference between Christ and us: such is that the humanity of Christ cannot be perfect (in a full sense of humanity) given the perfection of God.⁶⁹ Basil,⁷⁰ stressing more on the divine and human characteristics in Christ than in the unity of person (in the *communicatio idiomatum*), argues that there is no suffering in the Godhead. The “flesh of Christ” is the “bearer of the Godhead made holy by union with God.” Moreover, Basil stresses the humanity of Christ with a created soul becomes a subject of suffering, growth, and even ignorance of the Judgment Day. Suffering may be natural and necessary or a product of a perverse will and lack of training in virtue. More so, Basil considers the soul of Christ as a theological factor to safeguard the Logos and his transcendence against Arianism. Without highlighting the implications of a human soul in Christ, Basil tried to protect such concept against all sinful emotions without transferring to it the spiritual decisions for man’s salvation. For his part, Gregory of Nyssa holds that Christ was capable of suffering and that his glory and

⁶⁵ Cf. J. I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *o.c.*, 447-448.

⁶⁶ Also, in his Logos-sarx framework, Athanasius underlines that “the immutability of the will Logos is emphasized in contrast to the weakness of the flesh.” (A. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition* vol. 1. *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, Oxford²1965, 313).

⁶⁷ That say that Christ “received gifts” against his identity in the Logos with the Father; his “inward distress and suffering” are not his Father; he could not be the Father’s own wisdom of he is “advanced”; and, the “destitution, prayer and ignorance of the day of judgment prove that the Son was not the Father’s word.” (Ibid., 314.)

⁶⁸ G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología*, 350.

⁶⁹ Cf. J. I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *o.c.*, 398.

⁷⁰ Cf. A. GRILLMEIER, *o.c.*, 367-368.

power were only revealed after his passion.⁷¹ On the other hand, in *De Trinitate* X, Hilary of Poitiers holds the impossibility of both the Logos and the body and soul of Christ (capable of suffering only by a divine miracle in which Logos has to have a conscious decision of it).⁷²

The following two councils formulated the fundamental scheme of the Christological ontology arguing that Jesus Christ is true God and simultaneously true man (taking the integrity of human nature against Apollinarism) in order to safeguard the properties of natures.⁷³ The Council of Ephesus (431) took up the subject of the unity of Christ's person, the integrity of humanity united with the Divine truth. Upon his rejecting of Mary as the mother of God, Nestorius' *Christotokos* was condemned and *Theotokos* was promulgated instead (DH 251) thanks to the defense of Cyril of Alexandria and including the concept of the "communication of idioms."⁷⁴ The "natural principle of suffering" of Cyril of Alexandria, in his *Logos-sarx* Christology, has a lucid identification of the soul of Christ to clarify the Apollinarian objections of a μία φύσις, by admitting the language of "two natures" but with the Laodicean concept of the vital and dynamic physis.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the unity of the person in the diverse natures of Christ is what the Council of Chalcedon (451) developed and which Eutyches denied.⁷⁶ Against the Monophysism of Eutyches, the *Epistola Dogmatica* (DH 290-295) by Pope Leo I puts into unity the two natures (human and divine) of Christ.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the two councils of Constantinople (II and III) reassumed the depth of the ontological trinity by linking the Christological ontology to the Trinity and devoting efforts to elucidating its intrinsic connection.⁷⁷ "The Theology-Christology-Anthropology" gives consequence to the soteriology and eschatology. The Council of Constantinople II (553) clarifies that the hypostasis, which was formulated in Chalcedon, is a Trinitarian hypostasis. In it, there is the famous line of the Scythian monks regarding the death of one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity (DH 432): "Unus de Trinitate passus est." The concept of Leontius of Byzantium and Leontius of Jerusalem on "en-hypostasis" gives a clear idea of the divine hypostasis of the Word

⁷¹ Ibid., 376.

⁷² Ibid., 397.

⁷³ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 354.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 352-353.

⁷⁵ Cf. A. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 475.

⁷⁶ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología*, 353.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 358.

incarnate that hypostatically unites with the human nature.⁷⁸ During the period of the Council of Constantinople III (681),⁷⁹ the theological ideas of Maximus the Confessor make fundamental integration of the humanity of Christ by taking into account the relation of the human-divine wills and operations (DH 556-557). Hence, the natural dynamism of being creature is oriented towards God. Christ, then (with his humanity and incarnation) is the head of humanity from the protological design of the divine economy of salvation (harmonious complementarity in the divinization, Christification and Pneumatologization).⁸⁰ Hence, the true humanity of Christ discerns his own humanity in his integrity and fullness in suffering. This idea becomes a mode of understanding how God communicates with men and in comprehending the mystery of God and the beingness of man (i.e. limitations and weakness, sufferings and joys, etc.).

4. Christ's Suffering that brings Hope: A Reflective Recapitulation

Throughout our discussion and reflection, we can underline that the true humanity of Christ signifies for us the true relationship and the love of God has for us. Jesus consumes our humanity and has brought himself into the space and time of human history. We refer to Christ in his true and singular humanity (revealer, savior, the one who perfects the coming of the Kingdom and the bearer of salvation):⁸¹ his life with the poor and the marginalized, the sick, the hungry, those who seek the presence of God in their lives and those who desire for the repentance of their sins, those who are suffering and in doubt of the presence of God in their lives. Due to the Incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, salvation has come upon us. The “en-hypostasis” of Christ brings to us the perfect and loving image of the Trinity that reveals his self-communication with us: “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

In the cross of Christ, the possibility of resurrection, the eschatological event and the imminence of salvation are given to us. God revealed his identity to those who are lost: the sick, those who cry for justice, the rejected and belittled. Christ assumed the pain of creation by letting himself suffer with the suffering of men. Christ

⁷⁸ Ibid., 355.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 356.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 357.

⁸¹ Ibid., 360-361.

communicates an immense dynamism of sacrifice (in his suffering and death), not only as a sign of freedom from the slavery of sin or a design of his mercy, but also a design of his love that desires a stable union and definitive covenant⁸² so that our lives may become even more beautiful in our continuous docility of our filial relationship with God and will our solidarity to the suffering humanity. This God of hope induces us to the possibility of attaining our freedom and journeying with him with joy towards the promise of the new creation (new heaven and new earth) where suffering no longer takes part of our story.

Hence, in the resurrection of Jesus, we find a definitive sense of Christian suffering. This means that God offers his own life so that man may find meaning and direction with the promise that each one will have the possibility of his own life in him. God saves humanity in spite of suffering. However, our faith in the resurrection demands from us a responsibility for one another in the midst of suffering: to commit oneself for life and not for death. J. B. Brantschen would say, “We may dream of life after death only if we make life before death possible for one another.”⁸³

⁸² A. VANHOYE, *Tanto amó Dios al mundo. Lectio sobre el sacrificio de Cristo*, Madrid 2005, 69.

⁸³ As cited in J. LAMBRECHT–R. F. COLLINS (eds.), *God and Human Suffering*, Louvain 1992, 153.

III. Mystery of the Suffering Triune God

1. *Mystery of God in the Suffering Humanity*

a. *The question and knowledge of the Suffering God*

At the very outset of the development of the Trinitarian theology, the question of suffering of the divine was always at the summit of queries on the divine. Can God, who is impassible, suffer? Who is this God seen in the cross of Christ, suffered and abandoned? God's revelation, which according to the Christian doctrine commences from his Son, is brought to its fullness through the Holy Spirit.¹ However, the revelation of God is charged with its revealed and hidden mystery² (the being of God revealing himself in his Word and giving himself in his Spirit as the history of his self-revelation [K. Barth] and self-communication [K. Rahner]): "but our vision of the face of God is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently" (FR 13).

The God of reason and the God of faith are inseparable. Such is that our experience of suffering leads us to the questioning of God who also suffers for us. This points towards our considering of a God who hanged upon the cross and experienced a terrible worldly suffering. For E. Jüngel, defining "God" as the one-who-communicates and the one-who-expresses himself, the Crucified man-Jesus (in the name of God was executed) is the One who makes the real definition of it.³ More specifically, Jürgen Moltmann⁴ develops his Trinitarian theology by centering on Jesus, the crucified Son, and his conception of the Father (taking away the old idea of God's impassibility) who suffers in and with the Son: the cross as the beginning of the Trinitarian history of God. On the other hand, Karl Rahner explicitly infers that the death of the incarnate Logos pertains to the self-manifestation of God.⁵ This death of God and his suffering reveals

¹ Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, in: ID. (ed.), *La Lógica de la fe. Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 93.

² *Ibid.*, 98.

³ E. JÜNGEL, *Dios como misterio del mundo*, Salamanca 1984, 31.

⁴ Two of his works contribute mainly to the line of his argument: *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (1972) and *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (1980). His direction is expressed more systematically and apologetically in his attempt to lead the cultured modern mind towards the richness of Christian mystery.

⁵ K. RAHNER, *Jesucristo*, in: ID. ET AL. (dirs.), *Sacramentum Mundi. Enciclopedia teológica* vol. 4, Barcelona 1977, 67.

who he is and that our death is converted to that of the immortal God. This leads to his famous adage: *the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity*⁶ by putting emphasis on the salvific character of the truth of faith and that the mystery of God is a transcendent ground of the history of salvation.⁷ Lastly, the death of God, as Hans Urs von Balthasar would posit, is the “fount of salvation, revelation, and Theology” concretizing Christ as knowledge of God and the reception of salvation and from the cross, the doctrine of God as the Trinitarian theology is conceived.⁸ This God crucified becomes for us the divine image of the invisible revealed and hidden in mystery.

b. *The language of God in the Suffering of Man*

In the fast-growing technological advancement and over-secularized world, it is very plausible to say that our conception of God is forgotten,⁹ through which Hegel would describe as the relativization of the Absolute and the absolutization of human existence and through which Nietzsche would shout to the world, “God is dead.” Moreover, L. Feuerbach’s conception of atheism, which opens us up to the autonomy of man, is the negation of the negation: the no to God is yes to man—the man becomes the measure of all things and of all reality; but to enrich God man must become impoverished.¹⁰ More than the humanistic and Marxist atheism, the dissipation of the mystery of man occurs in the mystery of God and thus leading man to apart from his freedom because *the death of God leads to the death of man*.¹¹ It is very apparent to describe that the world, in its diffident appearance, has erased the essence of faith and has created a “delusion” of God.¹² Suffering then becomes an ocean of reasoning that drowns the one who believes in God and who lives in an illusive image of the unscathed world.

However, “the desire, the passion, the thirst of God transforms suffering into a conscious pain and converts the conscience of pain as protest against suffering.”¹³ The

⁶ ID., *Escritos de Teología* vol. IV, Madrid 1961, 117ff.

⁷ Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 94.

⁸ H. URS VON BALTHASAR, *Teología de los tres días. El Misterio Pascual*, Madrid 2000, 45-68. See also J. MOLTMANN, *El Dios crucificado. La cruz de Cristo como base y crítica de la teología cristiana*, 230.

⁹ G. L. MÜLLER, *¿El Dios olvidado! ¿Experiencia de Dios en nuestro tiempo?*, in: G. AUGUSTIN (ed.), *El problema de Dios, hoy*, Santander 2012, 57-71.

¹⁰ Cf. L. FEUERBACH, *La esencia del cristianismo*, Madrid 2013, 73, 76.

¹¹ W. KASPER, *El Dios de Jesucristo*, Salamanca 2005, 22-23.

¹² R. DAWKINS, *The God Delusion*, London 2006.

¹³ J. MOLTMANN, *Trinidad y reino de Dios. La doctrina sobre Dios*, Salamanca 1983, 63.

knowledge of God seen from the beauty of all his creation is analogically implied (cf. Wis 13:1-5). The prophets to whom God spoke in partial and various ways (cf. Heb 1:1) speak of a God who expresses his grievances, mourning, and labors under the burden of the plight of Israel: a God who suffers for his people (cf. Jer 31:20; 12:7-11; Hos 11:8-9; also for people's infidelity, Rom 1:24-32). It is for this that God so loved the world that he sent his Son (Jn 3:16) and the mystery of God is manifested in Jesus Christ and "him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2) who emptied himself and took the form of a slave and died on a cross but whose name was exalted (Phil 2:6-11). This has opened up to become an analogy of our knowledge of God, the immanence and transcendence: *greater similarity in ever greater dissimilarity* of the Lateran IV formula of analogy (DH 806). Our *analogia entis* of God's suffering manifested and realized in Christ reveals our image as called to be the likeness of God through Christ, the true image of God. Hence, it is necessary that the mystery of God be considered to be the absolute and crucial response to the mystery of man. Our experience of God is rooted from our human nature (immediacy, mediation, and opening). It is also a religious experience that creates a possibility of transcendence; and, in Trinitarian faith, a personal experience of a God who reveals to us of his Word, of his Spirit and Love to lead us to our finality in him is manifested.

2. God's Mysterious Revelation of Suffering in the Sacred Scriptures

a. God's Revelation to and Relation with His Suffering People in the Old Testament

God reveals to his people that he is the only God (cf. Dt 6:4-6; Ex 20:2-3) whom Israel should worship. The Old Testament story is of love between God and his chosen people. The concept of suffering plays a great role in this dramatic story of God and his people. We can describe suffering in this context as "retributive, disciplinary, revelational, probational, illusory (or transitory), mysterious (only God has Wisdom) eschatological, or meaningless."¹⁴

God reveals himself in the history as "I am" (cf. Ex 3:15) as his actuating and salvific presence in Israel: Yahweh, God who is.¹⁵ This is also found at the beginning of

¹⁴ J. A. SANDERS, *Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism*. Colgate Rochester Divinity School Bulletin vol. XXVIII, New York 1955, 1.

¹⁵ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 130.

the Decalogue of the Pentateuch: “For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors’ wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation” (Ex 20:5). The catalogue of curses is also being drawn upon (cf. Dt 28:15). Collective and individual retributions leading to the offence of Yahweh are also found: social injustice (Is 1:15; Jer 5:26-28; Am 5:7,10-12; Mic 3:1-3), the obstinate politics of the court (Is 30:1-5; Jer 2:35-37; Ez 16:26; Hos 5:13) and the syncretistic worship. These evoke the emerging “Day of Yahweh” (i.e.: Am 5:18; Hos 4:3; Is 5:25-30; Jer 4:5-31; Ez 21:23-32; etc.). We also note the fall of the Northern Kingdom, destructions of Samaria (722), of Jerusalem and its temple (587) (also note Joshua to 2 Kings). Israel had its whole prehistory of sin and punishment alongside with its journey until the Babylonian exile. Let’s also consider, in this case, the woe by Yahweh (Ez 16:20, 23), Ps 78; 106 and penitential prayers (Ezr 9:3-15; Neh 9:6-37; Dan 9:4-19; Bar 1:15-3:8). In postexilic times, suffering as punishment for individual guilt¹⁶ is noted: Ps 106:6; Dan 9:16; Lam 5:7; Jer 31:29; Ez 18; 33; punishment for the infidelity to Yahweh (1 Chr 2:7; 2 Chr 16:12; 26:16-21; 25:20,27; etc. and the book of Job [15:4-6; 22:4-11; 15:17; 8:8-10; 4:12-16; etc.]). Moreover, we also note that suffering is experience of the presence of God and as a medicine¹⁷ for Israel to reflect on their sinful deeds and showing how God loves and protects them (cf. Am 4:12; Hos 11:8-9). It is also a form of a test (cf. Gen 22, Dt 4:37; 13:1-5; Jgs 2:22; Neh 9:7ff; Mic 7:20; Ex 16:4; etc.); as a purification (Zec 13:8-9, etc.). Lastly, we find the existence of the vicarious suffering of the fourth song of the Servant of Yahweh (Is 52:13-53:12), which brings salvation and redemption to others that entails curse and punishment for the sinful and trial for the righteous.

Through suffering, we could infer that the revelation of God in the Old Testament entails various means and reasons. It is evident that through suffering, God reveals his solidarity and sovereignty over the people where God, despite his immanence, made himself manifest in our concepts, language, and experience. However, it is but apt to note that human suffering doesn’t come from God but, in the first place, as to how man uses his own freedom and his falling from sinfulness.¹⁸ This is the reason why God was crucified (New Testament) because our freedom through a

¹⁶ J. LUYTEN, *Human Suffering in the Old Testament*, in: J. LAMBRECHT–R. F. COLLINS (eds.), *God and Human Suffering*, Louvain 1992, 8-10.

¹⁷ J. M. MCDERMOTT, *La Sofferenza umana nella bibbia. Saggio di teologia biblica*, Rome 1990, 48-51.

¹⁸ M. SERENTHÀ, *Sofferenza umana. Itinerario di fede alla luce della Trinità*, Cinisello Balsamo 1993, 15-27.

transcendent and immanent revelation of Christ revealed his *permanent presence*¹⁹ as the Word, Wisdom, and Spirit even from the story of creation, exodus, covenant and promise in the Old Testament.

b. *The New Testament Revelation of the Triune God through the Suffering Christ in His Paschal Mystery*

Through Christ, God made us partakers of his life with his Spirit: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Gal 4-6; also Rom 8:1-16). The words of Paul make up of a double mission by the Father in sending us his Son, and the Spirit “into our hearts.” In the New Testament, we find an affirmation of the divinity of Christ (Jn 7:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Rom 10:9) in a Trinitarian structure of the revelation from a relational structure (this projects that New Testament continues the monotheistic faith confessed in the Old Testament). Christ reveals himself in his relationship with the Father, as the prologue of the Gospel of John would imply. We need to note that the experience of the Trinitarian God is already the basis of the Christian life and the history of salvation²⁰ (1 Thess 1:1-6; Eph 1:3-14; Col 1:15-20; Jn 1:1-18).

Undoubtedly, the Paschal mystery is a fundamental moment of the revelation of the mystery of the loving God, of his fatherhood and the divine filiation in the Spirit.²¹ It is the supreme verification of the “God Crucified” who becomes the consummation of the project of God the Creator: the *Shekinah* that led and accompanied the people of Israel in the desert and during the exile (manifesting the covenant and the presence of God) was extended and fully manifested in Christ in his flesh, passion and death—“from *shekinah* to flesh (*sarkosis*), emptying of his glory in his poor and stripped existence (*kenosis*) and finally with the death on the cross (*staurosis*).”²² Jesus Christ is “who is from eternity wanted to become man for our own good, who made man in his time for our own, and will still be man for our own good in eternity.”²³ Such is that, the

¹⁹ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 131.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

²¹ L. F. LADARIA, *El Dios vivo y verdadero. El misterio de la Trinidad*, Salamanca 1998, 72.

²² O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Dios*, Salamanca 2004, 178-179.

²³ K. BARTH, *Esbozo de Dogmática*, Santander 2000, 82.

suffering of Christ, in its Trinitarian dimension, has something to do with the *Deus absconditus*. For K. Kitamori,²⁴ the God revealed (*Deus revelatus*) to the sinners can only be done in the God of the cross. The Father, who was hidden himself during the crucifixion of the Son, is a God of pain and suffering. Even prior to that, there was fear of seeing himself separated from the Father before the “death of God” (Mk 14:33; Mt 26:37; Mk 14:34) and even saying: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34), but, “Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb 5:8). Still, he was firm to what he said: “The Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30). However, considering the hiddenness of God during the crucifixion, man cannot discover God in the same state (1 Cor 1:23) except with the help of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3) who drives and guides Jesus to do the will of the Father and was with him and in him to accomplish his mission even up to his terrible death.

The cross of Christ would bring out a strong implication to God’s impassibility and immutability that signify of his freedom and sovereignty over his creation. Moreover, they express the ontological integrity of God (impassibility) and the alterations of his being (immutability) and without renouncing his will, he brings perfection and establishes communion with his creation.²⁵ Because of his love for the world, God sent his son (in his *kenosis*, Phil 2:6-8) for our salvation (cf. Jn 3:13-15; cf. Rom 8:32; and the glory of the Father, Rom 6:4). The resurrection of Christ is not something about his incorporation to God but of his glorification before the world, his enthronization as *Pantokrator* and the solemn acceptance of his death.²⁶ Moreover, the cross of Christ is the place for following him who is the revelation of God and the presence and gift of the Holy Spirit who makes possible the perfect offering of Christ to the Father (cf. Heb 9:14) and giving of his Spirit for men (cf. Jn 19:30) for the new mission of the Church (cf. Jn 20:19).²⁷ The Spirit is not only that of the Father’s in whom Jesus accomplishes his mission but also of the Son’s who was given to humanity (Jn 20:19-21) so that they will also be directed where the glorified humanity is.²⁸

And, in the Holy Spirit, Jesus is resurrected and justified (Spirit of the Father) and as the crucified Lord of the glory, he is converted as giver of the Spirit to the

²⁴ K. KITAMORI, *Teología del dolor de Dios*, Salamanca 1975, 162-163.

²⁵ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 118.

²⁶ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *El misterio pascual*, in: J. FEINER–M. LÖHRER (dirs.), *Mysterium Salutis. Manual de teología como historia de la salvación* vol. III, Madrid 1969, 772.

²⁷ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 121.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

Church and to the world.²⁹ Christ, pre-existent with God, is the *Word* (cf. Jn 1), the *Image* (cf. Col 1), and the *Son* (Eph 1).³⁰ This *Logos* is the image of the invisible God reconciled with man through the blood of the cross for the redemption and forgiveness of sins. Through Christ, man becomes in full participation with God: “Apart from his Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by his death; he has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit; Abba, Father” (GS 22).

c. Mystery of the Suffering God Viewed from Its Dogmatic Determination

The theological and salvific richness of the Trinitarian post-Paschal confession of God under the Jewish monotheistic society has to be substantiated. The doxological and the eschatological transcendence of Christ in his death and resurrection and in his relation with the Father for the fullness of time were to be assimilated even up to the conception of *monarchianism*, the affirmation of the uniqueness of God through the absolute primacy of the divinity of the Father. The Trinitarian profession proposed the knowledge of the One who enters in the multiple separations in the world that brought of His scandal on the cross. However, on the day of Easter, He has produced a higher and fructiferous reconciliation in numerous and new relations with all humanity.³¹ This Greek vision of the divinity of One even led to more rigorous interpretations, even to the point of leading towards the subordination of the Other like the Arian contention to *Patrispassianism* which contends God the Father as the one suffering and dying on the cross. The question on the suffering of a God who is impassible brings so much interest in the Trinitarian theology. Unlike the idea of the impassibility of God, there is a minor theme that depicts a God who suffers (for example, in various theopaschite expressions or the heretical groups such as Modalist Patrispassianism and Theopaschite Monophysitism).³² The debate on divine impassibility is very much rooted in the incarnate Son who suffered. This has been the subject debated and developed during the first five centuries of Christianity: God who comes to us in history transcending the imperfections of history. The divine “apatheia,” in its more rigorist philosophical

²⁹ Ibid., 125.

³⁰ ID., *El misterio de Dios trinitario. Dos-con-nosotros*, Madrid 2012, 215-228.

³¹ B. FORTE, *Trinidad como historia*, Salamanca 1988, 63-65.

³² P. GAVRILYUK, *The Suffering of the Impassible God. The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, New York 2004, 4.

stance, posits God's impassibility as a defense of God's transcendence to humanity and the world, thus demonstrating his sovereignty, freedom, and dignity (as a response to the provoking question of God's impassibility amidst the unjust and senseless suffering that is experienced in the world).³³ We underline some patristic juxtapositions like Tertullian who speaks of the impassible God who dies: *Deus mortuus–Deus crucifixus*³⁴; Origen's idea of "Passio Caritatis"³⁵: God who suffers a passion of love. The essence of love is identified with the loved person. Thus, God also suffers for us in his love and passion because God, who is impassible and incapable of suffering could also be considered a God who is incapable to love.³⁶ Much later, in the council of Constantinople II (553), a theopaschite formula coined by certain Scythian monks emerged, "*unus ex Trinitate passus*,"³⁷ that rejects the idea that the divinity is passible and confesses that one of the Trinity was crucified according to the flesh (an idea attributed to Proclus by Liberatus).³⁸ This has received a magisterial ground in the council (DH 432): Christ crucified in flesh is the true God, the Lord of Glory and one of the holy Trinity.

The impassibility of God was a major controversy between the fathers of the Church and the heretical movements (Docetism, Patripassianism, Arianism, and Nestorianism). In the second century, the Church rejected a docetist idea³⁹ of the unworthiness of the divine status of Christ given his shameful experiences in his birth,

³³ Cf. S. DEL CURA ELENA, *El «sufrimiento» de Dios en el trasfondo de la pregunta por el mal. Planteamientos teológicos actuales*: Revista Española de Teología 51 (1991) 331-373.

³⁴ TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Marcionem* II, 16, 3; 27, 7. Moreover, Tertullian clearly argued against Marcion: "Was it with any other intent that he came down, and taught, and suffered, and rose again, except that he might become known? Certainly, if he did become known, he was willing: for nothing could have been done with respect to him unless he had been willing... For it adds to the disgrace if he made the substance of his body into a lie—and he even took upon himself the Creator's curse by being hung from a tree" (*Adv. Marc.* I, 11, 8). He would later argue in a more biblical way the passion, death (a curse especially to the one "that hung on a tree")—taking this away out of the midst through the resurrection of Christ (*Adv. Marc.* III, 18, 1ff; 19, 1ff). (Text edited and translated by E. EVANS, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem*, Books I-III, Oxford 1972).

³⁵ ORIGEN, *Ezech. Hom.* 6,6: "He came down to earth in pity for human kind, he endured our passions and sufferings before he suffered the cross, and he deigned to assume our flesh. For if he had not suffered he would not have entered into full participation in human life. He first suffered, then he came down and was manifested" (as cited by J. B. POOL, *God's Wounds. Hermeneutic of the Christian Symbol of Divine Suffering* vol. II, Cambridge 2011, 387).

³⁶ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios trinitario. Dos-con-nosotros*, 171.

³⁷ Cf. C. HOVORUN, *Will, Action and Freedom. Christological controversies in the Seventh Century*, Leiden 2008, 41.

³⁸ Cf. S. DEL CURA ELENA, *o.c.*, 355.

³⁹ P. GAVRILYUK, *o.c.*, 64-90. Irenaeus' point may be substantial: "if the 'Father of all' is impassible, so should have been his divine offspring; if, on the contrary, his offspring are passible, the 'Father of all' would also be subject to passion" (see p. 87). Also, his idea of the "economy" introduces the developed relationship between the Father and the Son in the history and introduced to history in the immanence of the Word (cf. B. SESBOUÉ–J. WOLINSKI, *El Dios de la salvación*, Salamanca 1995, 131).

suffering, and death. It argued that Christ only suffered in appearance. This, together with the Gnostic cosmological pessimism, was against the argument of Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons (among others) that Christ's birth, suffering, and death were real and historical and God-befitting. This has also led to the imitation of martyrs, which was also a full evidence of a God who suffers.

On the other hand, the third century's heretical Modalist Patripassianism⁴⁰ claimed a real suffering of God but fell into saying that since the Father and Son are of one divine being, the Father himself changed as the Son for incarnation purposes to protect the full divinity of God. But the Church argued that both the Father and the Son participated in the incarnation in different ways and only the Son has involvement in the Christic suffering. The Father could not be subjected to the experiences of the humanity of Christ most especially in his suffering and crucifixion. There were two evoking propositions that caused a series of debates: in reality Christ has suffered and that the Father did not suffer. Hippolytus asserted that the Son was God's Word distinct from but united with the Father, while Tertullian (contending with Praxeas) argues for the two natures of Christ (*divinitas* and *humanitas*) with distinct properties ("the miracles showing the godhead, the sufferings the manhood") who suffered in his *humanitas* and remained impassible in *divinitas*.

The fourth-century was marked by Arians' take on Christ's involvement in change and his human experiences in his birth, suffering, and death that cannot be considered fully divine. With this, a great controversy called Subordinationism was conceived.⁴¹ The council of Nicea (325) rejected Arianism since the Son's involvement in suffering cannot reduce his divinity in his humanity. The Nicene creed went along the following lines: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made" (DH 125).

Moreover, the controversy produced by Nestorius⁴² (d. ca. 451) evolves in the difficulty in distinguishing the divinity and humanity (which the suffering can only be

⁴⁰ P. GAVRILYUK, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 91-100.

⁴¹ For Arians, God was not always called Father (though God was always God) until when he engendered the Son; the Son is a creature and is God by participation; and, the Son cannot totally reveal the Father (cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios trinitario*, 335). On the other hand, another anti-Arian movement called Apollinarianism posits that the Logos, that is divine, took place of the human mind as he undertook human nature (cf. P. GAVRILYUK, 101-134).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 135-171.

involved) of Christ. Hence, suffering cannot be ascribed in the impassible God. Therefore, God cannot be involved in Christ's birth, suffering, and death on the cross. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) raised his arguments against Nestorius by contending that the humanity and the divinity of Christ should not be separated. Christ, who as a divine agent and in his full divinity, emptied himself and took the human nature (body and soul) and was subjected to human sufferings and actions or the feeling of grief or emotion. This mystery affirms the free and salvific experience of the suffering of God who triumphed over sin and death in his resurrection and has given the possibility for the resurrection and immortality of humanity. This, in turn, becomes the image of the impassible God who assumed to be part of human suffering by freely becoming man (in all his limitations and frailties) and even suffer and die for humanity's salvation through the Spirit out of his infinite compassion, mercy, and love.

3. The Hope in Glory: Man's Participation in the Divine Life of the Triune God

a. God's Communion in the Suffering of Man: Missions, Processions, and Relations

The *missio* that leads us to our knowledge of the immanent Trinity has its origin that is the Father that entails knowledge and the finality that is the sending of the Son (Gal 4:4; Jn 3:17; etc.) and the Spirit (Gal 4:6; Jn 14:26) in the history of salvation of the world.⁴³ These "two missions," however distinct, are inseparable: in the incarnation (visible form) that is God's presence in the history and in the grace of conforming the person destined to this sending (immanent, transcendent, and in form of God's communion in history). This has great importance in the ecclesial system and its ministries but without creating subordinations in its Christological and Pneumatological aspects. There is, in the ecclesial origin, Christ in his Paschal mystery as the Church's principal-objective beginning and the Holy Spirit in Pentecost that is its personal-objective beginning.⁴⁴ This mission has a profound connection with the two processions⁴⁵ (*processio*) that leads us to the understanding of God as pure donation of Word and Love: the Father, the origin and fount (of divinity, the origin without origin) of the other two persons (the Son by *generation* (Jn 1:18; 3:16; 8:42) and the Holy Spirit by *procession* (Jn 15:26)). The

⁴³ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios trinitario*, 446.

⁴⁴ Cf. ID, *El misterio de Dios*, 150-151.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 151-155.

council of Nicea and the theology after it brings us the idea of a procession *ad extra* (creation) and the procession *ad intra* in God's immanent dynamism and spiritual action. God is the fullness of life and being. Given the complexity of the relation between the three persons, we need to underline the equality of the three and their relations to one another without breaking the biblical, liturgical, and ecclesial tradition. This Trinitarian theology has to be remitted to the history and there we see the "monarchy of the Father unfolded in the action and mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" in which the Father is the fount of divinity of the Son and Spirit but without signifying their subordinations. The Father is the infinite capacity of this communication, love, and donation of the fullness of being with the two other Persons. The Son who possesses the same nature of the Father (engendering the Son out of love) in a distinct form leads us to the understanding of the Father's total donation of love (in his primacy) to both the Son and the Spirit in equality without any contradiction.

It is then apposite to take Rahner's axiom that *the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa* to accept Barth's idea that God is in himself eternally as what is revealed in Christ: "A God who coincides with himself"⁴⁶ especially in Christ's death on the cross which gives light to God from above to below, from outside to inside, from time to eternity. Christ is the "lamb who was slain" from the very beginning of the world; thus, he is the "image of the invisible God." For Moltmann,⁴⁷ the pain of the cross eternally determines the internal life of the Triune God. And so the joy of love defines the intimate life of the Triune God in the glorification through the Holy Spirit. This love that creates and animates life is a positive element that contrasts with the negativity of suffering and death. Love participates in the sufferings of others and feels in the death of others as its own. Thus the story of the sufferings of Christ forms part of the suffering of humanity as the fullest expression of his love.

b. *Unitarian and Trinitarian Attributes of God*

God's essence as relation means that he is love and communication.⁴⁸ In Christian revelation, God is not a supreme substance, closed in himself, intangible and unmoving

⁴⁶ See J. MOLTSMANN, *Trinidad y reino de Dios*, 175-176.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

⁴⁸ Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 157.

monad, but rather life, relation, *communion*, one that communicates.⁴⁹ The *hypostasis* is itself the expression of unity: “The Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30). The concept of person of the Trinity means “being in himself, to give of himself and to being giving of himself”⁵⁰: in relation and in the reciprocity of the triune God. The union of the Triune God and the origin of salvation consist in the *eternal perichoresis* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his opening and the unification of all that is created. This perichoretic union of God corresponds to the experience in the community of Christ that is unified through the attention, effect, and love of the Spirit.⁵¹ Thus, this expression expresses the unity of God signifying the “permanent mutual presence, the reciprocal inhabitation, and the state of co-inherence among the divine persons.”⁵²

In the first letter of John (4:8), “God is love” that he even sent his Son (Jn 3:16) and thus God can be defined as “communion in love” which lords over his personal logic (the communion of life in love): from the love of the Father who is “inconceivably unfathomable mystery of giving,” of the Son who is “existence in reception” and of the Holy Spirit “who unites the Father and the Son and makes their lives overflow.”⁵³ This is the essence of what is in Jn 10:17: “This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again” that creates a link between the Father and the Son in such a way that man is included in this relationship of love through God the Holy Spirit. This is a full identification of God with the crucified Jesus as the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ Therefore, this love is the self-communication of the good by virtue of his self-differentiation and self-identification since love implies three things: the lover, the love and the loved (St. Augustine). Through love,⁵⁵ the self-humiliation of God started (the creator love is the sorrowful love): his suffering for the world in the world and for the world to create a free communion with the world and the free response for the world. The redemption of God has to culminate in his eschatological self-redemption before suffering. The glory of the triune God reflects in the crucified face of those who are oppressed for whom Christ made of himself a brother. He is the image of the invisible God who radiates his glory in the community of believers and the poor.

⁴⁹ G. GRESHAKE, *Creer en el Dios uno y Trino. Una clave para entenderlo*, Santander 2002, 26.

⁵⁰ Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 164.

⁵¹ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *Trinidad y reino de Dios*, 174.

⁵² Á. CORDOVILLA, *El misterio de Dios*, 164.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁵⁴ E. JÜNGEL, *o.c.*, 420-421.

⁵⁵ J. MOLTSMANN, *Trinidad y reino de Dios*, 72-75; 214-215.

IV. God's Revelation in Suffering: the Reason of our Hope

1. *Christianity on Suffering*

a. *The Reason of Faith to Hope in Suffering*

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope...” These words from 1 Pt 3:15 bring us to the underlying essence of giving *explanation* and *reason* to the *logos* of hope. This letter obliges every Christian to respond to the interrogations most especially in times of suffering persecutions in which one has to confess his pertinence to Christ, expressed fundamentally in his personal profession of his baptismal faith and the creed.¹ Thus, giving reasons to the question of suffering cannot be remedied by just an absolute silence (even in the contemplation of mystery) or by an easy escape. Rather, it is much better reflect on it and give a word that is illumined by Christ himself.² The discernment of faith that produces hope is what is needed. In this sense, the Christian hope possesses the *logos* that gives basis to both Christian thinking and the ethical life of humanity. It is but proper to think that this *logos*, as the reason of hope, becomes an essential response that is brought forth from Christian revelation and the reasoning that sees faith in truth. It is for this ground that man, through his faith as gift of God, can have access to transcendence and the Revelation and finds the essence of his suffering condition. Man, therefore, is capable to hear the Word of God (hearing the Revelation: *fides ex auditu* in Rom 10:7) in his radical capacity to have faith.³

Faith now is in service with hope, a way to hope; that is, it constitutes a more profound desire of our being and of our desire of God. Faith saves hope and hope saves our existence and gives sense to it.⁴ And so, the *logos* that is inscribed in hope leads to the Christian idea of salvation⁵ that ascribes to our end which is eternal life (Rom 6:22): the absolute Life of God as our consummation. The internal *logos* of our faith unravels amidst the impediments to salvation, to illumine our fatalities and failures (human propensities, lack of freedom, evil that is brought about by suffering and disgrace,

¹ P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La Lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 18.

² N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Los excesos del amor. Figuras femeninas de Reparación en la Edad Media (siglos XI-XIV)*, Madrid 2012, 40.

³ Cf. S. PIÉ-NINOT, *La teología fundamental*, Salamanca 2001, 93.

⁴ Cf. A. GESCHÉ, *El sentido*, Salamanca 2004, 131-132.

⁵ P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 21-22.

failure, sin, death, etc.). Now, the *logos* creates the best apology of hope that illumines the aspects of human existence.

Having in mind the aforementioned stance, we consider that the contemporary development of Fundamental Theology in this matter lies in Vatican Council II's Delphic adage: "know yourself" (*nosce te ipsum*) that corresponds to the question "What is man" in all his nature and tendencies who "suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society" (GS 10).⁶ Moreover, John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* used the same imperative in his desire to manifest a new sensibility to man's possibility of becoming hearer of the Revelation and the unending questions of man of his sense of being, his future, the existence of evil, etc. (cf. FR 1-6). In particular, FR 26 deals with the idea that life's meaning can also radically present one's lack of sense because of the presence of suffering: "The daily experience of suffering—in one's own life and in the lives of others—and the array of facts which seem inexplicable to reason are enough to ensure that a question as dramatic as the question of meaning cannot be evaded." This brings us to the question on sense and the ultimate end of human life⁷ through the endless searching of truth in which the ultimate revelation of God is manifested (cf. FR 2).

On the other hand, the Christian tradition has conceived man as *homo capax Dei*: in a protological sense, he was created in the "image of God" (Gn 1:27) and the new man created in Christ (Rom 8:10, 29); and in an eschatological sense of having "to see God," a beatific vision (1 Cor 13:9-12; 1 Jn 3:2; Mt 5:8). Man, then, is considered an active subject with regard to the Revelation and faith, open to transcendence. K. Rahner imparts his idea of the *opening transcendence* of man (spirit-in-the-world; true hearer-of-the-word) to God in an indefinite growth towards the Absolute asking what we "experiment" to arrive into the "being in itself," which is infinite and limitless; and from this being infinite to Being God (the ultimate end of our transcendence).⁸ On the other hand, Paul Tillich,⁹ in his method of correlation, asserts that man is capable of questioning his existence that reflects the essential unity with the Infinite. This insertion of the Revelation in man injects the ultimate sense of his existence (filled with theological propositions) that turns out to be his *ultimate concern*. God is the response

⁶ Cf. S. PIÉ-NINOT, *o.c.*, 103.

⁷ "Fundamental theology should demonstrate the profound compatibility that exists between faith and its need to find expression by way of human reason fully free to give its assent..." (FR 67).

⁸ Cf. S. PIÉ-NINOT, *o.c.*, 130-135.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-143.

to the implicit question on human finitude that cannot be deduced from the analysis of human existence. Thus, Revelation responds to the question of reason; God responds to the question of being; the Spirit responds to the question of existence; and the Kingdom of God responds to the question of history. Moreover, the access of man to the Revelation and the Faith, as J. Alfaro¹⁰ would posit, arises from man's interiority and the condition of possibility to communicate with the divine is "opening" of himself towards the unlimited aspiration of the immanent. Man's questions about God are by far an upshot of his suffering experiences. Thus, man's existence is existence by God for God and the question of God gives sense to it. God, then is the "full conscience of being," "absolute freedom," and "personal fullness" that calls man towards a full existential realization.

Furthermore, Maurice Blondel, most especially in his classic work "Action,"¹¹ gives a special systematization of man's inquiry towards transcendence. "I will; and if nothing of what is willed satisfies me, much more, if I will nothing of what is and of what I am, it is because I will myself, more than all that is and all that I am" (A 336). He further expresses, "what I know, what I want, and what I do" (A 16), between what we are and what we have to become (A 182) wherein suffers the difficulty: "My decisions often go beyond my thoughts, and my acts beyond my intentions." (p. 4). Thus, the dialectic of Action is the inadequacy between the impetus of transcendence (movement of the will) and the overflowing projects of our willingness that cannot be limited. Moreover, we find how Blondel uses his two types of will: "That is why, in proposing freedom as our end, we feel the disproportion between the willing will, *quod procedit ex voluntate* (what proceeds from the will), and the willed will, *quod voluntatis objectum fit* (what becomes the object of the will)" (A 132). In other words, Blondel wants to explain that the willing will is the infinite aspiration towards joy, present and implicit in all, while the willed will is the explicit and free will that can be abused by its freedom and that can lead man to deviate from his first and fundamental tendency towards this joy, leaving one to suffer from failing to achieve his own end.

The third part discusses about the phenomenon of Action. It is at once something known and something knowing. But there is the inevitable transcendence of human action: the "One Thing Necessary": "An uneasiness, a natural aspiration toward what is

¹⁰ Ibid., 148-153.

¹¹ M. BLONDEL, *Action (1893). Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, Notre Dame 2007. Text translated by Oliva Blanchette.

better, the sense of having role to fulfill, the quest for the meaning of life, these, then, are what mark human conduct with a necessary imprint... Man always places in his acts, no matter how obscurely he knows it, this character of transcendence” (A 353). And what is like in the heart of all human projects, and the immanence of his condition, he encounters suffering and discontentment. The suffering is the worldly term for love and his acceptance manifests the measure of his love (A 429). This love lets him escape from egoism and the possessive knowledge, he goes out and gives himself to others.

b. *Christianity towards Authentic Transcendence*

Gearing towards man’s aperture to transcendence, religions have given testimony to the Reality (even to suffering) to build a profound relationship with the Mystery.¹² The only possibility for having an effective relationship between the Mystery and man is that the Mystery is made present in mundane realities (mediations which are possible objects of human faculties and actions).¹³ Many religions/beliefs have tried to confront the reality of suffering and even finds a way to eliminate it (i.e., Hinduism and Buddhism through elimination of desires) or negate its existence (i.e., Christian science sect). However, solutions given do not give answer to the existence or non-existence of suffering in its ontological status since no explanation is given to the painful appearances (a variation of the metaphysical non-being) that still subsist.¹⁴

On the other hand, religion exists in the plurality of historical manifestations and it is in this manner that Martín Velasco would call it “mysteriophanies”¹⁵ or the articulated system of mediations that consist in religious reality (liturgy, worship, creedal teachings, mysticism, etc.). Moreover, human experience of suffering and pain, in Christian perspective, can be a venue where the presence of God is manifested (a mysteriophany). Just as Léon Bloy¹⁶ would assert, the heart of man has places that have not yet existed; and for them to exist, the presence of suffering is necessary. In this shaking experience, man opens himself up to the Mystery, capacitating himself to

¹² Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 41.

¹³ Cf. J. MARTÍN VELASCO, *Recapitulación*, in: ID., *Introducción a la fenomenología de la religión*, Madrid 72006, 569.

¹⁴ Cf. J. M. MCDERMOTT, *Sufrimiento*, in: R. LATOURELLE–R. FISICHELLA–S. PIÉ-NINOT, *Diccionario de Teología Fundamental*, Madrid 31992, 1395.

¹⁵ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Presencia inobjetiva: la fenomenología de la religión de Juan Martín Velasco*, in: A. ÁVILA (ed.), *Nostalgia de infinito. Hombre y religión en tiempos de ausencia de Dios. Homenaje a Juan Martín Velasco*, Estella 2005, 85-100 (esp. 91).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

accept the self-revelation of Life. In order to further understand this, the idea of Holy is seen from the sphere of reality or in the light of its presence in the religion. The *mysteriophanies*¹⁷ points out towards two aspects: religious attitude (live before God) and the transcendent reality of Mystery. They should not be separated in order to avoid reducing their complexity to purely historical, economical aesthetic, etc. It is in the Mystery where we encounter the definitive fullness in every order of reality. This resounds that the human being can seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection (FR 12).

The experience of suffering from others' critiques, corrections (even in constructive criticism) even when there are motives as a painful gift to the other still leads us to express our capacity to love. *There is true dialogue only when it is between the wounded and the wounded.* It is then necessary to be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to receive the impulses of his love to live with wisdom by treating one another with passion, suffer with those who suffer, showing affection, concern and encouragement and making them feel the joy in company with others. This is the *way of the beauty* that leads to the Mystery.¹⁸ Moreover, this is what the "mysticism of the open eyes" of Johann Baptist Metz¹⁹ that brings to light the sense of suffering, of the *memoria passionis*. It is the mysticism that makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering pays attention to it with eyes painfully open and takes responsibility for it.

c. God's Redemptive Relation to Man for Salvation

The Thomistic concept of religion considers three classic etymologies of the term *religio*: *re-legere* (Cicero), *re-eligere* (Augustine) and *re-ligare* (Lactantius). From these concepts, Thomas of Aquinas defines religion as *ordo ad Deum* (order of all to and relationship with God, who is the eminent fullness of man). The *ordo* of God is redemptive, situating in the horizon of salvation not by man but by God who is the only giver of this gift freely given. The relationship with God is basically expressed in

¹⁷ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 42-43.

¹⁸ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *La herida esencial. Consideraciones de Teología Fundamental para una mistagogía*, Madrid 2013, 154-156;162-164.

¹⁹ J. BAPTIST METZ, *Por una mística de ojos abiertos. Cuando irrumpe la espiritualidad*, Barcelona 2013, 52-58.

prayers, true religion in action, worship and piety that are sustained by the theological virtues (faith, hope and love). On the other hand, Religion is the Church, worship and dogma as an orientation of the Spirit towards the Unconditional (Paul Tillich). Religion becomes our Ultimate concern whose term refers to God.²⁰ The “catholic substance” of religion is revitalized in the Church, worship and dogma and suffering encounters its deepest sense through conversion, purification and true exercise of freedom.

The theological phenomenology of Christianity centers on the redemptive relation of man with the Triune God, the ultimate truth revealed in Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is the basis of the very being of man who establishes dialogue with him in his moments of joys and sufferings. Now, Christian faith does not deal with understanding doctrinal-dogmatic system (intellectual comprehension) but, just as Benedict XVI would assert, it is an option that gives possibility to comprehend the reality in a distinct manner.²¹ Christian faith does not refer to ideas but to a person, the “I” that is the Word and the Son who also suffers but opens man a total transcendence. And this faith has its origin in Jesus as Christ and the point of origin of the “Chris”-tian faith is the cross.²² E. Jünger²³ would add that the idea of God girds from the Christian faith in a God who identifies with the man-Jesus crucified (his death is the affirmation of the Christian faith): a Triune God who brings himself closer to man, reveals his identity and gives value to him with whom God himself has identified.

2. God’s Revelation in Suffering

a. Revelation for Salvation

The revelation in suffering itself is not only a personal self-manifestation of God but also an objective content that is offered to the believer. The possibility of knowing is determined through a kenosis of God in the revelation.²⁴ In its aesthetic concept, the *revelatio* can be considered a drawing back of a veil in order for the truth to appear or uncover (*aletheia*). The concept of revelation possesses an experiential and perceptive

²⁰ Ibid., 45-46.

²¹ “Faith is a decision in which we affirm that in the deepness of human existence, there is a point that one cannot be supported or sustained by what is visible and comprehensible but rather, he crashes with something that cannot be seen that affects him and appears to be something necessary for his existence.” (J. RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI. *Introducción al cristianismo*, Madrid 1995, 32).

²² Ibid., 175.

²³ Cf. H. FRIES, *Teología fundamental*, Barcelona 1987, 176-182.

²⁴ Cf. R. FISICHELLA, *Introducción a la teología fundamental*, Estella 1992, 98.

dimension that invades as a grace or gift permitting the subject to rearticulate his the confusion and presentiments of his suffering existence and his vital world like a powerful flash of light that allows to perceive its unseen richness in a marvelous expansion of scales and categories seen with special intensity. This is precisely seeing the invisible in the visible.²⁵ The science of Religions can be the second responses as far as the systematization to the conscience of Mystery is concerned. However, Christianity takes its essence in the salvific dimension as it considers itself as a revealed religion. It has in itself original elements that permit us to distinguish well its salvific character through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's full revelation. Thus, it would be apt to consider the structuration of the revelation, in its phenomenological characterization, these constitutive elements: author, phenomenon of mediation through mundane reality, the content revealed by the Mystery, the receiver, and the total, definitive and ultimate effect (salvation). Christianity contains a revelatory experience of the religious history of humanity in its Trinitarian vision of God, in its understanding of revelation as free and loving self-communication of the Triune God in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit for salvation of suffering humanity..²⁶

The revelation, in its biblical sense, is a free self-manifestation and self-revelation of God that envelops man and the world in the light of the truth. God personally reveals himself (Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6; etc). In suffering, God manifests his revelation through his covenant with Israel that associates their fidelity or infidelity (Dt 28-30); he uses suffering to bring his people to obedience (Am 4; Os 6:1-6, etc.) and purify themselves from sin (Ps 38, etc.). Moreover, God manifests himself in suffering through his presence (Ps 73) and Job²⁷ himself (esp. Job 38:1-42:6), whose innocent suffering helped him discover the possibility of knowing God and his love. The revelation in history is an image, parable and anticipation of the eschatological revelation, seeing God face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2) when everyone is subjected to him (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).²⁸ The human reason “judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind,” but he is also conscious that “his intelligence is not confined to observable data alone, but can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partly obscured and weakened” (GS 15). Suffering

²⁵ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 48-51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53-56.

²⁷ Cf. G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente*, Salamanca 2006, 53-66.

²⁸ W. KASPER, *El Dios de Jesucristo*, Salamanca 2005, 143-151.

in obscurity and weakness leads to the understanding of the hidden God as a manifestation of his revelation in the hidden mystery. The dialectic of revelation and hiddenness of God is valid in the moment of revelation in Jesus Christ, who is the icon of the Father (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and the reflection and the imprint of his being (Heb 1:3; Jn 14:9). Thus, the hidden character of God does not mean the transcendent and distant *Deus absconditus* but the *Deus revelatus* manifested in the power of God through his death and resurrection: the power in human suffering, the fullness in the emptiness and the life in death (most especially, the presence of the hidden God in Jesus Christ in his poor, humble, sick, persecuted and dying brothers [Mt 25:31-46]).²⁹ The axis of faith is this abrupt verticality where one who arises falls and the one who descends is elevated. The greatness of the divine mercy and salvation only spread out in the contraction, constriction and the narrowness of one's anguish. God reveals himself in a secret and dark space, in suffering, and hides himself in a space of clarity and transparency.³⁰ By virtue of the self-revelation of God, his mystery, the fundamental and central truth of the Christian faith, becomes our salvation.

b. *Christ as the Summit of God's Revelation*

Revelation is the fount of the sacred doctrine, the truth of faith. The Council of Trent referred to it as the sacred books and traditions (cf. DH 1501); the Lateran IV affirms that God has given men the "doctrine of salvation" and Christ as "the way of life"; the Vatican I modified the word "Gospel" to "supernatural revelation" (DH 3006). The Vatican I Council had already confronted with the suffering in abandonment and rejection of Christianity, the negation of God and Christ led to the abyss of pantheism, of materialism and of atheism. The Church suffered for her members who have strayed from the path true piety and their Catholic sensibility was weakened and the truth was diluted. Thus, the need for the Church to defend herself in the modern world and her teachings on God, faith and revelation was made concrete in the Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Filius*. In particular, the said Council reiterates the natural knowledge of God through the natural light of the natural reason (Rom 1:20; DH 3004) concentered in Christ (Heb 1:1ff). The limitations of the world and the opening of reason to the Absolute emphasize "God as the beginning and end of all things."

²⁹ Ibid., 151-158.

³⁰ Cf. J.-L. CHRÉTIEN, *La mirada del amor*, Salamanca 2005, 70.

Vatican II takes the revelation by modifying the “supernatural revelation” of Vatican I as *salus superna* (DV 3).³¹ This would reside both the epiphany of God as a manifestation of the living God really present and creates, guides, judges and saves. The history of salvation in the New Testament is considered the epiphany of God and Christ (Tit 2:13; 1 Tim 6:14). In DV 2, we encounter the revelation in the light of Eph 1:9: “he has made known to us the mystery of his will.” Thus, revelation becomes the “economy and history of salvation” in “deeds and words” (cf. DV 2;4;7;8;14;15) like the illuminating vision of faith (cf. DV 5).³²

Furthermore, the expression, “*Dei Verbum*,” in which the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation of the Vatican II Council is entitled, gives testimony of the Triune God who gives freely of himself through faith. This evokes that the Word of God, the revelation, was made flesh in Jesus Christ. The text introduces us to the idea of “communion with us and our communion with God” which is a communication of God and his personal gift to man because the revelation is already salvation and is already structured to life eternal (DV 1).³³ Christianity then is religion of the living Word and the incarnate of God and not the *Buchreligion*.³⁴ Thus, revelation is an act of God who reveals of himself (DV 6) that is a Trinitarian movement in the history of salvation as a gift of knowledge and eternal life (DV 2). The word of God has its own efficacy: the act (in the Hebrew sense of *dabar*) reveals and accomplishes the salvation.³⁵ The plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words through which God is made known through the crucial history (DV 2; 17). Moreover, the revelation is presented in a long *historia salutis*: from the moment of creation, history after sin and the history of the people of Israel from Abraham (divine initiative that gives order to the creation up until salvation in unity of the redemptive action).³⁶ Christ himself is the mediator and fullness of fullness of the revelation (DV 2; 4) who fulfills the work of salvation that the Father has entrusted him and through his words and deeds, in his suffering to death and his glorious resurrection from the dead and sending of the Spirit (DV 4) to free us from the darkness of sin and bring us to life eternal.

³¹ Cf. S. PIÉ-NINOT, *o.c.*, 246-249.

³² *Ibid.*, 243.

³³ B. SESBOÛÉ, *La comunicación de la Palabra de Dios: Dei Verbum*, in: B. SESBOÛÉ–C. THEOBALD, *La palabra de la salvación*, Salamanca 1997.

³⁴ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 58.

³⁵ B. SESBOÛÉ–C. THEOBALD, *o.c.*, 409.

³⁶ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 61; B. SESBOÛÉ–C. THEOBALD, *o.c.*, 410-412.

God's creation came to be through Christ (Jn 1:3) and in this sense, he made himself manifest in his creation (Rom 1:19ff): in the revealed things and divine goods (DH 3008; 3005). Just as the Word who became flesh with all his weaknesses and who suffers with us, thus the Word of God was made into human words (likening it to human language). The essence of dialogue between God and man is richly made through "condescension": "For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men" (DV 13). The Johannine tradition derived from revelation shows the relationship of God with the world: first is creation, which Christ becomes the mediator through whom the world was made and held in being. The revelation is primarily salvation. Second is the incarnation: Jesus Christ is the Word who was made flesh (Jn 1:14; 1:18). And third, the mediator of salvation is the one who made God known, God's love for the world, God's lamb that removes the sins of the world (Jn 1:29), the one that will be lifted up from suffering because of the sins of his people through the revelation of his glory in the Paschal Mystery (whose sacrificial love re-establishes the relationship of God with his sinful creatures).³⁷

c. *Faith as Man's Response to Revelation*

The Christian faith is a gift of encounter that free men do to listen to the word of grace pronounced by Jesus Christ; it is the illumination of reason by which men are made free to live in the truth of Christ and be conscious of the sense of his existence; and, it is the decision that men have the freedom to respond publicly of his trust in the word of God and his knowledge of the truth of Christ through the Church and with the pertinent acts and attitude of the worldly stance.³⁸ Faith is the *supra* and *prius* that always corresponds to the true God that man offers himself totally and freely. But this needs an obedient response to this free gift of God (Rom 16:26) "consonant with reason" (Rom 12:1) "to give full obedience of intellect and will to God who reveals" (DF 3) that starts from hearing (*Fidex ex auditu*) the Gospel, the transforming and actuating force that gives

³⁷ C. E. GUNTON, *A Brief Theology of Revelation*, Edinburgh 1995, 118-119.

³⁸ Cf. K. BARTH, *Esbozo de Dogmática*, Santander 2000, 22-43.

sense and saves.³⁹ Thus, there should be a dynamic relationship between the faith of the Church (*fides qua*) and the act of faith (*fides quae*).

Blaise Pascal develops a philosophical anthropology in the reception of the revelation. He would consider man who always suffers in contradiction: miserable but he knows of his misery even up to suicidal (this suicide does not pretend that life may tear apart but to shatter this miserable life that makes him suffer by working in hope to escape from the unbearable life. However, to escape from the unbearable condition means a constant longing for happiness). This act of knowing is an aperture for man to the Revelation. He would prescribe: “through Christ we get to know life, death. Without Jesus Christ we don’t know what our life is all about, our death, our God and ourselves.” God manifests in Christ that explains the reason to human misery (the corruption of man’s nature) and offers a way of salvation.⁴⁰

Our modes of prayer, worship, piety and devotion lead us to God in his self-donation to his creature. God reaches man for salvation in love and freedom. In Christ, everything was a “yes” (2 Cor 1:19) in such a way that his love, salvation, fidelity and truth become the primary objective. This absolute Presence calls man to partake with Christ’s life that would awaken him to desire God and the restlessness of his heart would find rest in him despite his sufferings, infidelities and rejections (sinfulness). God’s salvific will leads man to partake in his divine life (cf. Eph 1:9; 2:18): “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself... the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (DV 2).

3. God’s Revelation in the Language of Man

a. Tradition as medium of Revelation

To understand Tradition (*paradosis*) is to consider the term self-surrendering of Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit and in the Church in its communicative, sacramental,

³⁹ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 63-64. Also, cf. Rom 10:9-10.

⁴⁰ Cf. C. IZQUIERDO (ed.), *Teología fundamental. Temas y propuestos para el nuevo milenio*, Bilbao 1999, 92-95.

historico-salvific and personalist vision.⁴¹ This sense of understanding is already found in the New Testament writings: “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you...” (1 Cor 11:23-27; also 1 Cor 15:3). The martyrs have lived such very good example to transmit such revelation from God: “Neither suffering nor violent death could ever lead them to abandon the truth which they have discovered in the encounter with Christ” (FR 32). Tradition can be better understood and lived in these three Pauline key terms: *to receive* from the Lord (make others as contemporaries of Christ), *to transmit* to others, and *to make anamnesis* (memory) of the message transmitted.⁴² This process has its fundamental basis on the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ for our salvation that deals with the necessity of ecclesial mediation in the light of the central event that convokes one’s own existence (through the Holy Spirit as the body of the head), that is the life of Christ that is given up for all.⁴³ The Holy Spirit makes possible the reading, comprehension and living of the sacred texts as the Word of God (*norma normans*) that stirs up the faith. Irenaeus and Tertullian already had the conception of Tradition expressed in the Scriptures and the Creed as an essential element in the *regula fidei*.⁴⁴

Vatican II Council had explicitly expressed the profound unity between the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition (DV 9) in a qualitative manner: the Scripture is the word of God (*locutio Dei*) recorded in writing. The Tradition integrally transmits the Word of God (*Verbum Dei*). Thus, it has the same relation with the Word of God. The Word of revelation, entrusted by Christ and by the Holy Spirit was transmitted by the apostles according to the principle of continuity. Meanwhile, the Tradition transmits what the Scripture contains and the Scripture is transmitted and received in a continuous life of faith⁴⁵ even under the threats of suffering from persecutions and condemnations. The constitutive content of the Tradition is the self-communication of God who reveals and suffers with humanity. The summit is the surrendering of God his own Son to suffer through the hands of men (Rom 8:32; 4:25; Eph 5:2). The redemptive action of God is transmitted in the word preached and the Eucharist (in memory of his suffering and self-offering) that is real verbal tradition (cf 1 Cor 11:23). The Constitutive form of tradition is the testimony of faith in the lives of the apostles (cf DV 8). The Sacred Scripture,

⁴¹ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 74.

⁴² Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *EL ejercicio de la teología. Introducción al pensar teológico y a sus principales figuras*, Salamanca 2007, 149-151.

⁴³ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *Teología fundamental*, 74-75.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁵ Cf. B. SESBOÛÉ–C. THEOBALD, *o.c.*, 423.

inspired by the Holy Spirit, testifies to the apostolic faith and is a norm for continued ecclesial tradition. The Word of God becomes the supreme norm (*norma suprema, norma normata*) that gives testimony in the doctrine, Liturgy, life of the Church and in the hearts of the believers.⁴⁶

The teaching authority of the Church in the name of Christ “is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed” (DV 10). Thus, there is the unbreakable solidarity of the Tradition, Scripture and the magisterium under the action of the Holy Spirit. It is then a need to hear obediently the Word and sacrifice oneself to remain faithful to what is transmitted, even to the point of suffering.

b. *The Word of God in the Church*

The Sacred Scripture is the “soul” of the transmission of Revelation by the Church (cf DV 24; OT 16). As a rule of faith, it deals with the event of Christ as the inspired word of God as the “soul of Theology” and thus, it considers of high importance its interpretation “in the Spirit”.⁴⁷ We find that, God manifests his desire to reveal himself through the Sacred Scripture. He made himself manifest through the obedient following of his people and their leaders to the “one living and true God, provident father and just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by Him, and in this manner prepared the way for the Gospel down through the centuries” (DV 3). This becomes for us true evidence that God has fully revealed and continuously reveals himself in the history. Thus, in order for man to be “useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (2 Tim 3:16), the sense of inspiration done by the Holy Spirit must be acknowledged in the authors so as to ensure an error-free and solid revelation for salvation (cf. DV 11).

Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14) and thus, the Sacred Scriptures can be thought of in the light of the mystery of the incarnation: “For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every

⁴⁶ J. WICKS, *Tradición*, in: R. LATOURELLE–R. FISICHELLA–S. PIÉ-NINOT, *Diccionario de Teología Fundamental*, Madrid³1992, 1560-1573.

⁴⁷ Cf. S. PIÉ-NINOT, *o.c.*, 625.

way made like men” (DV 13). And so the Church has its voice in the Sacred Scripture, the voice of the Holy Spirit, that is being offered and given to the community of believers as the objective expression of his being and as the Word of God.⁴⁸ Moreover, “the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord” (DV 21) which invites for a *sacramental* comprehension of the Word of God, its “power and strength,” that is “living and effective “ (Heb 4:12), its “firmness of faith” and the “nourishment of soul.”⁴⁹

Suffering hides the presence of God in a more radical way that affects one’s religious and human experience. Moreover, suffering empties the experience of salvation and thus, the experience of faith and of God seems impossible. It also contradicts with the basic experience of love since it empties the light of one’s vision of reality. Hence, one would ask about the absence of God but he is invited to look up to a Christian paradigmatic experience of Jesus who experiences suffering and experienced the abandonment, the painful absence of God (“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”: Mt 27:46). Like Jesus, man can encounter God through his absolute trust by commending his spirit to the Father (cf. Lk 23:46).⁵⁰

Thus, through the Word of God and the incorporation of every individual in communion with the Church through the sacramental comprehension of his Word, suffering is given a profound sense: Christ’s suffering overflows us (2 Cor 1:5) “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil 3:10) and fill what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions (cf. Col 1:24) for the salvation of all. In this way, the revelation of the Word of God becomes even more the Word interpreted and lived “in the language of man” (cf. DV 12; *Divino Afflante Spiritu*). It is such a great mystery of God’s love penetrating the world and so man, though he suffers, becomes himself true when the Word who is the language of God himself leads him. The very sign of God coming down to us through the incarnation, in his sufferings and death, and in his emptiness give us already the reason why God goes out and reveals himself as inscrutable love⁵¹ that chose to suffer with and for humanity.

⁴⁸ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, o.c., 116.

⁴⁹ Cf. B. SESBOÛÉ–C. THEOBALD, o.c., 434.

⁵⁰ Cf. J. M. VELASCO, *La experiencia cristiana de Dios*, Madrid 1995, 170-173.

⁵¹ Cf. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Sólo el amor es digno de fe*, Salamanca 2004, 131-132.

PART TWO

**MAN'S SUFFERING AND
THE HOPEFUL RESPONSE OF GOD**

V. Suffering and the Reality of Man

1. *Creation and the Existence of Suffering*

a. *The Cosmic Creation and the fullness of the Love of God in Christ*

The Christian confession of faith speaks of “God, creator of heaven and earth”: his work of creation cannot be understood and explained only by itself but with man as its center who senses the embodiment of his existence— the heaven and earth are from God and they pertain to God.¹ The concept of creation is essentially a religious experience of contingency and gratuitousness in all creatures. However, one cannot but question on his experience of pain and suffering: Why did God create a world in which suffering is extremely imbibed in the existence of the living beings? Can’t God create a world where there are lesser sufferings and evils? Why does he permit it? Can we still consider him as the omnipotent and loving God? Without setting aside these crucial questions, man’s attributions of God can still directly be comprehended on his human condition. Hence, only God is capable of creating (who gives being out of nothing) and man is only capable of doing. The presence of God (being omnipresent and omniscient) in his creation affirms a disparity in terms of its absolute dependence on him in its origin, essence and direction. According to Paul Tillich,² the divine life is a creator per se and it is realized in a never-ending fullness; for God eternally creates. Thus, creation is not an event in the life of God but it is being identified in him. On the other hand, the finitude of man dwells in the condition of the creature (his capabilities and weaknesses) since being a creature is to have fundamental roots in the creator of the divine life through freedom.

In this way, it is adequate to consider J. Moltmann’s³ idea of the divine eternal life as life of the love that is eternal, infinite, that overflows from a Trinitarian perfection, in the creator process, and returns to him in the eternal sabbatical rest. From the said conception, the distinction between God and the world can be maintained in all forms of communion. God activates his divine interior life to his creatures in love: to make man in his image and likeness (Gen 1:27) and to participate in his divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). It is then apt to concur that sufferings and miseries of the world help us to

¹ K. BARTH, *Esbozo de Dogmática*, Santander 2000, 73.

² As cited by J. MOLTMANN, *Dios en la creación*, Salamanca 1987, 98.

³ *Ibid.*, 99.

understand that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) as we see in the God who is crucified that shall be developed in this chapter.

As far as the concept of creation is concerned, we are confronted with how God has created the world and maintained it in being without any internal necessity, felicity and power. The creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) is a free creator action of God that is not conditioned by anything that is distant from him or any external presupposition that limits his freedom. It is a consequence of the universal sovereignty of God.⁴ Even different myths of creation of different religions are concerned with the concept of existence and the concept of actual existing contingency of reality. But they have to be understood from the conditions of the primordial existence since the actual mode of which the universe exists is not thought of in an absolute mode. Another consideration can also include the priestly narration of Gen 1:1ff though it does not question, in an absolute way, the totality of all that exists and does not clearly affirm that God created everything out of nothing. Instead, it is more of a creation that is forming the cosmos from its chaotic condition.⁵ Such narration uses the verb *bara* that means an action that has God, who does not act over a preexistent material, as its exclusive subject and results of an unprecedented effect.⁶ From this idea onwards, the faith in the creation becomes a guarantee of a continued covenant of God with his people. Furthermore, on wisdom literatures, we find that the idea of creation, a creation out of nothing (cf. 2 Macc 7:28), is given a new expression that directs towards the reflection of the attributes of God through ontological structure and qualities of creation with extraction of effects for human conduct.⁷

The New Testament is replete with a Christological concentration in the theme of creation (e.g., Mk 13:19; Mt 11:25; 19:4; Acts 4:24; 7:49ff; 17:24-28; Rom 4:17; Eph 1:4; 1 Tim 4:4; 6:13; Heb 11:3; 1 Pet 3:5; Ap 4:11). The key concept can be understood from the resurrection of Jesus Christ who was sentenced to death on the cross and was incorporated to the fullness of divine life: a life that has no end. The creation in Christ, just as Athanasius would posit, is linked with the logical interpretation of his resurrection (the idea of preexistence is linked with the confession of the absolute Lordship of God, which is the eternal Lordship of Christ [see also 1 Cor

⁴ Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, Madrid 1983, 63-67.

⁵ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La Lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 191-192.

⁶ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *Teología de la creación*, Santander 1988, 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53-58.

8:6]).⁸ It is in this sense that Christ is the ultimate end of all that exists, redeemed and saved. Christ, who is the beginning and end of creation, has promised us of the ultimate and unalterable victory over evil and its manifestations (physical evil of creatural limitations, sin, death, social injustice, selfishness, all kinds of suffering, etc.).⁹

The affirmation on the continued creation,¹⁰ the most special relationship with God with the totality of all that exists, creates such relationship that gives possible the day to day existence within the mode of space and time. Augustine admits that the beginning of creation and time is the same and that the being of creations comes from God in which his divine creator actions are maintained. Thomas Aquinas is affirming such conception as he asserts the ontological affirmation of the creation out of nothing.

In contemporary Theology, J. Moltmann¹¹ tries to relate the *creatio ex nihilo* that reaches its peak in the cross of Christ. The *ad extra* divine action marks the opening of God to a redemptive suffering and the presence of God in the “primeval space” that he himself prepared: a God who does not abandon his creatures despite sinfulness. For him, *creatio ex nihilo* in perspective of the cross of Christ means forgiveness of sins, justification of the impious through Christ’s death, resurrection from the dead and life eternal through the sovereignty of the Lamb. Moreover, the cross of Christ means true consolidation of the universe since the Creator, in every suffering there is, is always available in favor of his creation even from the beginning.

Men are directed towards the promise of eschatology, the faith in the Creator referred to the future. His hope in God obliges him to be faithful on earth. On the other hand, it is but fitting to underline that the fidelity of God is not only expressed in the preservation of his creation as a sign of his faithfulness but also in purifying, redeeming, reconciling and consuming his creatures.¹² Hence, the consummation can be concreted in the idea that the love of God cannot abandon his creation (despite suffering caused by evil and death) in the hands of nothing but it will be kept forever in the fullness of the condition of creature in him.

b. *The mystery of man before the Mystery of God*

⁸ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 195-197.

⁹ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *Teología de la creación*, 84.

¹⁰ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 198-199.

¹¹ See for further exposition: J. MOLTMANN, *Dios en la creación*, 100-107.

¹² Cf. W. PANNENBERG, *Teología sistemática* vol. II, Madrid 1996, 44-45.

In our understanding of creation, man is placed as its center. Man is already a major preoccupation of the Sacred Scriptures and has continued in Christian tradition: that he is created in the image and likeness of God and thus, he is situated above all other creatures, but he is not God. Gen 1:26-27 speaks twice of the “image” of God and once of the “likeness.” There’s no opposing argument regarding these terms but some authors would say that the word *likeness* serves to avoid an excessive identification between Creator and creature in using the word *image*.¹³ The same terms are found in Gen 5:1 and 5:3 (in distinct order: Adam “begot his son in his likeness, after his image”) but they are not in the same affirmation with Gen 1:26. Rather, they should be understood in the idea of the nearness of God to men and man’s dominion in creation.¹⁴ This calls for a communion with God and such image and likeness of man cannot be removed from him despite his continues infidelity against the Creator. Furthermore, in the New Testament, this idea becomes very Christocentric. The “image of God” refers to Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). Moreover, the Christological hymn of Col 1:15-20 leads to a deeper understanding of this novel theology brought by Christ. First of all, it presents Christ as creator in vv. 15-16. He is the “image of the invisible God” (it applies also to Christ called as the “wisdom of God” which can be found in 1 Cor 1:24.30 and even in Wis 7:26– the creator wisdom of God anchored in Christ). His being the “firstborn of all creation” speaks of his primacy over all creatures (see also v.18) in his personal preexistence and prevision of his incarnation towards eternity. In Christ, all things were made both in heaven and earth (v. 16). Secondly, vv. 16b-18a talks about creation and salvation. All things were created through him and for him: the plan of God from the very creation is realized as unity in, through and for Christ. Creation becomes Christocentric. Christ becomes the basis of harmony, unity and cohesion to the reality (v. 17) who will later be the head of the ecclesial community (1 Cor 12:12; Eph 1:22-23). Lastly, vv. 18b-20 talks about Christ as savior. In v. 18b, Christ is the “beginning” (arché) as regards the “image” (see Rom 8:29). The “fullness” (v. 19) of Christ is given by God for him to also give fullness to his creatures and to reconcile with them (v. 20).¹⁵

The New Testament reinterprets and enriches the creational theology of Genesis: the creation initiates the dialogue between God and man towards the coming of Jesus

¹³ Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, 118-119.

¹⁴ Cf. H. W. WOLF, *Antropología del Antiguo Testamento*, Salamanca 1974, 217.

¹⁵ Such content can also be paralleled with Heb 1:1-3 and/or Jn 1:1-18. Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *Teología de la creación*, 71-77.

and the eschatological consummation. The initial condition of man as the image of God is converted to the following of Christ through his faith towards eternal fullness. This salvific event destroys the old man and his sinfulness, that is, from Adam to Christ.¹⁶ This is made clear in GS 22: “For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.” Through the incarnation, Christ, being the “image of the invisible God” is very much united in some fashion with man (in work, suffering, choice, human heart, etc.): “to the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward” (GS 22).

Furthermore, man, in his relation with the world and with God, is created as all alive and personal under these principles contained in the Old Testament: *ruah* (spirit), *nefesh* (soul¹⁷), *basar* (flesh: vulnerable, perishable, fragile). This would say that salvation and condemnation affect the totality of man. On the other hand, *leb* (the heart as the organ of sentiments and the forces of intelligence and will) can conceive the idea that man is soul and body.¹⁸ On the other hand, we encounter in the New Testament that the Greek term *psyché* is equivalent to the *nefesh* of the Old Testament; *basar* is translated in Greek with the idea of carnal weakness as *sarx* (directly related to sin due to egoist desire of one’s satisfaction) or *soma* (Pauline idea of the flesh that orients towards Christ); the *ruah* is linked to the idea of *pneuma* that directs towards an altruistic and genuine self through the Spirit that orients our existence, conforms man with Christ, incorporates him to a new reality; and the *leb* resounds as *kardía* (heart) and *syneidesis* (conscience), directing man towards self-determination.¹⁹ Man, created differently for being the image and likeness of God. The Christian tradition, even in pre-Nicene conceptions like that of Justin, Theophilus, Tatian, Athenagoras, Clement and Origen, the “soul” and “flesh” are confined in a unitarian concept of the human person even deviating from its biblical vision. Such concept of unity of person is fundamentally expressed in the Council of Vienne (1312), taking into account the Thomistic concept of

¹⁶ Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, 122-123.

¹⁷ The traditional biblical interpretation primarily refers it as “soul” but it should also be envisaged as the definition of human being in his totality and in special relation with his breath (cf. Gen 2:7). Thus, man is *nefesh* and lives as *nefesh* expressed in man’s various body parts used in the Old Testament. Cf. H. W. WOLF, *Antropología del Antiguo Testamento*, Salamanca 1975, 25-44.

¹⁸ Cf. R. PESCH, *Antropología bíblica*, in K. RAHNER ET AL., *Sacramentum mundi* vol. I, Barcelona 1976, 278.

¹⁹ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 207-212.

“anima forma corporis” in which the substantial union of the said components must be considered.²⁰

Moreover, Vatican II Council reiterates the unity of the body and soul and the capacity for an existential interiorizing. Driven within the material world, man becomes the peak of creation and is capable of praising his Creator. In his experience of suffering and his weaknesses, “wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorify God in his body and forbid it to serve the evil inclinations of his heart” (GS 14). In this way, man’s freedom is the fruit of his concrete elections in the temporal milieu of his limited possibilities. His comportments would show his relational character both with interpersonal and cosmic (be it a suffering-driven actions or loving relationship with others). Man has the corporal condition in God as his origin; and in God, man has his ultimate origin and waits for the overcoming of the reality of death.²¹ Human corporality, therefore, is the true condition of the possibility of the intangible and where his Creator establishes a true otherness to overcome his limitations and establish an eternal participation with God through the resurrection of the Son. This gives sense that man himself will survive not by his own capacity but because God knew and loved him and made him his interlocutor who is capable of transcendence.²²

c. Human condition before his own Creator

One of the dramatic pinnacles of E. Wiesel’s masterpiece, “the Night,” relates such experience of a death sentence of three prisoners, hanged before thousands of inmates by the Nazis. Seeing the child hanging and in slow agony before the face of death, Wiesel placed God on the side of the suffering victim: “Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows...”²³ This is just one of the numerous stories ever told about human’s extreme distress and endless miseries that even the idea of a potentate God amidst human distressing realities is being smashed into pieces. In a more particular way, man tends to ask: Why has God created the world in which suffering and pain are present? How does man know of his creatural condition, of his time and his world?

²⁰ Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, 108.

²¹ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 214-215.

²² Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Introducción al cristianismo*, Barcelona 1995, 313-314.

²³ E. WIESEL, *La noche, el alba, el día*, Barcelona 1975, 70.

Beyond the torment of life's miseries, there lies a profound comprehension of the human being fastened in the mystery of God. Together with life's experiences of suffering, the vast and unreachable mystery of God is underlined. Hence, the Theological Anthropology recognizes human being, in all his complexities and reality, before God. Reflection on man's incommunicable and non-transferable personal existence provokes man's questioning of his origin and the beginning of all creation, of sin and death, grace and salvation.²⁴ This relationship of man with God is marked in God's covenant with his chosen people. The mystery of God is manifested in the mystery of the incarnate Son, the image of the invisible God who has united in some fashion with the life of man and through whom "the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful" and "by suffering for us He not only provided us with an example for our imitation, He blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning" (GS 22). Thus, man is thought of before God and from God through the revelation that has its fullness in Christ. Man's existence is enshrined in his "opening to the world" that connotes of his relationship with God.²⁵ This brings the idea that the infinite destitution of man can be understood in his interrogations about God. The incarnation of the Word realizes the Divine purpose: the humanization of God for the divinization of man. This participation of God is made possible through his loving and gratuitous communication. This would be the root of man's endless questions of his human condition before the divine mystery that particularly induces in human queries on the sufferings of the world.

The understanding of human condition through the mystery of God revealed in the humanity Jesus Christ is fundamentally grounded on the notion of man in the following dimensions:²⁶ firstly, as a *living being* that conceives man in his biographical existence and God as the source and origin of life. The transcendental questions on the beginning and end of man remit to a double interpretation regarding man's conception and death (ontogenetic) and the hominization and extinction of human species (phylogenetic). Both questions lead to the God of Jesus Christ. Secondly, man is an *intelligent being* who apprehends, transforms the world and transcends to it. Thus, man himself is the *logos* that opens to the ultimate reason that is the *Logos* of God. However, man has the capacity to continue the action of the *logos* creator but can also lead

²⁴ P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 173.

²⁵ W. PANNENBERG, *El hombre como problema. Hacia una antropología teológica*, Barcelona 1976, 25.

²⁶ P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 172-187.

creation to its destruction. Thirdly, man is a *free being* in his finite condition and historical existence: in his destiny and his capacity for self-realization. But this freedom requires a constant deliberation, election and responsibility since man does not do what he wants to do (Rom 7:14ff). This remits us to gaze at the freedom of Christ (in the moments of temptations and his crucifixion). The freedom of God is the maximum exercise of his love that transcends death to eternal life. Lastly, man is a *sexual being*. The corporal dimension of man does not only explicit his individuality, capacity and limitations but also of his relational aspect that expresses of his sexed corporality through a determined concretion of his human identity. Hence, the love of man is an abode of which the love of God is manifested through Christ. It is in this sense that sexuality becomes a vital part in man's identity and activity: his capacity of creating new existence. Now, these dimensions are realized through man's existence including his possibilities and limitations. Suffering becomes a strong element that is embedded in "human condition" from his birth up to his death: in life, intelligence, freedom and sexuality. Taking from the Anthropological Theology perspective, man, placed in the evolution of the universe and in his chronological history, is referred to the mystery of God of Christ as his absolute origin, his very essence and his ultimate end. It is in this sense that suffering is uncovered within the possibilities of man and his world but is directed towards divine finality.

2. Christ triumphs over Suffering from Sin and Evil

a. The Existence of Evil

The questions that are previously raised in this discussion delve in the question of evil and even questioning of the omnipotence and omnipresence of God in the suffering of humanity. Evil exists. It is a reality in itself, a privative affection such as harm, pain or guilt that show of what "it should be" or better refer to as the Augustinian concept of "privatio boni." It can also be the absence of integrity, innocence, health, etc. Evil pertains to "it-must-not-be" in respect with "it-should-be" though it can also generate a relativistic view of it.²⁷ Moreover, evil can also be made manifest as experience (threat, separation, moral or physical suffering, etc.), as a scandal (questioning of the existence

²⁷ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 218-221.

of God amidst injustices and sufferings or even up to atheistic attitudes), as a problem (the why's of the problems of human existence) and, as a mystery (mystery of human freedom and of the unfathomable love of God).²⁸ However, evil can be indefinable because it is so extensive and distinct in its varied incarnations although it can be thought of as moral, physical or social evils. Theology does not explain evil but it tries to investigate the possibility of belief from the agonizing or evil experiences just as what Jesus did.²⁹

The Sacred Scriptures give us evident images of suffering. Deviating from it through the obedient following of God's covenant with his people. God made himself manifest as the author of creation and the liberator from slavery and afflictions. From the perspectives of the narrative theology,³⁰ evil was not even foreseen or mentioned in the story of creation. After creation, evil comes in the unknown image of the Demon-serpent who would bring such accident and disgrace. In particular, creation proclaims a message that man can perceive (cf. Ps 19) but it can also generate questions that pursue man relentlessly and persecutes him, closing the siege, so that he would only look up to the mystery of creation under the inscrutable authority of God (this is so evident in the story of Job and the doctrine of retribution).³¹ On the other hand, looking at the idea of Augustine in his idea of the *De natura boni*, evil in creation is but corruption: there is corruption in creation since it is not God and thus, it is the condition of the ultimate possibility that what is created can be destroyed (that's why evil exists). Only God is perfect, Absolute. On the contrary, creation proceeds from the Absolute but since it is not absolute in itself, it can always be threatened with the "no-being" and replete with the condition of possibility.³²

The question will, then, be: why God did not create a perfect world? To understand the perfect world is to picture it out as a place where evil does not exist, a paradise where happiness and harmony are universal, relations and nature go in perfect accord. Thus, there is no corruption; time passes by without erosion and space does not offer resistance. However, taking into account the idea of creation which is created by God, the world must be distinct from him and thus, perfect creation does not exist for

²⁸ R. LATOURELLE, *El hombre y sus problemas a la luz de Cristo*, Salamanca 1984, 337-340.

²⁹ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *Teología de la creación*, 157-159.

³⁰ Cf. A. GESCHÉ, *El mal*, Salamanca 2010, 53-60. Alongside with the discussion, the author presents the characteristics of the fragility of man: tempted, fragile (accidental and it comes as a surprise, man is vulnerable to outside manifestations), freed (temptations come in the exercise of our freedom), victim, and (evil as loss, mistake, obstacle). See pp. 62-69.

³¹ Cf. G. VON RAD, *El libro de Job* in, ID, *Sabiduría en Israel*, Madrid 1985, 261-286.

³² Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 221-225.

God alone is perfect. The “perfect world” is itself a contradiction since its own nature does not allow it (*ex ipso* and not *de ipso*). Will this be a contradiction to God as omnipotent? The answer is no. In terms of suffering, the Augustinian reasoning would delve on the idea that the omnipotence of God shows in doing what he wants and not in suffering what he does not want.³³ Such is that, the experience of human and worldly suffering is better seen in the historical event of salvation.

In Jesus Christ, the concrete image of God as savior and creator is revealed. Jesus lived in the world where evil exists; his words and actions cured the sick, changed the lives and social status of those who were neglected and possessed by the demons. The message and the person of Jesus were united in the great expectation of messianic kings in Israel (under universal human expectations) and were linked with creation as a starting point of history where God has entrusted to man his battle against the power of chaos. In his life, death and resurrection inaugurate the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus brings to success the mission of creation (history and covenant) within the conditions of our history of suffering.³⁴ And so, the sons of God are the coheirs with Christ: freed from the slavery of sin for the freedom of the glory of God’s sons (cf. Rom 8:20-21). Hence, evil is not a problem to be solved before believing in God; it is rather a situation in which God has revealed himself and has transmuted the seeds of the resurrection. To believe from the cross is to believe in the hope of the resurrection. The crucified God ratifies his credibility before evil because he is always the One who was resurrected from the dead by the Father (cf. *Salvifici Doloris*, 20). Moreover, to believe from the cross is to alienate us from the forms of crucifixion (against all experimented evil). Hope, then, is the activity that is waged for the solidarity and the victory over pain, suffering and evil that includes the faith in the resurrection and the life inseparable from the faith in creation.³⁵

b. *Suffering and Sin*

Human sin is at times sin against God and against his fellowmen. The Yahwist tradition of the first sin of humanity develops theologically, sociologically and anthropologically the sinful acts. Since it ruptures the order of creation, sin also breaks the communion

³³ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 225-227.

³⁴ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Los hombres relato de Dios*, Salamanca 1995, 222-223.

³⁵ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *Teología de la creación*, 172-174.

between man and God and all creations.³⁶ Just in the Old Testament, the dismal characteristics of human condition do not only delve on the existence as suffering and death where the people of Israel experimented the sinful activities that caused suffering and the dreadful shadow of mortal fate (Ps 39:5.14; 90:10.12; Gen 47:9; Job 7:2-3; 14:1-2; Eccl 2:7; 3:19-20) but also on committing sin against God: temptation to be like God (Gen 3:5). In a more particular vision, the origin of sin that Gen 2-3 presents is a clear presentation of how man disobeys God, his desire to make absolute the moral autonomy and put himself in the place of God. The peace of God was broken through the anti-divine force symbolized by the serpent. And this fall itself is irreparable. Not only the “man” and “woman” who are affected but even their sons through all generations. Still, God does not abandon man in spite of the sinfulness (cf. Gen 3:14ff.21).³⁷ The “existence as sin” from the very story of man’s fall in Genesis to the universal sinfulness that does not only deal with illicit acts (i.e., Gen 4:6-7; 6:5-6.11-12; Ps 14:1-3; Eccl 7:20; Prov 20:9; Sir 8:5; Is 24:5; etc.) but on a disposition (psychological) that is driven from the heart (i.e., Jer 17:9; Ez 36:26; etc.) of man.

Being the image of God, man ruptures through alienation of his being, has wronged his objective, broke the communion and became perverted. This can also be expressed in people’s solidarity in suffering.³⁸ On the other hand, without speculating on the origin or nature of sin and continuing the Old Testament conceptions of sin, Jesus in the synoptic gospels reiterates the existence of the universal sinfulness (i.e., Mt 7:11; 12:34.39.45; Mc 1:15; Mt 1:21; Lk 4:19, etc.). Moreover, John underlines the “sin of the world” (i.e., Jn 1:29; 3:1-7; 7:7; with the demon as prince in Jn 12:31; 16:11, etc.). Paul, taking into consideration the Rom 5:12-21, speaks about man, in his original sin, is victim. Man is also a brother-of-other in his sinful character. Each man actualizes and brings in himself the primary vice of the history.³⁹ Paul also creates a relation between the sin of man and of Adam and how Christ feed man from the power of sin and reconciled him to God. Through sin, death entered the world and this sin drags all men to commit another sin: the sin of Adam becomes the sin of all. Thus, Paul makes a parallel Adam-Christ (Christ as the head of the redeemed humanity and in his grace, justification brings life from the death caused by sin). Christ’s obedience and

³⁶ Cf. T. SCHNEIDER (dir.), *Manual de teología dogmática*, Barcelona 1996, 219.

³⁷ Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, 201.

³⁸ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *El don de Dios. Antropología teológica especial*, Santander 1991, 48-56.

³⁹ Cf. J. I. GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *Proyecto de hermano. Visión creyente del hombre*, Santander 1987, 329-333.

justification fulfills God's work of salvation and the redemption and reconciliation speaks about the universal redemptive will of Jesus against the dominion of sin.⁴⁰

For this instance, man has already been experiencing rupture: he already encounters disorders, disturbance and irregularities breakdown in ordinary interaction that boils down to effort, suffering, pain and labor that are incomprehensible, "quod operor non intellego" (What I do I do not understand).⁴¹ There is such a fundamental split between the central form of organization and eccentricity that creates a contradiction in deeds that has its structural basis. There is then a special reference of the "I" the *amor sui* which is instilled already in natural restrictions.⁴² The evil, as Augustine would negate the Manichaeans' conception of it, has its origin in the corruption of what is real and the corruption of the interior of man, his will and heart. But this experience, as Augustine goes against Pelagius, does not speak of man's nature as evil. The "original sin" that disrupts the primary good of creation continues with the corrupted nature in the world (inherited sin). On the other hand, St. Thomas would later concur that the original sin is materially concupiscence and formally privation of justice. This is affirmed by the Council of Trent in saying that concupiscence is not a sin by taking into account the possibilities of the freedom of man for salvation: salvation of God in Jesus Christ.⁴³

GS 13 encapsulates this odd human experience: "therefore man is split within himself. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness." Thus, man has to receive the salvation from his sinfulness and the liberation from suffering since, as GS 13 explicitly affirms, "examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too, and is engulfed by manifold ills which cannot come from his good Creator... Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains. But the Lord Himself came to free and strengthen man, renewing him inwardly and casting out that 'prince of this world' (John 12:31) who held him in the bondage of sin. For sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment." In this way, the theology of original sin has to consider that the love of God for his creation is made manifest fully in Christ.

⁴⁰ For more information, Cf. L. F. LADARIA, *Antropología teológica*, 207-215.

⁴¹ Cf. A 145 in M. BLONDEL, *Action (1893). Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, USA 1984.

⁴² Cf. W. PANNENBERG, *Antropología en perspectiva teológica*, Salamanca 1993, 131-133.

⁴³ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 241-246.

Only the love of God is capable of transforming us and saving us from the destruction of sin and evil. Jesus, in his crucifixion, death and resurrection (a full manifestation of God's love) is a full manifestation of the merciful act of God for the forgiveness of sins.

c. Grace in Suffering and Hope for Salvation

The "grace" is no other than the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. It anticipates the eschatological transformation in order to make us God's "new creation" (Gal 6:15). Moreover, it becomes for man the self-communication of God, the "uncreated grace" since, at the very outset, man is in need of liberating himself from the experiences of evil. Thus, God freely gives grace to man, who is extraordinarily privileged in all his creation, saved in love.⁴⁴ At the outset, the sense of grace is already noted in the Old Testament: the identity of God expressed in his free election (i.e., Dt 7:6-8; 10: 14-15; Jer 1:5-10; Ps 79:2; 89:51; etc.), unbreakable covenant (i.e., Gen 9:8-17; 17:10; 2 Kgs 11:4ff; Ps 136; etc.) merciful love, and the constant and free salvific destiny of man. Although grace is not explicitly marked, three elements are considerably satisfying: the cancellation of sin, interior renewal of the sinner, intimate relationship between God and man (presided by divine *hesed-emet*).⁴⁵ In the New Testament, the grace is concreted in the person of Jesus Christ. It is in whom the superabundance of grace and the love of God manifest despite man's transgressions: where sin increased, grace increased all the more (cf. Rom 5:15-21 esp. v. 20). Everything boils down to the love of God in Christ that also insists the love of man for his neighbor (cf. 1 Jn 4:19; 5:1). This love of God is a free gift to man through Jesus Christ whom God sent us in order for us to live in him (cf. 1 Jn 4:9; Rom 8:31ff) justified by his grace (Rom 3:23-24). This is salvation in Christ in the participation and appropriation of his being that freely calls to follow him through man's response of faith and love as gracious gift and free choice.⁴⁶ Moreover, in first letter of Peter, the suffering Christ occupies the model for Christians who suffer and it is an "undeserved suffering" (2:20; 3:17; 4:15) that means for grace to be the salvation of God in Christ (1, 10.13).

Alongside with the scriptural affirmations of grace, we also encounter Augustine's defensive argument against Pelagianism on grace, human nature and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 247-250.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *El don de Dios*, 207-232.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 233-265.

freedom. To do the good, man acts not only in freedom but also in grace as its mechanistic liberator. The more man is free, the more he is docile to the merciful grace of God expressed in the redemptive suffering of Christ on the cross. It is in this way that grace heals man's will to do justice and to love freely. Later on, the Semipelagians admitted that man can desire to be just by himself without any divine assistance but cannot make him just before God since from the *initium fidei* of man, grace is absolutely necessary for salvation (for *augmentum fidei*), that comprehends faith as already formed by love. This will later be negated by the Synod of Orange (529) saying that all is saved by grace and not a division of those who are saved by grace and those who are saved by free will (cf. DH 373-395 esp. 378).⁴⁷ Conflicts have also emerged, for example, Michael Baius and Jansenist followers naturalized grace when they conceived it as integrating and crucial part of the structural configuration of the creature through the naturalization of the Spirit for the good acts of man. The decree on justification by the Council of Trent (1547) sustained that man impulses to action with help of grace but he can also reject it and it is through grace that man makes himself just before God. The actuation of grace has its invisible character of love and the visibility of the loved since grace acts through love.⁴⁸

Through our baptism,⁴⁹ our life is brought to the real incorporation in Christ. It is the force of the love of God that reconciles our perturbed and suffering human condition caused by evil and sin. This is expressively done through the cross of Christ that impedes evil to produce more sufferings in the world. Through Christ who triumphs over sin and death, our incorporation in him through baptism is already an expression of a glorious victory of suffering, death and sin. Now, God does not want suffering so that man may learn from him but he does it for the salvation of all humanity. His persistent salvific will confronts with the disgrace of suffering in order that it may also be a viable instrument to bring others the salvation of God (cf. Rom 8:28). Christians, through God's solidarity with those who suffer and those who are threatened by death, know that in communion with God, Jesus redeemed and took all forms of evil and transformed them to good.⁵⁰ Through grace, all Christians should take God as an inspiration and orientation in the gospel of salvation through Christ to achieve the authenticity and will, freedom and happiness by being imitators of God, his beloved children (Eph 5:1).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 282-285.

⁴⁸ Cf. P. FERNÁNDEZ CASTELAO, *Antropología teológica*, 267-271.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁰ Cf. T. SCHNEIDER (dir.), *Manual de teología dogmática*, 272-273.

VI. The Church, the People of God That Suffers, is a Testimony of Her Love for and Hope in Christ

1. *Belief and the Knowledge of the Church*

a. The Mystery of the Suffering Church in the light of the Trinity

The Church reflected the miseries of humanity and since it is both human and divine, it is given to us from above and while simultaneously derived from below. The Church opens its arms towards the future by exalting an ineffable consummation that no sign is capable of conjecturing it. The Church, professing herself to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, is destined in her present form as a figure of this world that remains in its proper essence. She is the people, the church in the intimacy of her interior life and in the silence of her adoration. She integrates all cultures and elevates all values and at the same time wants to be the home of the belittled, of the poor, of the simple and miserable people; she contemplates the One who was once crucified and resurrected, the man of pains and the Lord of glory, the loser and the savior of the world, the Church's spouse covered by blood and her triumphant teacher in whom she received existence and the life that she wants to communicate to all.¹

The Church is the community of the followers of Christ, the Messiah, united through the gifts of the Holy Spirit in one body and was born through the Paschal Mystery and form part of the salvific event of Christ who loved and surrendered himself for her by purifying and sanctifying her with water and word that she may be presented to him without blemish (cf. Eph 5:25-27).² Thus, the Church is the bringer of salvation for a sinful humanity. Such is that the mystical life of the Church does not fade in the conditions of the history that is rooted from the Trinity and is moving towards the Trinity and taking into account what J. Ratzinger³ said that the mystery does not destroy the comprehension but it makes possible the faith as comprehension. From the very foundation of the Church in the first and second century, her Trinitarian confession already resounded in the baptismal rite, fundamentally referring to the words of the resurrected Christ in Mt 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

¹ H. DE LUBAC, *Paradoja y misterio de la Iglesia*, Salamanca 1967, 13-15.

² S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 400.

³ J. RATZINGER, *Introducción al cristianismo*, Barcelona 1995, 55.

baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Such ecclesiology employs both its sacramental dimension and the mystery of Christ.

The ecclesiological amelioration at the outset of the twentieth century, the subsistence of the trust in institutions, the proven sufferings and the new desire of interiority have led man to the renewal of the social sense and the awakening of the religious yearning: to counter the sense of communion offered by the Church against the diffusing of social upheavals. This ecclesiological renewal includes taking into consideration the sense of supernatural provoked by the antimodernist actions, in liturgical movements, in the Eucharistic life, in going back to the biblical and patristic sources, in the new impulses of the ecumenical movement, etc. On the rise of the new ecclesiological vision, there came the restoration of the supernatural and mystical elements of the Church in the divine profoundness of her mystery. The said renewal recovers the pneumatological and Christological dimensions of ecclesial reality where the idea of the Church as communion is envisaged from the Trinity.⁴ In this spiritual and cultural climate, there developed the idea of the Church as the mystical body of Christ as highlighted in the encyclical of Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943), concerning the Church militant in her “intimate union with so exalted a Head” for “we intend to speak of the riches stored up in this Church which Christ purchased with His own Blood, and whose members glory in a thorn-crowned Head. The fact that they thus glory is a striking proof that the greatest joy and exaltation are born only of suffering, and hence that we should rejoice if we partake of the sufferings of Christ, that when His glory shall be revealed we may also be glad with exceeding joy” (MC 2).

The mystery of the Church as “communion,” “sacrament” and the “people of God” was highlighted from the time that it took crisis Church-world facing the secular society, decisive change of the triumph and crises of modern ideologies through modernism and the problems on progress and of hunger. The said aspects of the mystery of the Church honed the Vatican II Council by proposing the Church as mystery of communion and mission brought forth from the Trinity, stretching out as people on her way between the “already” of the first coming of Christ and “not yet” returning with the promise of a joyous hope:⁵ that the one and triune God is the main and transcendent foundation of the history of salvation. The love of God, according to St. Augustine,

⁴ B. FORTE, *La Iglesia de la Trinidad*, Salamanca 1996, 58-59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-64.

makes us see the Trinity.⁶ God, in his communion of love,⁷ convokes, congregates, and reunites his people as his property (*ecclesia ab Abel*) through the Son (cf. 1 Cor 1:9; Jn 17:24; 1 Jn 1:3ff) in the Spirit that embraces in communion with the Lover and the Loved (cf. 2 Cor 13:13; Rom 5:5). Thus, the Church proceeds from the Trinity: “Coming forth from the eternal Father's love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world” (GS 40) and makes herself the true recipient of the salvific plan of God and of the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (cf. LG 1-2). In this sense, Christ offers in his sacrifice and sufferings that we may be united with the Trinity.

Furthermore, the Church is inseparable from the Holy Spirit. Our creed that expresses “*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*” illumines and leads the Church and confers her gifts and charisms and acts in the sacraments and thus guarantees her participation in the divine life. The Holy Spirit is the principle of communitarian union (that breaks human barriers against injustices) and the principle of the eschatological action towards human fullness.⁸ Moreover, the Holy Spirit is communion and the One which binds us in communion with the Son and the Father through the Church (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Jn 16:13; LG 1, 4; UR 2). Thus, we believe in God and only in God and the Church is of and for God.

The Church is founded in her dual relation with Christ and with the Spirit in her access to the Father. The doctrine of the Church must be the doctrine of the Holy Spirit but it must be directed towards the doctrine of the history of God with man (Christ's function in the history). It then illumines the concepts of the communion of saints and the forgiveness of sins which alludes to the unity of the scattered world in one Church as the body of the Lord: it surpasses the limits of death and reunites those who receive the Spirit and his power to unite. Nevertheless, to think of the Church according to the model of the Trinity is to think of her as relational and of communion reality that lives by the love of God who self-reveals and lives in communication of love within and

⁶ Book VIII of Augustine's *De Trinitate*. See AUGUSTINE, *On the Trinity*. Books 8-15, Cambridge 2002, 19.

⁷ Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 401-404.

⁸ X. PIKAZA, *Trinidad y comunidad cristiana. El principio social del cristianismo*, Salamanca 1990, 181.

outside her.⁹ Hence, it is the Church that is brought forth from the wounded side of Christ crucified and is congregated under the fire of the Pentecost.¹⁰

b. *Church's Origin, Nature, and Being in Christ*

Viewing the Church as having her origin in the Trinity, we reflect thus on the presence of Christ sent by the Father in the suffering world through his incarnation: “It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest” (LG 2). Mt 16:18 and 18:17 expressly indicate the foundational basis of the Church but numerous critics have emerged as regards her foundation—among others, A. Loisy is doubtful if Jesus ever intended to found the Church: “Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom, and what arrived was the Church” since the preaching of Jesus of the Kingdom of God (*basilea tou theou*) was shifted to the preaching of the Church by his apostles after the resurrection. However, with the idea of the post-Paschal *logion*, the post-Paschal Church can be understood as a community founded by Christ.¹¹

Taking into account LG 5, Jesus Christ who suffered death on the cross, had risen as Lord, as Christ and as the eternal Priest and sent the Holy Spirit as promised by the Father: “From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom.” Then Christ instituted the Twelve with special sending of Peter, realized his gestures, which later on became the origin of the sacraments (implicit Ecclesiology).¹² This has become a basis on correlating the preaching of the Kingdom and the reunion of the People of God. For G. Lohfink,¹³ Jesus directs himself to the members of the people of God (cf. Mk 1:14-15 and later with the institution of the twelve, his attention to the sick and the possessed; his pilgrim with the gentiles; his takes on the religious and social crises of Israel, his death for the many, etc.) just like what John the Baptist did and not to a particular

⁹ Cf. W. KASPER, *Iglesia católica. Esencia—Realidad—Misión*, Salamanca 2013, 122-124.

¹⁰ Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 412.

¹¹ Cf. M. M. GARIJO-GUEMBRE, *La comunión de los santos. Fundamento, esencia y estructura de la Iglesia*, Barcelona 1991, 38-39.

¹² Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 416.

¹³ Cf. G. LOHFINK, *La Iglesia que Jesús quería*, Bilbao 1986, 17-38.

individual alone (cf. Harnack etc.). Jesus reunited the people in eschatological times by doing the will of God (conversion) even if it would create conflict against other religious parties (Essenes, Zealots, Pharisees, etc.).

The kingdom of God is characterized to be universally inseparable with the people of Israel (cf. Is 52:1-2). The beatitudes that project humanity's conditions (the poor, the hungry, the mournful, etc.) express significantly Jesus' mission contained in Is 61:1ff as good news to the poor, to the sick, to those who suffer and are in pain and the salvation of the people. In the person of Jesus, the Kingdom of God is being concretized by assuming the suffering of humanity through the hope that is already realized. Moreover, the New Testament conceives the Church as the true eschatological Israel as an eschatological separation done by Jesus of the people of God (to found the Church in Mt 16:18; the relation "people of God"- "kingdom of God" in Mt 21:43). With this, the institution of the Twelve gave a strong impulse towards sustaining the eschatological hope to the members of the Church of the Crucified by highlighting the image of Peter in spite of his weaknesses and lack of comprehension. The death of Jesus "for all" brings an important implication to the Last Supper event, for the moment when Jesus "breaks the bread" and "blesses the cup" that would turn as his "body" and "blood" institutes the new people of God of the new covenant by doing in memory of Christ the community as a Eucharist of hope through the Paschal experience. This reminds us that the Church's foundation as a juridical institution in the Old Testament (Ex 24:8; Jer 31:31; Ex 12; Is 53:11) are reinterpreted in the life and death of Jesus (the Paschal Lamb, the servant of God who dies for many).¹⁴

Given all these, it could be apt to ponder that the global event of Christ reflects the very origin of the Church: in Christ's life and his post-Paschal and ecclesial actualization, which M. Kehl¹⁵ calls particularly as "structural continuity." The "community signs" intend to create continuity of Jesus' intentions to reunite the people of Israel and the Church after Easter: first, the communitarian character of salvation that underlines the pneumatological dimension of the Church through her communicating and personalizing action of the Church; second, the continuity of the banquet that identifies the true eschatological community of the people of God that exerts the configuration of man with Christ (banquet feast with sinners and the poor; banquet with the Resurrected; banquet as a liturgical and cultural form of unity and identity (1 Cor

¹⁴ Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 415-423.

¹⁵ For further discussion, see M. KEHL, *La Iglesia. Eclesiología católica*, Salamanca 1996, 252-293.

10:16ff; 11:17-34); third, the sign of the salvific will of God directed to the history to a concrete social subject in its eschatological dimension; and fourth, the sign of the Gospel preaching structure (a divine mandate in and before the community: mission of the disciples, of the apostles and “pastors”).

Furthermore, there is a wide utterance of the Church that in the New Testament, the followers of Jesus considered the beginning of the true Israel that he wanted to congregate. This is the “Church of God” that Paul wanted to persecute (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). Moreover, this marks an eschatological union of God in the salvific history of the world in which Christ is the one who lays the foundation (cf. 1 Cor 3:11). The existence of the Church of God is associated with suffering that culminates in hope (cf. Rom 5:2-4). The salvation of the members of the community is guaranteed through the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9, 11, 23). As children of God and coheirs with Christ, the members suffer with him in order that they may be glorified with him (Rom 8:16-17) for their suffering cannot be compared with that of who is to come (Rom 8:18). The members of the Pauline sect impatiently and sorrowfully wait the adoption and redemption of their bodies (Rom 8:22, 23). On the contrary, suffering is converted into the expression of the imitation of Christ (cf. Phil 1:29) as the symbol of the crucified and resurrected Messiah who reminds them of his suffering that produces hope.¹⁶

The said conviction has connected to the Pauline idea of the “body of Christ” lived in the revelation through Jesus. Through baptism, members are transformed into new creation in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Moreover, Paul makes a relation between the body of the Lord who was crucified and the ecclesial community as the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:23-25). This in turn has led to living out the essence of *koinonia* by underlying the common participation of one another as one organism united in the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:14-26) without creating a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles, the descendants of Abraham and the sons of God (Rom 9:6-8). Paul was conscious about his sufferings on behalf of Christ’s body, which is “for the Church” (Col 1:18, 24). He perceived the Church in its universal aspect and as the body of Christ (cf. Col 1:25-27; Eph 1:22-23). Moreover, the Church as an institution testifies as the pillar and foundation of the Church of the living God (1 Tm 3:15ff) that leads her

¹⁶ Cf. M. Y. MACDONALD, *Las comunidades paulinas. Estudio socio-histórico de la institucionalización en los escritos paulinos y deuteropaulinos*, Salamanca 1994, 120-128.

members to purification and conversion (cf. Ti 2:12) called to become testimonies of the “mystery of the Gospel” (Eph 6:19).¹⁷

2. The Church in Communion: Hope of Christ in the Suffering World

a. The Church of God in the New Testament Context

“And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (Jn 12:32): the evangelist John shares his belief with these words of Jesus. The cross of Christ is converted into a new focus where the new people of God find hope and solace. On the other hand, in the great prayer of Jesus (Jn 17) the unity of his disciples indicates his sacrifice as the total submission to the father: the unity runs between Jesus and the Father that is sealed definitely through the cross that is fount of unity of the believers. With this concept, the apostles continued the mission as witnesses (Acts 5:32) of the significance of the Cross of Christ as bringing salvation to the ends of the world (cf. Mk 16:20; Mt 28:18-20). The universal Church is presented as the people reunited by the unity of the Trinity (cf. LG 4).¹⁸ Paul, on the other hand, accepts the term “Ekklesia” that indicates the community of the people reunited within the city. This corresponds to the term “Qahal” (the Church as reunion) of the Old Testament. “Ekklesia” deeply expresses the convocation for the Church of God to live a saintly life (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:1-2; Acts 20:28); in her the true relation with Christ exists (cf. 1 Thes 2:14); in her, unity and charity are underlined: collections for communities (2 Cor 8:7-24), different meetings as regards discipline (1 Cor 11:16), mutual relationship and solicitude (1 Thess 1:7), and the interchange of greetings (1 Cor 6:19; Rom 16:16). The “Ekklesia” is a testimony of the assemblies that offers Eucharist and sacrifices.¹⁹

The major organization of the Church started to develop from the first and second century. Such development is seen in the authentic letters of Paul as constructor institutionalization of the community, the stabilized institutionalization of the community in the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, and the institutionalization of

¹⁷ Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 429-442.

¹⁸ Cf. T. CITRINI, *Chiesa dalla Pasqua. Chiesa tra la gente*, Milan 1991, 15-17.

¹⁹ Other images of the Church are also given: “New Israel” (Gal 6:16); “People redeemed in the blood of Christ” (Acts 20:28); “Spouse without blemish” (Eph 5:27); “the productive Vine” (Jn 15:1-8); “New Spiritual Kingdom” (Jn 18:36). Cf. P. L. DE ARBELBIDE, *La Iglesia, misterio y encuentro, en la patristica y la liturgia*, San Sebastián 1979, 74-76.

protectorship of the community in the pastoral letters.²⁰ Given the images aforementioned of the Church, some particular gestures that marked the apostolic governance of Paul can be detected. One example of that experience of the glory of the Church in suffering is Paul's strategy of "contrast"²¹ that provokes in the experience of every believer the apocalyptic conception of history: living the decisive moment of the history of humanity and receptors of the revelation of God reserved to the believers generating an intense conscience of a sectarian and apocalyptic character (cf. 1 Cor 2:6-10). The Church at that moment lived within the tyranny of the empire but she considers a profound sense of reality in the foolishness and the stumbling block of the cross, of stupidity and weakness that could win over the forces and the powers of the world where the believers (the foolish, weak, despised, etc.) will triumph over them (cf. 1 Cor 1:21-28; 6:2-3; 15:24-25). Paul and his community were even faced to suffer various hostilities (cf. 1 Thes 2:2; 2:14; 3:3-4). He regards such experience as something that could be equated to the sufferings and humiliations of Christ and to foresee the sufferings that they will meet along the way as believers (cf. 1 Thes 1:6; 3:3-4). Moreover, there were cases like the possibility of generating divisions and fragmentations among the communities with the diverse functions and gifts such as apostles, prophets, teachers, mighty deeds, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. In order to solve this, Paul uses the rootedness of all functions in the Spirit and the body as the image of unity. Such is that the identity of the "ekklesia" is a reflection not of the coordination of beliefs but of the deeds that reflect the God of the cross.

In order to make a plea for the unity of the Church, Paul chooses the metaphor "body of Christ"²² since members were comparing the degrees of their personal experience to the disadvantage of others. As a Church, Paul highlights the "one and many" concept (cf. 1 Cor 12:12, 14). God created the body and its structures (1 Cor 12:18, 24) and the weak and righteous members: "But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1

²⁰ Cf. M. Y. MACDONALD, *Las comunidades paulinas*, 53.

²¹ Cf. C. GIL ARBIOL, *La primera generación fuera de Palestina*, in: R. AGUIRRE (ed.), *Así empezó el cristianismo*, Estella 2010, 173-176.

²² R. F. COLLINS, *The Many Faces of the Church. A Study in New Testament Ecclesiology*, New York 2003, 31-47; esp. 40-43.

Cor 12:24b-26). Every believer (Jews and Greeks alike) was baptized in one Spirit and all were made to drink in one Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:13) and there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female because everyone is created to be one in Christ (cf. Gal 3:27-28) which connects with the Exodus experience: all passed through the sea and were baptized into Moses, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink from the rock that followed them: Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10:1-4).

b. *The Essence of Koinonia in Suffering*

G. Philips once said that suffering will always exist and will put in the world its perplex and mysterious enigma and that Christian life is not a bed of roses and is not seduced with illusory solutions and does not pretend to unveil the mystery: it infuses the necessary force to support hardships and pains until the dawn of the definitive beatitude.²³ The Vatican Council II creates a testimony to humanity associated primarily in taking the cross that is Jesus Christ. The Church, the people of God in motion, transcends the history of the world where she suffered in negotiating her identity and adopting herself to the ever-changing socio-cultural milieux: “However, until there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing and she herself dwells among creatures who groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the sons of God” (LG 48). It is in this manner that the said Council highlights the sense of communion not only with the Trinity but also among the local churches, episcopal collegiality: the people of God in virtue of the sacrifice of communion Christ celebrated in the Last Supper.²⁴

This concept of the Church does not deviate from the New Testament structures of the community. From the very outset, Jesus had already formed the group of the Twelve and later called Paul who would proclaim the good news of salvation. Later on, the communities recognized in institutionalizing of the Church the leadership of the “elders” or the group of the seven (Acts 6:3). Moreover, with the need of the services for the community and the exercising of the gifts of prophecy, doctrine, healing, and service of charity aside from the apostles, prophets and teachers for the edification of

²³ G. PHILIPS, *Iglesia y su misterio*, Barcelona 1969, 40.

²⁴ Cf. S. MADRIGAL-E. GIL (eds.), *Sólo la Iglesia es cosmos. Miscelánea homenaje ofrecida al Prof. Dr. Joaquín Losada Espinosa*, Madrid 2000, 147-159.

the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 14:26), there came functions and services done by the *episkopoi* (inspectors, overseers), *diakonoi* as mentioned by Phil 1:1 and *presbyteroi* (cf. 1 Pt). This triple ministry was thought of as an expression of unity that was considered as an apostolic succession in the first and second century. The Church has already considered its historical decision of its theology (cf. LG 28). Thus, the ministerial structure forms a part of the concept of the Church. The Holy Spirit takes action by conferring the grace that emanates the redemption of Christ to the social body of the Church where Christians, in their intimate communion of the grace of Christ, remain faithful to the Church.²⁵

Furthermore, it is also worth highlighting that there was already a new phase of the comprehension and the self-realization of the Church regarding the decisive role of the Bishop of Rome who possesses the power of direction over all the Church that corresponds to the “*sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*” (attention given to all the Churches) and the “*plenitudo potestatis*” (the fullness of power).²⁶ LG 22 expresses clearly the role of the Roman Pontiff in creating bond of unity, charity, and peace with the bishops and the convoked councils. His role then as successor of Peter is a visible principle of the *communio episcoparum* and the entire faithful (LG 18, 23; cf. DH 3051). In particular, the individual bishops in their respective local churches have a crucial role in the formation and the unity of the faithful: “To instruct the faithful to love for the whole mystical body of Christ, especially for its poor and sorrowing members and for those who are suffering persecution for justice's sake, and finally to promote every activity that is of interest to the whole Church, especially that the faith may take increase and the light of full truth appear to all men” (LG 23).

The Church is the “Church of the people”²⁷ that has its center in the common celebration of the Eucharist and at the same time in solidarity with the existential problems, the joys and hopes, the fear and pains of men (cf. GS 1). Thus, for the *communio* of the Church, the sense of fraternity should not exist without the spiritual paternity (sense of *auctoritas*): *augere* (increase) and *auctor* (increaser). With this, the authority should not oppress life but to let it grow and promote it in every parish as community of communities. To achieve this, the Church can achieve the vision of the Vatican Council II with the ecclesial communion: communion with the Trinitarian God;

²⁵ Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 442-454.

²⁶ Cf. M. KEHL, *La Iglesia*, 306.

²⁷ Cf. W. KASPER, *Iglesia católica*, 411.504.

participation in the life of God through the Word and the sacraments; communion-unity of the local Churches; communion of the faithful who are also co-responsible in life and mission of the Church; the Church as communion for the salvation of the world.²⁸ Finally, this vision should have a sense of the people; promote charisms with a dialogical spirit through communication and development. We adhere to L. Boff's idea that the Church is a "sacrament of Trinitarian communion" and thus, "society is not ultimately set in its unjust and unequal relationships, but summoned to transform itself in the light of the open and egalitarian relationships that obtain in the communion of the Trinity, the goal of social and historical progress."²⁹

3. The Church as the New People of God in the Way of Salvation

a. Diakonia: the Church in the Service of God for the World

The Church, being called to share the gifts, joys, and anxieties of men especially the poor and the afflicted (cf. GS 1), is the People of God that while in its "earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love" (GS 45). The said task entails the service for the Kingdom and the *diakonia* of salvation in the spirit of Jesus "for the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). In Jesus, the sense of true *diakonia* is reflected in his very image as the Servant of Yahweh (Lk 4) — bringing glad tidings to the poor; proclaiming freedom to captives and the oppressed; eating with the poor and sinners. He brought the Kingdom especially to the sick, poor, humiliated, etc. (cf. Mt 11:4-5; Lk 4:18; 9:10) and he even made himself poor so that man can become rich (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). Given the diversity of gifts and services (cf. 1 Cor 12:4ff), the Church also possesses oneness in mission amidst the diversity of her ministry: "Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in his name and power. Likewise, the laity shares in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world" (AA 2).

²⁸ Cf. W. KASPER, *Teología e Iglesia*, Barcelona 1989, 376-400; S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 460-462.

²⁹ As cited in D. M. DOYLE, *Communion Ecclesiology*, New York 2000, 127.

In the post-biblical language of the Church, the term *mystery* was translated from the time of Tertullian as *sacramentum* and from which the Church fathers like Cyprian of Carthage would later develop as sacrament. In the nineteenth century, some thinkers like J. A. Möhler, in his *Symbolik*, studied the analogy between the mystery of the Word incarnate and the mystery of the Church, both gifted with human and visible element and the other divine and invisible while M. J. Scheeben coined the term “*sakramentales mysterium*” that reunites in itself human association and the mystery of unity with Christ and the Holy Spirit.³⁰ Vatican Council II says that “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (LG 1). The originary sacrament of salvation is Christ himself (Augustine). Hence, the Church as a sacramental sign remits to Jesus and his cross, that is, the Church configured with the image of Christ is the Church under the cross and in the shadow of the cross.

With this, Kasper highlights three dimensions in the Church just like the sacraments: the dimension of external sign or the social institution (*signum seu sacramentum tantum*); the medial dimension of the reality of the Church in the community with God hidden by signs (*res et sacramentum*); and the eschatological reality consumed of the universal kingdom of God towards where the Church journeys (*res sacramenti*).³¹ With this, the Church carries out the work of salvation like Christ (holy, innocent, and without sin who came to expiate the sins of the people) amidst persecution and poverty: “the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal... ‘like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God’” (LG 8) will continue to announce the cross and death of the Lord unto the world until Christ will come again. We may ask them, what about salvation outside of the Church: “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”? This is the Church’s continued challenge in her dialogue with other non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*) and considering the important aspect of religious freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*). “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions” (NA 2). Moreover, the theological tradition rejects the idea that outside of the Church, the grace of the cross of Christ is not conferred (cf. GS 22; LG 16). The gift of grace is given to man with his existence. The *Ecclesia ab Abel* (LG 2) also underlines

³⁰ Cf. M. SEMERARO, *Misterio, comunión y misión. manual de eclesiología*, Salamanca 2004, 226.

³¹ Cf. W. KASPER, *Iglesia católica*, 126-129.

that those who have not received or heard of the Gospel of Jesus, can also be pertained to the Church.³² It is the love's salvific power that makes it possible remembering that they "also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience" (LG 16).

b. *Leitourgia: the Church in the Spirit of the Sacraments*

The center and summit of the life of the Church is the celebration of the liturgy most especially the Eucharist (SC 10; LG 11). In Christ, the people received such perfect achievement of reconciliation and the fullness of divine worship was also granted (SC 5). It is not strange that the liturgy affirms that the Church was born from the side of Christ: the blood and water which flowed out from the side of Jesus constructed the Church: the water as sacrament of regeneration and the blood as the sacrament of nutrition.³³ The liturgical reform accentuates the active participation of the people of God (SC 14) and that all Christian community is the subject of every liturgical action under the ordained minister (cf. SC 28).

The charismatic and the ministerial structures of the Church have their Christological and pneumatological origin. In this sense, "The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth and which he unified in communion and in works of ministry, he both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with his fruits" (LG 4). Every baptized Christian—be it the common priesthood of the faithful (cf. Heb 13:15-16) or the ministerial priesthood (cf. 13:7.17; Rom 15:15-16; 2 Cor 3:6; 15:18-20)—participates in one priesthood of Christ, the only mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2:5). In the offering of the sacrifice of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the priest makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice (*in persona Christi et Ecclesiae*) as *communio* of the head and his members (*totus Christus*) with the Father while the faithful, in their royal priesthood, joins in offering the Eucharist: "they likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity" (LG 10).

³² Cf. S. MADRIGAL TERRAZAS, *La Iglesia y su misterio*, 476-477.

³³ Cf. *Liturgia SS. Cordis* as cited in S. PIÉ-NINOT, *Introducción a la eclesiología*, Estella 1995, 79.

The ministry of the presbyters, who are given special grace by God to be ministers of Christ, is to perform the sacred duty of preaching the Word of salvation so that the offering of the people as sanctified by the Holy Spirit will be made acceptable to God. Christ, being sent by the Father, also sent the apostles who themselves made their successors, the bishops. The priests of God (*in persona Christi capitis agere*), collaborators of bishops, share the authority in building, sanctifying, and ruling the Body of Christ (cf. PO 2). On the other hand, the role of the laity (who are themselves the Church) in the mission of the Church has their dynamic origin in the Eucharist made in the cosmic liturgy and in the passion of daily living. They, in their secular character, participate in the functions of Christ as priest, prophet, and king (cf. LG 31). They are also called to live their ecclesiality in a secular manner, in family life, in temporal living where they can build the Kingdom of God and proclaim their testimony of the Gospel.³⁴

c. Martyria: the Church as the Living Testimony of the Truth

The Church, who pilgrims as the Church of sinners and of those who suffer, being sent to announce the Gospel of salvation to the world, is herself “creature of the Gospel.” In this sense, every Christian is called to become witness of his/her faith for salvation (cf. Rom 10:10; 1 Pt 2:9). This must become the word of the magisterium of the saints in the life of the Church as an expression of their testimony (anchored in their sense of faith) of the resurrection of Christ before the world. The “magisterium” defines the official function of the teaching exercised by the pastors of the Church who preach, teach and transmit or conserve the deposit of faith. It is in this manner that the Church, according to Y. Congar, remains immutable in her essential constitution and her definitive institution for salvation (indefectibility) and guarantees the teaching of faith and customs free from error in matters of the salvific truth on faith and customs, along with the impossibility of being deceived in her teaching and preaching (infallibility). God has gathered together all his flock to look upon Jesus as author of salvation, fount of unity and peace and established the Church that strains forward through trial and tribulation and “is strengthened by the power of God's grace, which was promised to her by the Lord, so that in the weakness of the flesh she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain a bride worthy of her Lord, and moved by the Holy Spirit may never

³⁴ Ibid, 477-487.

cease to renew herself, until through the Cross she arrives at the light which knows no setting” (LG 9). And so, taking into account the constitution *Pastor Aeternus* of the Vatican I Council, the concept of infallibility was reinforced in the Vatican II expressed in LG 25: the bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, “bring forth from the treasury of Revelation new things and old, making it bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors that threaten their flock... to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent.” Moreover, the Roman Pontiff, “the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals...in whom the charism of infallibility of the Church itself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic faith.”³⁵

The Church who lives the testimony of the Truth, being the “community of the cross”³⁶ and was born from the cross of Christ proclaimed in his word and announced in the Eucharist, is where Christians feel the solidarity and where they live under the shadow of the cross: the poor, the marginalized, the prisoners, and the persecuted (cf. Mt 25). With the resurrection of Christ, the Church manifests and lives the idea of sovereignty where the sense of liberation is experienced and experimented in her community and confesses the truth of salvation. Finally, the Church is not only a small group of activists gathered to initiate a new communitarian life and celebrate the Eucharist but is also more than the Pope, the bishops, the priests, and the saints because she forms as part all the unknown and the unmentioned whose faith known no one else but God, all men in all place and time, whose heart draws alone to Christ (“the leader and perfecter of faith” according to Heb 12:2) with hope and love. Hence, the Church grows as companion in true life that renews each day and is converted as the house with many dwellings where the multiplicity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit can work in her.³⁷ With this, each member can confess like St. Paul: “now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

³⁵ Ibid, 489-495. In matters of infallibility, see also “*Infalibilidad*” in: C. O’DONNELL-S. PIÉ-NINOT, *Diccionario de ecclesiología*, Madrid 2001, 554-562.

³⁶ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *La Iglesia fuerza del Espíritu*, Salamanca 1978, 112-126.

³⁷ Cf. J. RATZINGER-BENEDICTO XVI, *La Iglesia. Una comunidad siempre en camino*, Madrid ³2005, 140-143.

VII. Suffering and the Signs of God's Nearness to the World

1. *Suffering Construed from the Symbol to the Sacraments*

a. *Suffering and the Sacramental Beauty of Creation*

Man's journeys toward the proper, free and transcendental spiritual realization in the corporality-historicity and co-humanity (humanity with others) is the very basis of the word "sacrament," which is the fundamental estimation associated to the essence of man and is verified in the realization of the religious service formed in a determined mode.¹ Despite many forms of alienations that manipulate the contemporary minds of the people, the technological advancements, the absence of mystery in the conception of life, the growing number of sufferings, testimonies of afflictions and miseries, there exists a basis for sacramental life. Living in such discordance, a Christian can give reason for being a new creature in Christ who, for him, the sanctifying justification (wanted and deserved) as the sacramental way is offered and communicated through the Church, the radical sacrament of salvation.² Thus, the sacraments are a medium of how every baptized faithful should follow Christ: "in conscious and active participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, in personal prayer, in family or in community, in the hunger and thirst for justice, in the practice of the commandment of love in all circumstances of life and service to the brethren, especially the least, the poor and the suffering" (John Paul II's *Christifideles Laici* n. 16).

To confront suffering, man's presence in history must always start with Christ and sacraments are to introduce humanity to the salvific history that opens them to the new world and directs them to an intimate union with God. The sacraments lead all to the historical community and set them apart from the world that seems to lead suffering humanity into sinfulness. From this inevitable chain of suffering tendencies of man, the sacraments establish in him a liberating union with the love of God through Christ. It is in this sense that the visible realities got its essential foundation and meaning from God and received a new sense when introduced into the Christological history as bearers of spiritual forces and new historical significance.³ This self-communication of God is

¹ Cf. T. SCHNEIDER, *Signos de la cercanía de Dios*, Salamanca 1982, 24.

² Cf. E. MALNATI, *I Sacramenti. Segni della prossimità di Dio*, Milan 2004, 15.

³ J. RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI, *El fundamento sacramental de la existencia cristiana*, in ID, *Ser Cristiano*, Salamanca 1967, 75-77.

even more concretized in the grace received by man and his constant adoration that is expressed in one's life in Christ. In Christ's *kenosis*, passion and death, the true meaning of every sacramental existence of every creature is found. Moreover, man, in his corporality and in his real interiorization, is capable of transcending. The sacraments assume symbolic interpretation and thus, in a highly civilized, technological, communicational but suffering-inflicted world where complexities arise, the expression of symbols as manifestation of truth and of goodwill loses its significance and impedes the real experience of transcendence in which nature provides (*via pulchritudinis*).⁴ In this case, reducing man to a *homo faber*, the sense of transcendence and man's capacity of seeing eternity disappear.⁵ However, God can still be discovered through diverse human ways in every community and history: "bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation" (John Paul II's *Oriente Lumen* n. 11). Therefore, man's suffering is relieved in the mystery of incarnation of Christ, who reached the depths of man and find him in his very own world.

b. *The Symbol and the Christian Identity*

Explicitly implying a sacramental structure, K. Rahner would posit that the symbol⁶ is not only a mere allusion but it is a "real symbol," an expression that is realized in itself, efficient for bringing the being to reality and an authentic symbol that causes what it truly signifies. Everything is a symbolic reality and God can reach man and his opening to the self-communication of God through grace. Hence, the total reality of suffering is covered with symbolical and sacramental possibilities: life, man's relationship with others and with the world, experiences of justice and freedom. In lieu of the historico-theological view, there had been an arising of distrust in deciphering the sacramental sign as signifying creation and human life. If man is himself corrupted by sin, then it could lead him even to the darkness of his perception of God. The signs based on the Word of God give an authentic assurance of God's transcendence (even in the dark

⁴ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos de la Iglesia*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 498-499.

⁵ Cf. J. RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI, *o.c.*, 81-82.

⁶ Cf. H. VORGRIMLER, *Teología de los sacramentos*, Barcelona 1989, 22-26.

history of Auschwitz) strengthened by the faith—even when threatened by darkness and suffering—and living in hope of the realization of God’s promises.

Furthermore, symbol is specifically human and man’s existence has three dimensions: inter-subjective personal, cosmological, and historical dimensions. Thus, symbols are gathered from various human intercommunications (human relation as a sign that can acquire sacramental characters); the visible and tangible sacramentality of the faces of the poor who suffer and fight against injustice and oppression that are determined by cosmological realities of all creations. This confronted reality has the cross as its symbol; and, the historical and temporal events are converted to the signs of the times that lead to the discovery of faith in the sacramentalization of history.⁷

The anthropological trajectory that can occur in the vital groundwork in the life of the sacraments is the suffering man has to conquer: suffering from fragmentation. There is a need to rediscover the wounded condition of man and the condition of returning to something unbroken. The sacramental truth liberates if there is a respect in the dialectics between man and the Other (the assurer of unbroken unity).⁸ On the other hand, it must be duly considered that the Christian memorial underlines the ethical example of Jesus Christ towards the gift of his life as a *martyr*, because without it the Christian identity and its salvific function will just remain as a timeless myth. Also, there’s the “sacramental” gratuitousness of Easter: “for us men and for our salvation” Jesus’ death and resurrection marks as bearer of an eschatological future for humanity.⁹

c. *Sacraments in Christian Life*

The Church does not ignore human weaknesses and sufferings and is always inclined to routine and deformation. The Church considers every symbolism as crucial to ensure the enduring presence of God’s promise founded in the God of Jesus, who, in his creating love, decided to be always with men, helping and saving them.¹⁰ Moreover, the

⁷ F. PLACER UGARTE, *Signos de los tiempos, signos sacramentales*, Madrid 1991, 63-71.

⁸ B. BRO, *El hombre y los sacramentos*: Concilium 31 (1968) 55-57.

⁹ Cf. L.-M. CHAUVET, *Símbolo y sacramento. Dimensión constitutiva de la existencia cristiana*, Barcelona 1991, 549-550.

¹⁰ An example is that of the aftermath of the tragic attacks in 2011 in Oslo, Norway where the people gathered in unity through solemn gestures, words, flowers, and candles as a way of showing their unified sentiments of pain and suffering, confronting the hate and agony with hope. It was the time when the churches of distinct religions accompanied them in their afflictions (a proper gesture of maintaining their hope through God). These images show that sacraments do not break their secular significance and they also help to open and enrich the essence of dialogue. Cf. A. TORRES QUEIRUGA, *Los sacramentos*:

Church, as the visible presence of grace among men and, amidst suffering, she leads herself towards grace, manifests every Christian desire, fosters Christian movements in the bosom of the lay community. The Christian ecclesial and sacramental life is both a practice and the visibility of its faith, hope, life, and sanctity as an exterior form of an interior calling of grace in the hearts of men.

Man has an infinite need of encountering God most especially in times of difficulties. Hence, human encounters are converted into the sacrament of encounter with God.¹¹ This in turn leads to the idea why the word *mysterion* was coined (inspired mostly by Pauline usage of it, particularly Col 2:2; 4:3; Eph 3:4; cf. Eph 6:19) in speaking of a manifestation of what was hidden in God (who confers man such grace) revealed in the course of history. On the other hand, the term was changed to *sacramentum* to avoid referring to the sanctifying action of God over man (developed in the works of the Fathers even from the time of Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, etc.).¹² Thus, sacraments, in the depths of divine mystery becomes the living signs of the nearness of God to his suffering people.

Thus, every Christian identifies him/herself within the Church as “the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG n. 48) where he/she immerses him/herself in the salvific history of God with men, where the true condition of man and the genuine encounter with the love of God are manifested.¹³ Every faithful is called to live the faith in the Word of Christ (Lk 24; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 9:1-20) grounded in the life of the Church as a fundamental sacramental mediation.¹⁴ Moreover, sacraments are established to “sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God” (SC n. 59) and thus, as signs,¹⁵ they nourish the faith, prepare the faithful for charitable acts and send them to establish the kingdom close to the poor and the suffering.

Moreover, a Christian life is called to be faithful like the life of the saints, who have suffered and been glorified with Christ, by recalling and celebrating their passage to heaven as the Church proclaims the Paschal Mystery achieved in them (cf. SC n. 104). Finally, the sacramental language is a narrative language that *evokes* the presence

acontecimiento real versus simbolismo vacío o magia culta: Selecciones de Teología 50/197 (2011): 117-124.

¹¹ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Cristo, sacramento del encuentro con Dios*, San Sebastián 1965, 231-246.

¹² Cf. H. BOURGEOIS, *El testimonio de la Iglesia Antigua: una economía sacramental*, in: H. BOURGEOIS–B. SESBOÛÉ–P. TIHON, *Los signos de la salvación* vol. III, Salamanca 1996, 27-29; C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos de la Iglesia*, 500-509.

¹³ Cf. J. RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI, *o.c.*, 83-84.

¹⁴ Cf. L.-M. CHAUVET, *o.c.*, 167-178.

¹⁵ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 517-521.

of Christ and his salvation (cf. Mt 18:29); it *convokes* all Christians as an experience of encounter (“If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” [1 Cor 12:26]) and communion with the Trinitarian life; it *provokes* a response since the sacramental actions transform relationships and free man who suffers from individualism, sinfulness, injustices and makes possible his new life in Christ (cf. Rom 8:11); finally, it *invokes* man through the ecclesial sacramental structure that expresses and realizes the salvation of God in Christ.¹⁶ The life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified.

2. The Celebration of Signs

a. Suffering and the Christian Initiation

Many religions, in their initiation rites mirrored on suffering, know very well their religious and ethnic socializations particularly in receiving new members of the tribe/group, commencement of new life, encounter with the divine, transition period, new way of dealing with suffering, etc. The profound significance of water, both in religious myths and the Sacred Scriptures, is characterized as a chaotic power that is detrimental to life or causes one to suffer, as the fount of life, as purifier, etc.¹⁷

On the other hand, suffering construed in the sacrament of Christian initiation is already reflected in Jesus’ baptism in the hands of John that begins his public ministry (Mt 3:3-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22), an episode that affirms Jesus’ belief of the imminent end and his solidarity with the people’s need of redemption and freedom from suffering. In Jesus’ baptism at the Jordan, Jesus as the Messiah showed himself as authentic suffering Servant (Mt 8:17, par) of the Lord, who carried love as his weapon and turned suffering as a symbol of his victory, taking the cross as his throne. He trod the *Via Dolorosa*—acknowledging his baptism (cf. Lk 12:50; Mk 10:38; Mt 20:22) through his suffering at Calvary and on the cross, “giving his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).¹⁸ Parallel to this, the community of disciples who received the mandate from Christ himself to preach and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy

¹⁶ Cf. I. CORPAS DE POSADA, *Teología de los sacramentos. Experiencia cristiana y lenguaje sacramental eclesial*, Bogotá 1993, 166-168.

¹⁷ Cf. T. SCHNEIDER (dir.), *Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Barcelona 1996, 848-850.

¹⁸ Cf. N. CLARK, *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments* (Studies in Biblical Theology 17), London 1956, 9-18.

Spirit (Mk 16:15-16; Mt 28:18-20) continue to traverse the whole world for “conversion,” “baptism,” “remission of sins,” to receive the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” and to become aggregated to the community “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 2:38, par.).¹⁹ In the same way, the fourth Gospel²⁰ underlines baptism as a rebirth (in water and spirit: Jn 3:5; lifted up all men to himself on a cross and in glory: Jn 12:32-33) and finds the true significance of the Gospel at the very foot of the cross: “but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out” (Jn 19:34), that is, the Spirit as the water of life (Jn 7:38-39). Moreover, Paul relates baptism as one’s participation, conformation, and configuration in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom 6:4-11; “clothed with Christ,” Gal 3:27); to live life in the Spirit (Rom 8:2; Gal 5:13-26) as one body (1 Cor 12:13; in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering to attain resurrection, Phil 3:10-11). Thus, baptism is “actualization of the event which is Christ” (O. Cullman): the Paschal event of Christ’s death and resurrection and one’s incorporation to the Church.²¹

The baptismal discipline that was developed during the Patristic period shows a certain identity in their rites and catechetical formation rich in symbolism of confronting suffering as pictured by the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome in the third century: abandonment of the “old men” and the sinful works; fleeing from the enemies (pre-baptismal unction); resurrection with Christ, the sign of the cross; chrismation, etc.²² Moreover, Justin Martyr, in his Apology (I, 66, 1), designates baptism, in lieu to suffering, as a bathing that leads to new birth and thus, Christians are regenerated through “water, faith, and wood [of the cross]” (Dial. 138, 2).²³ On the other hand, in his work, *De Baptismo*, Tertullian underlines the question concerning the baptism by blood of the martyrs that conforms to Christ crucified and glorified and that guarantees of the eternal happiness. Thus, baptism by blood is not only real but a more glorious, noble, and superior to baptism by water.²⁴ With regard to the question regarding the re-baptism, Cyprian acknowledges it when baptized by heretics (marcionists and montanists) while Pope Stephen does not deem it necessary. Also, Augustine, in his confrontation with the Donatists, asserts the imprint character of God, the seal of Christ, and the Holy Spirit in questioning the validity of baptism over the

¹⁹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 539-541.

²⁰ Cf. N. CLARK, *o.c.*, 27-28.

²¹ Cf. B. SESBOÛÉ, *Invitación a creer. Unos sacramentos creíbles y deseables*, Madrid 2010, 94-96.

²² Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 542-543; Cf. B. SESBOÛÉ, *invitación*, 101-102.

²³ Cf. G. BARTH, *El bautismo en el tiempo del cristianismo primitivo*, 1986, 121.

²⁴ Cf. A. HAMMAN, *El bautismo y la confirmación*, Barcelona 1982, 104-105.

sanctity of the ministers (distinguishing *signum* and *res* in baptism's indelible *dominicus* character).²⁵ This would also lead to Augustine's take on the baptism of infants so as not to suffer into the effects of original sin and the eternal condemnation; rather, they will receive salvation and life eternal.²⁶ Baptism, in its variety of names (gift, grace, unction, illumination, etc.) as recounted by Gregory of Nazianzus, is a help to man's weakness, a creatural restoration, a purification from sin, a participation in the light, the disappearance of darkness, a death with Christ, the suppression from slavery, a breaking of chains, sufferings, etc.²⁷

Baptism as the "door of spiritual life" (DH 1314) was marked by Augustinian principles in the Scholastic period especially in the cause and effect of the sacrament (in its Christic institution, composition of matter and form, the *ex opere operato* efficacy; and the effects (character, purification and divine grace). The Council of Florence (1439) considers the sacrament of baptism (with Thomistic influence) as incorporation in the Body of Christ (to suffer and be joyful with others), identifying the Triune God as fount of grace through human minister for the remission of sins towards the Kingdom of heaven (cf. DH 1314-1316). Council of Trent reinforces its baptismal teaching on justification, its Christic institution, forgiveness of sins, observance to the law of Christ, ecclesial incorporation, infant baptism, etc. (cf. DH 1614-1630).

Thus, viewed from suffering, baptism is one's birth to the Paschal life of Christ (cf. LG 7; Gal 2:20: buried and resurrected in Christ). In this manner, every Christian is called to learn from Christ himself to know how to die and suffer for others, whose baptism realizes the union ad configuration with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:4-5; LG 7; AG 36; UR 22; AG 14) and participation in the new people of God (AA 3; LG 31; 15-16). The Christian identity in baptism through the Church generates new and immortal life through the Spirit and was born of God (LG 64; AG 21); death in sin "to free himself from those obstacles" and consecrated in Christ (LG 44); conversion in the regeneration through the water and Spirit (LG 2) through faith professed in baptism developed in the love of God and of neighbor (GS 3; LG 11)²⁸ for man's participation in God's divine life for salvation.²⁹

²⁵ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 544.

²⁶ Cf. A. HAMMAN, *o.c.*, 149-151.

²⁷ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 545.

²⁸ Cf. V. M. GOEDERT, *Teología del bautismo*, Caracas 1991, 58-59; Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 547-551.

²⁹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 551-555.

In view of this, every baptized Christian is called to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (or Chrismation) in order to become fully Christian since Confirmation makes perfect the baptismal grace (cf. CCC 1302-1304). This sacrament becomes an instrument for one to be mature enough to face different forms of suffering even to face persecutions for the sake of faith. It also manifests one's strengthening to make his own decisions and be responsible for important compromises in his life. Confirmation reinforces baptism and overflows in abundance the Holy Spirit. Particularly, this gift of the Holy Spirit acquires its sense from a society or individuals who aspire for freedom from human suffering, oppression and exploitation and helps to achieve the full access of the Word and recognized in it the manifestation of God.³⁰ In the Old Testament, the unction was done for the rites of enthronement (Ex 29:7; Lv 4:3; 1 Sam 10:1; 16:3) and also, in reference to the prophets. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament in the life of Jesus as the Anointed configures the sacrament of Confirmation in his baptism (Lk 3: 21-22 and par.) and in Pentecost (Acts 2, 1-13). He also expresses the Isaianic line, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me," in his announcing of the Good News to the poor and setting free the captives and the oppressed (Lk 4:16ff).³¹ Through confirmation, the faithful participates in the Pentecostal Spirit as a witness of the resurrected Christ, to defend and know the truth and to renounce every sin and injustice in the world (Acts 1:8; Jn 14:16-17.26; 16:7-15) and to proclaim the Word of God with courage against threats that make community to suffer (Acts 4:29-31). Moreover, the Church Fathers explains the sign of the unction as "aroma of Christ," "unction with chrism or *Myron*," "weapons of God" against suffering from the slavery of sin (2 Cor 1:21-22; 2:15; Rom 6-7; Eph 6:10-20). Cyril of Jerusalem affirms that like Christ, the faithful, after baptism and mystic unction, puts on the weapons of the Spirit to combat the power of the enemy and surpasses it with Christ who comforts him.³²

The richness in ritual diversity that Confirmation has creates a distinction between the Oriental and Occidental Churches. The former lets the newly baptized receive the unction with the *Myron* and participate in the Eucharist while the latter reserves confirmation through the Bishop as a competent minister and reference of ecclesial communion. In the medieval period, the theology of separating confirmation

³⁰ Cf. G. FOUREZ, *Sacramentos y vida del hombre. Celebrar las tensiones y los gozos de la existencia*, Santander 1983, 117-118.

³¹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 556-558.

³² *Mystagogic Catecheses* 3,4 cited in D. BOROBIO, *Dimensión social de la liturgia y los sacramentos*, Bilbao 1990, 81.

from baptism was elaborated. The Latin Church presents Confirmation as force (*robur* for Augustine and *consecrated* for Thomas Aquinas) as training and as equipment to battle for life against suffering and weaknesses. Thomas Aquinas underlined the maturity of the spiritual life in the adult age as strength for spiritual combat amidst temptations and suffering and for testimony of faith, confessing it with courage especially against persecution (*quasi ex officio*). More so, the baptized faithful who receive this sacrament are more perfectly bound to the Church through the Holy Spirit who endows them with special strength to spread and defend the faith as true witnesses of Christ (LG 11). Hence, this is also an incorporation to the Paschal mystery of Christ: dying from oneself and live in Christ, suffer like him and resurrect with him. With this, the Christian faithful are capacitated to participate (being born again in Christ and be anointed by the Holy Spirit like him) in the Eucharist as culmination and fullness of Christian life strengthened by the Holy Spirit as witnesses through faith and charity. Moreover, the Confirmation incorporates one in the Church vivified by the Holy Spirit to the mission of Christ both in sanctity (ad intra) and testimony (ad extra), suffering, death and resurrection and to be able to confess bravely the name of Christ and be not ashamed of the cross he once suffered for all (LG 11, 12).³³

Likewise, baptized Christians, who live in the eschatological reality in the history for the salvation of all, are sustained by the Eucharist as members of the body of Christ: “the sacrifice of Christ and the ‘spiritual sacrifice’ of the Church become one because Christ takes the members of his body into the embrace of his sacrifice.”³⁴ We also bring our very own sufferings to unite with the sufferings of Christ through our offering of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is God’s greatest consolation to our suffering.

Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb who is sacrificed and offered to humanity, realizing both the new and eternal covenant of God. The Eucharist contains in itself the radical newness every time it is being offered.³⁵ In Jesus, the essence of participating and gathering in a banquet even with sinners and tax collectors and even accused of being a glutton and drunkard (cf. Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34) is of great importance. Thus, his participation in the banquet feasts (especially in the Synoptic Gospels) is a sign and anticipation of the banquet of the Kingdom. John’s Gospel would mention the wedding at Cana, the multiplication of the bread, and the last supper in which Jesus is himself the

³³ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 560-565.

³⁴ B. T. MORILL, *Christ’s Sacramental Presence in the Eucharist: A Biblical-Pneumatological Approach to the Mystery of Faith*: *American Theological Inquiry* 4/2 (2011) 5.

³⁵ J. RATZINGER-BENEDICTO XVI, *Los sacramentos. Signos de salvación*, Madrid 2015, 51.

personified Kingdom banquet—he himself is the bread of life.³⁶ It must be aptly considered the Last Supper as it is the summary and the culmination of the life of Jesus in giving, suffering and surrendering of himself (see Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26): “Take, this is my body... This is my blood” (Mk 14:22, 24 and par.) a surrender of his entire self where the “body” is his concrete self and the “blood” is the surrendering of life. This event precedes the upcoming treachery and his tragic execution, a concrete testament of suffering linked to the disciples (a living legacy) and the sign of future eschatology (“I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father,” Mt 26:29 and par.).³⁷ H. Urs von Balthasar would explicitly assert that Christ’s loving self-surrender or gift-of-self in his suffering and violent death is concretized in the institution of the Eucharist, the deepest expression of reconciling the world to God. The sacrifice of his flesh and shedding of his blood for his disciples communicate the salvific element of this reconciliation: “Jesus is really present, but along with the person comes his entire temporal history and, in particular, its climax in cross and Resurrection.”³⁸ After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples celebrated the memorial of the breaking of the bread in the Emmaus event (Lk 24:13-35) and in every Christian community (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 10:40-42) where Christ is really present (1 Cor 10:21; 11:29).³⁹ Thus, the Eucharist is the real symbol of sacrifice given that it deals with his body surrendered and blood overflowed and that such real presence can only be affirmed in his sacrifice:⁴⁰ a suffering Servant’s love for salvation.

Suffering, then, is linked and incorporated in the *sacrifice* of Christ which is an “anamnesis” in the Eucharist. It is Christ who realizes sacrifice as a great way of suffering for the sake of humanity. The Alexandrian theologians like Clement, Origen, and Cyril of Alexandria, in their descendent Christology, posit that the Eucharist is the communion with the *flesh* of the Logos. Moreover, Antiochene theologians, in their ascendent Christology, exert that the Eucharist is understood as a memorial of the sacrifice of and suffering in the cross. For John Chrysostom, the Eucharist, in the idea of anamnesis, is the actualization of the redemptive act in the cross and such celebration

³⁶ Cf. M. GESTEIRA GARZA, *La Eucaristía, misterio de comunión*, Madrid 1983, 17-22.

³⁷ Cf. T. SCHNEIDER (dir.), *Manual de Teología Dogmática*, 898-899.

³⁸ As cited in N. J. HEALY, JR., *Christ’s Eucharist and the Nature of Love: The Contribution of Hans Urs von Balthasar*: *The Saint Anselm Journal* 10/2 (2015): 7-8.

³⁹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 568-569.

⁴⁰ F.-X. DURRWELL, *La Eucaristía sacramento pascual*, Salamanca 1982, 54-55.

is denominated as living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice.⁴¹ In this idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, the *Didache* (14) is also a testimony in applying the sacrificial image to the death of Christ. Moreover, others would also express their Eucharistic conceptions: Ignatius of Antioch (+ c. 105) defines the Eucharist as a sign of unity and communion; Justin (+ c. 165) speaks of Eucharist as prolongation of the incarnation; Irenaeus of Lyon (+ c. 201) envisioned the Eucharist as center of the history of salvation and thanksgiving sacrifice; and the Latin Fathers (3rd-5th centuries) like Tertullian (Eucharist as *sacramentum* of bread and the Lord's passion); Cyprian of Carthage (Eucharist as commemoration, *memoria*, *mentio passionis*, oblation, *sacrificium*, communion,⁴² etc.); St. Ambrose (accentuates the Eucharistic realism in the historico-salvific, mysterious-Paschal, and ecclesial dimensions of the Eucharist) and St. Augustine (Eucharist as “*totus Christus, caput et corpus*,” as symbol of unity and of ecclesial communion; memorial of the sacrifice of Christ; renewal of personal and ecclesial life; its eschatological dimension that has its culmination in the resurrection; etc.).⁴³

Great controversies emerged during the medieval period on the teaching of transubstantiation when influential figures like Berengar of Tours, Calvin and Zwingli denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and Luther's idea of “consubstantiation” moved the Church to defend her teaching through the Council of Trent, which dealt with the sacrificial aspect and sacramental dimension of the Eucharist: 1) the Fathers of Trent confirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (cf. DH 1651) and the concept of transubstantiation (cf. DH 1652); 2) The Tridentine idea of the Eucharist as true sacrifice underlines that Christ's sacrifice and redemptive mission happened all at once and that the Eucharistic celebration is the true propitiatory sacrifice he suffered both for the living and the dead (cf. DH 1751-1759); and the cup of the lay (Trent's doctrine of concomitance and the reception of double species: DH 1760). Thus, Eucharist is the sacrament, sacrifice of the mass, and communion.⁴⁴

The total and active participation of the people of God in the celebration of the Mass generates a true participation in the sufferings and sacrifice offered in the Eucharist. Christ is both present not only in the sacrifices offered by the minister but also in the Eucharistic species (cf. SC 7). Three Eucharistic dimensions are observed: 1)

⁴¹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 570.

⁴² See also J. A. GIL-TAMAYO, *Eucaristía y comunión eclesial en los escritos de Cipriano de Cartago*: *Scripta theologica* 37 (2005/1) 53-75.

⁴³ Cf. D. BOROBIÓ, *Eucaristía*, Madrid 2000, 51-67.

⁴⁴ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 571-575.

anamnetic: the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ's body and blood is entrusted to the Church as the memorial of his suffering, death and resurrection (cf. SC 47); 2) Paschal and Pneumatological: Christ himself in the Eucharist as vital and vitalizing to men through the Holy Spirit (cf. PO 5); and 3) ecclesiological: the faithful, in participating the Eucharistic sacrifice as the summit of Christian life, offer to God the divine victim manifesting unity (LG 11). Furthermore, Benedict XVI encapsulates this idea by saying: "The Church is able to celebrate and adore the mystery of Christ present in the Eucharist precisely because Christ first gave himself to her in the sacrifice of the Cross" (SaCar 14) and thus, the Eucharistic celebration should not only anticipate the celestial banquet of the community of the saints but also anticipate historically the excluded world of the Kingdom of God, that is, the social sense of the bread made justice and justice made bread (V. Martínez) the defense of the threatened life of the suffering planet (Durwell) and the outcry of the poor (L. Boff). The sacrifice of Christ is to defend the threatened life of the people from the gods of the dead who are defenders of the anti-Kingdom "system" (J. B. Metz).⁴⁵ And thus, in the Eucharist, we seek Christ's help⁴⁶ for us to have something to offer for those who suffer and to obtain from him the attention and indispensable sensibility to let the hands of the people work every day for the help of those in need, oppressed, marginalized and poor.

b. The Sacraments that Heal Human Suffering

Suffering can be the cause of one's personal misuse of freedom and limitations or can be of one's or society's inflictions against another. The sacrament of reconciliation brings us to Jesus who can give us the opportunity to convert our failures and sufferings in possibility, who gives us the opportunity for our conversion and to start life anew, and who lets us understand and manifest in our lives the mercy of God. The Old Testament is replete with stories of forgiveness that God bestows to his people. The fidelity of God to his covenant and his compassion becomes the basis of his mercy (cf. Ex 3:7ff; 33:19; 34:67, etc.). And this mercy has reached every man (Ps 102) manifesting even through sufferings just to shake the people and the sinner off to bring them to conversion and reconciliation (Ez 34:7ff; Is 47:6; 48:10, etc.). God takes pleasure on the conversion of sinner and his life and not on his suffering and death (cf.

⁴⁵ Cf. V. CODINA, *Eucaristía y Reino de Dios: Theologia Xaveriana* 157 (2006) 45-58.

⁴⁶ Cf. C. GIRAUDO, *La plegaria eucarística*, Salamanca 2012, 79.

Ez 18:21-23).⁴⁷ God is the only one capable of reestablishing his covenant since he is “a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love and fidelity” (Ex 34:6). And, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the face of mercy of the Father through his words, actions, and his entire person (cf. MV 1). For Jesus, the oppressed, those who suffer from hatred and violence like the oppressors and those who couldn’t just admit their sinfulness need the divine reconciliation: the necessity to forgive and be forgiven.⁴⁸ Moreover, healing (corporal and spiritual) also comes with conversion and reconciliation as a new communion with God (cf. Mt 9:2-8, Jn 7:47, etc.). The true receiving of the sinner is better expressed in the parable of the prodigal son where the Father shows how he receives, pardons, and eats with the sinners (cf. Lk 15:11-32). The greatest reconciliation of God with humanity is better expressed in Christ’s suffering and death on the cross as a sign of his love for the sinners (cf. Rom 4:25). Furthermore, the Church that continues the forgiving mission of God and constituted as instrument of pardon and reconciliation was also given the power to forgive the sins: “to bind and to loose” (Mt 16:19; 18:18) “to forgive/retain” (Jn 20:23): forgiving in the name of Jesus that remits to the ecclesial people of God.⁴⁹

For Saint Thomas, repentance, confession, and satisfaction are the *materia sacramenti* and the priest’s absolution as *forma* guarantees the pardon during the penitent’s pain of contrition even before the absolution. On the other hand, challenged by the reformers’ false stance on the sacrament, the Council of Trent defended the institution by Christ of the sacrament of penance, its constitution, necessity and form, absolution as a judicial act, and the value of the satisfactory work (cf. DH 1667-1693).⁵⁰ When suffering afflicts men, they are wounded by their sins and so, through charity, example, and prayer, they could seek their conversion (LG 11). In this sense, in the sacrament of reconciliation, there is a “self-realization” of the Church as penitent of the sinners who suffers for her flock and constantly bathes with her tears the feet of Christ, listens to his words, “neither do I condemn you,” and makes herself as bearer of the Lord’s word of grace as a permanent sacrament of the mercy of God in the world.⁵¹

In like manner, not setting aside the reality of sin and forgiveness, Sacred Scripture also presents a unique syndrome that constitutes in suffering from sickness,

⁴⁷ J. RAMOS-REGIDOR, *El sacramento de la penitencia. Reflexión teológica a la luz de la biblia, la historia y la pastoral*, Salamanca 1975, 127.

⁴⁸ P. J. ROSATO, *Teología de los sacramentos*, Estella 1994, 83-84.

⁴⁹ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 582-584.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 589-590.

⁵¹ Cf. K. RAHNER, *La Iglesia y los sacramentos*, Barcelona 1964, 102.

sin, and death: in a grave infirmity or old age, death presents the disintegration of creation caused by sin and thus, causes a great upheaval in the entire human existence where man reacts with desperation, anxiety, impatience, etc. In this manner, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick signifies the living promise of God's salvation and Christ's salvific presence.⁵²

Sufferings, infirmities, old age cannot separate from God and her Church. Instead, they become a medium to give more meaning to one's relationship with God who is the source of all strength and healing. Christ, the Redeemer "suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed" (SD 19). In the Old Testament, evil, suffering, and death have its origin in human history, in the first sin of man (cf. Gn 3; Job 1:2-3) and also the sickness and suffering as punishment for infidelity to the covenant that takes in itself its very conscience of sin (2 Kgs 20:1-11; Dan 4:28-30; Dt 28: 21-27, etc.). But the suffering of the just has also taken into consideration the idea of retribution (cf. Job 21). In this manner, the sickness was related to eschatological hope, the discovery of the relationship between suffering and divine justice (Is 26:19; Jer 33:6), freedom from sin and sickness (cf. Is 33:24), etc. Moreover, suffering is also converted to oblation and service and shall end not in death but in resurrection and glorious life (cf. Is 53).

In the New Testament, Jesus goes to some lengths to explain the origin of sickness and pain (not even as a punishment from God or the consequence of sin [cf. Jn 9:2-3]). Instead, he cures the sick and forgives their sins (cf. Mk 2:17; 11:3-6; 2:1-13) as a sign of nearness and the realization of God's Kingdom (cf. Mt 4:23-24). Christ suffered and made himself perfect before the Father for the salvation and glory of man (cf. Heb 2:10; 5:7-9) through his passion and death on the cross (cf. Col 1:24). Likewise, Jesus sent his disciples to anoint and cure the sick (Mk 6:12-13). The Christian community had also followed this mission: cure of a lame man (Acts 3:1-16); considered the gift of healing (1 Cor 12:9); not only attended and cured the sick but also prayed over them and anointed them with oil for spiritual and corporal health (Acts 5:14-16). In James 5:14-15, the sacrament is explicitly implied: "Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him

⁵² Cf. G. GRESHAKE, *La unción de los enfermos: el movimiento oscilatorio de la Iglesia entre la curación física y la curación espiritual*: Concilium 278 (1998) 113-114.

and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.” Through this sacrament, the sick is saved, relieved, and cured. Such mission indicates the eschatological salvation as participation in the resurrection of Christ.⁵³

Throughout history, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, with special concordance with James 5:14-16 and with the texts of the Church Fathers, from the second century had an explicit mention of the corporal effect of the sacrament: the cure of physical suffering. On the other hand, in the twelfth century, scholastic theologians had underlined more the primacy of the spiritual efficacy, that is, such cure depends on the spiritual convenience of the sick person. During the Council of Florence, the term “extreme unction” dominated (until Vatican II). The primary effect was the spiritual healing and the corporal healing was not even ruled out. In the Council of Trent, sacrament must be administered to those who are in doubt of death. It established that the unction must be administered to the sick especially those who are in grave and in near-death conditions. Notwithstanding, Vatican II called the sacrament as “anointing of the sick” (SC 73) that anticipates the communitarian celebration of the sick including those of old age. The prayer of the Church accompanies this symbolic action that the sick is consoled in his Christian faith with the sufferings of Christ and bestowed with the gift of consolation by the Holy Spirit. Through Christ, God bestows the grace of consoling and healing strength of his love and is in communion with all the passions that the world has.⁵⁴ This sacrament extends in the Church the mercy of Christ on the sick and manifests his will and power to destroy evil in man (suffering, sin, sickness, and death) and return to the creatures of God the perfection lost.⁵⁵

c. The Sacraments at the Service of the Suffering Community

“For the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body” and for the salvation of the whole People of God (LG 18). The sacrament of Orders in lieu to suffering provides the sick their need for pastoral attention. These presbyters of God

⁵³ Cf. D. BOROBIO, *Más fuertes que el dolor (unción de los enfermos)*, Bilbao 1977, 21-33; cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 594-597.

⁵⁴ Cf. Z. ALSZEGHY, *El efecto corporal de la unción de los enfermos: Selecciones de Teología* 13 (1965): 114-120; cf. R. MESSINA, *L'olio che guarisce. L'unzione degli infermi*, Turin 1999, 49-56; cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 597-602.

⁵⁵ G. FLÓREZ, *Penitencia y Unción de enfermos*, Madrid 1993, 343.

are called to live like Jesus: surrendering themselves fully for humanity through his preaching and healing those who suffer from all evils the body and spirit, summing it all up to “giving of his life” for men as a Eucharistic expression of Christ’s eternal Easter.⁵⁶ In the history of salvation, God has chosen Israel to be his kingdom of priests and holy nation (cf. Ex 19:6) and thus, priests were consecrated to lead the people to worship, to make alive the word of Yahweh and be of service to those who suffer. God has promised to send his people shepherds “after his own heart” (Jer 3:15).

Jesus himself surpassed the priesthood of the Old Testament but continues such prophetic and analogical relationship since his priestly sacrifice is a fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood.⁵⁷ The mission of Christ is concretized in his promise of salvific mission, gathering all men as his eschatological people through his suffering and expiatory death. He was invested with the divine power to teach, expel demons, work miracles, and forgive sins. Paul and John would claim Christ as sent by the Father while the letter to the Hebrews posits that he is the Apostle and High Priest of humanity’s profession (cf. Heb 3:1) constituted by the Father through his passion and death. Moreover, he is the Good Shepherd who suffers and offers his life for his sheep as shepherd and guardian/bishop of souls (cf. 1 Pet 2:25). Christ bestowed such authority to his disciples from the sense of service and humility (Mk 9:35) and thus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the authority of Church’s ministers participates also in the divine power (*exousia*) to do Christ’s mission. Peter received Christ’s order to build his Church and confirm his brothers (Mt 16:19; 18:18) to preach the Good news and baptize all peoples (Mt 28:19-20) and promote a more pastoral attention to the needy and suffering. Also, Jesus sent seventy to live out the signs of the Kingdom (health the sick, announce the time of grace, etc.). The apostles chose seven men to be ministers of the Word through the imposition of hands as a symbol of unity of all Christian communities (cf. Acts 6: 1-7). Paul, on the other hand, who was called to be an apostle of Christ (1 Cor 1:1), had himself his pastoral collaborators and considered their own ecclesial functions as ministers (1 Cor 16:15-16; 1 Thess 5:12-13) by enduring trials, afflictions and every kind of suffering. Later on, the concretization of ministerial institutionalization as bishops, priests, and deacons was developed⁵⁸ to respond to Church’s needs and to share the joy of Christ to those who suffer and in pain.

⁵⁶ Cf. J. RATZINGER-BENEDICTO XVI, *o.c.*, 80.

⁵⁷ Cf. R. ARNAU, *Orden y Ministerios*, Madrid 1995, 24.

⁵⁸ cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 603-606.

Furthermore, Didache recorded that such succession was continued through the institution of the bishops and deacons by the apostles. Clement also noted the presbyters who offered gifts. Ignatius of Antioch reflected on the ministry as mystery of the Trinity, made a concrete distinction on bishop, priest, and deacon as ecclesiastical ministries and reflected on the bishop and the Eucharist as basis of ecclesial unity. Likewise, Tertullian distinguished between *ordo sacerdotalis* and *plebs christiana* and placing the ministers within the *clerus* while Cyprian underlined the image of the bishop as figure of unity of the particular Church. During the Scholastic period, the sacrament of order was focused in the Eucharistic sacrifices as its main reference. Peter Lombard considered the orders related to Eucharist (sanctification) as sacrament while Thomas Aquinas centered its idea of the priesthood (authority in the Eucharistic sacrifice) as supreme category among other ministerial orders (minor orders, etc.). On the other hand, defending itself from the Lutheran errors, the Council of Trent defended the sacramental nature of the ministerial priesthood as divinely instituted to consecrate, offer, and administer the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the mass as well as to forgive sins, etc. It also deals with the nature of the apostolic succession (DH 1764) within a Church (DH 1768) and the divine ordination of bishops, presbyters, and ministers (DH 1776).⁵⁹

Suffering is one of the motivations why the sacrament of Orders centers itself in the essence of “service” (LG 18); the preaching by bishops and priests (PO 4; LG 25; CD 12) as sacrament (DV 21). The bishops who are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, to whom has been assigned the bearing of witness to the Gospel for the poor and sinful men and the administration of the Spirit and of justice in glory (cf. LG 21). The priests who take part in the apostolic mission are conformed to Christ the priest and thus act in the person of Christ the Head (PO 2) and as cooperators of the bishops (PO 12) to promote pastoral assistance to all especially the suffering brethren. The deacons also participate in the mission and grace of Christ (LG 41; AG 16).⁶⁰ Furthermore, it is essential to underline that that human existence in its priestly function is grounded in the “sacrifice” in which Jesus himself suffered until death; in which expresses the real participation of the people of God; and in which the function of ministerial priesthood is rooted.⁶¹ However, it must be noted that just as the episcopal and sacerdotal orders reserve to themselves the authority to teach or preach, the lay

⁵⁹ Ibid., 606-611.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 611-613.

⁶¹ Cf. O. SEMMELROTH, *El pueblo sacerdotal de Dios y sus jefes ministeriales*: Concilium 61 (1971) 23-34.

faithful have their own ecclesial and evangelical mission, that is, to live the spirit of the Gospel in their everyday living guided by their pastors to form communities for the evangelization of society in the light of the Gospel⁶² and practice charity with the suffering members. After all, the authority of the ordained ministers makes sense in the community if it is exercised in the true spirit of service:⁶³ as a simple surrender, as a humble dedication, and as an expression of true service that takes its pure reference in Christ exercised as radical pro-existence⁶⁴ especially for those who are in need of special dedication (poor, marginalized, refugees, peripheries, etc.).

The sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony both manifest the service of the suffering community and exercise Christian fruitfulness. In particular, the sacrament of Matrimony is the sacrament of the all-embracing mystery of divine love in the whole Church for the world.⁶⁵ This love expressed in matrimony is rooted from God and is capable of enduring hardships, sufferings, faithful even in sickness and in health, in richness or poverty. In the Old Testament, the Song of Songs is invested with the idea of love as the experience of joy and man's fullness. Scripture also contains many narratives of suffering in human sexuality that is fragile and can easily be tempted; the stories suffering in birth pains and woman's oppression, of infidelity and pain. However, the sexual differences and the union of man and woman form a creational order that was so dear in the eyes of God who "found it very good" (Gen 1:31).⁶⁶ Such union is already considered indissoluble and that matrimony reflects the inalienable dignity of one another, blessed by God, open to the gift of new life, etc. (cf. Gen 1-2). In the New Testament, Jesus, in his new radical view of matrimony, calls for fidelity of the spouse (Mt 19, 3-9; Mk 10:1-2). Suffering comes with one's broken promises of infidelity and trust. Matrimony is also a pact "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39) and takes the image of conjugal love and union from the unity of the body of Christ (Eph 5:21-33).⁶⁷ Suffering manifests in the absence of fidelity. The Patristic period had shown a deep connection with the mutual fidelity and respect to life (Epistle to Diognetus) in considering its creatural and redemptive aspects united through the Church in the celebration of the Eucharist, etc. Matrimony in the Augustinian perspective is likened to God's covenant that remains for a lifetime with Christ's blessing and thus, is considered

⁶² Cf. J. MOINGT, *Sacramentos y pueblo de Dios: Selecciones de Teología* 50/197 (2011) 40-41.

⁶³ D. IZUZQUIZA, *Enraizados en Jesucristo. Ensayo de eclesiología radical*, Santander 2008, 228.

⁶⁴ Cf. G. GRESHAKE, *Ser sacerdote hoy*, Salamanca 2003, 127-128.

⁶⁵ A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World. Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, New York 1973, 82.

⁶⁶ Cf. W. KASPER, *Teología del matrimonio cristiano*, Santander²1984, 39-40.

⁶⁷ Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 603-606.

good by three properties/*bona* (*prolis, fidei, and sacramenti*). The Council of Trent, through the decree *Tametsi* accepts the validity of the marriages as long as the Church does not annul them and the obligation of the form (witnesses, presence of delegate/parish priest, etc.) is asked (cf. DH 183-1816).⁶⁸

Furthermore, matrimony, though inflicted by many sufferings, is a sign of the love of God. It is an intimacy in the life and love of the spouse (cf. GS 46-52). It is also a union for procreation and the children formed by the procreative act are to be educated: “Even amid the difficulties of the work of education, difficulties which are often greater today, parents must trustingly and courageously train their children in the essential values of human life” (FC 37). The spouses also are representatives who participate in the mystery of love between Christ and his Church (cf. LG 11) as eschatological signs for salvation. Up to now, it still calls the attention for deeper theological reflections on the issues like the nullity of marriages, mixed marriages, and divorce that cause much sufferings among spouses and afflict the sacredness of matrimony.⁶⁹ Finally, Schmemmann rightly points out that “a marriage that does not constantly crucify its own selfishness and self-sufficiency, which does not ‘die to itself’ that it may point beyond itself, is not a Christian marriage.” Furthermore, marriage must be directed towards God’s Kingdom and not to the idolization of the family since through Christ’s suffering cross, the authentic joy entered the world and because the joy of marriage is “not ‘taken until death parts’ but until death unites us completely.”⁷⁰

3. Sacraments in the Church of Christ

a. The Church in Suffering and the Sacraments of Christ

Man’s vocation is in Christ and for Christ, loved primarily by God towards a supernatural end. This vocation, even if it passes through sufferings, is conserved by God to all humanity in spite of sinfulness given that Christ himself, in his very being and salvific work (in his sufferings and death on the cross) is himself a member of this so-called humanity. God looks at all humanity as brothers and sisters of his incarnated Son “through the Church” (cf. Heb 2:11). Precisely, through his incarnation, his endured sufferings, death and resurrection, man’s redemption is already predefined and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 621-626.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 621-626.

⁷⁰ A. SCHMEMANN, *o.c.*, 90-91.

assumed fundamentally through a definitive personal unity between the head and his members— all because of the Logos’ assuming of the flesh of a sinner (cf. Rom 8:3). So Christ is the real and historical presence of the mercy of God in this suffering world. His historical existence is both the *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti* of the redeeming grace of God⁷¹ that responds to the outcry of the suffering humanity. Thus, sacraments are founded in the symbolic actions of God (as revealed in the Scriptures) that extends the salvific, corporal and symbolic actions of Jesus (F. J. Nocke) grounded in his suffering to death and resurrection. It is only through Christ in his divinity (principal cause of grace) and in his humanity (instrumental cause) that sacraments could be instituted (St. Thomas Aquinas; Also, DH 1601 of Trent) and in which medieval theologies were also pillared. Through the visible act of the Church (fundamental sacrament of the salvation of the world [K. Rahner]), Christ himself intervened in every sacramental act and thus oriented the seven sacraments of grace (Schillebeeckx).⁷²

The Council of Trent recognizes that the Church has the authority to establish or change (*salva eorum substantia*) those that are proper for a particular situation or case (cf. DH 1728) but its limit only constitutes “substance” of the sacramental rite and not the substance of the sacrament given himself by Christ so as to maintain the Church’s fidelity to the sound tradition. In all cases (like inculturation of sacraments), “there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing” (SC 23) guided by the Holy Spirit towards a true liturgical sense (cf. SC 37-38).

The union with man in the community of the Church began in the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The mystery of the Church is expressed sacramentally as the Body of Christ. Christ offers his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. In this way, man becomes not only a sharer in Christ's sufferings but he also completes the suffering through which Christ’s Redemption of the world is accomplished.

b. *Sacraments of Grace and Hope*

To affirm that the Church is the community that celebrates the gift of God in the sacraments means to re-situate it between tensions and conflict that traverse human

⁷¹ Cf. K. RAHNER, *o.c.*, 13-16.

⁷² Cf. C. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 523-525.

society without identifying herself with concrete politics or ideology, thereby being able to manifest the salvation and redemption in an ambiguous world plagued by contradictions (sins and sufferings).⁷³ In so doing, sacraments are efficacious signs of the grace instituted by Christ containing what they represent, to confer them *ex opere operato* to those that do not put obstacles (DH 1601.1606). However, these sacraments as recipients of grace (*vasum gratiae*) depend on their principal cause who is God to obtain the final cause, which is the salvation of man (St. Thomas Aquinas). They are but the operating words of God to man (K. Rahner) that give man freedom to accept God's communication with him and to help him endure the sufferings he faces. Thus man, as property of God (cf. Gen 17:11), is marked by the seal (*sphragis*) of God in the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:13), like baptism in the form of water (The Shepherd of Hermas, Tertullian, Hippolytus, etc.), which confers *character* (St. Augustine) to strengthen man and empower him in his sufferings. Moreover, the Council of Florence underlines a certain indelible spiritual sign with a definitive sense of divine gifts (DH 1313), while the Council of Vatican II reiterates the ecclesial incorporation and participation in the priesthood of Christ in each sacrament (LG 11) and the primacy of gift over minister's function (cf. PO 2). Thus, the sacramental worship of the Church done by Christ himself requires a real consecration in its priestly dimension for a true consecration and configuration with the crucified Christ—sealed by the consecration that the Holy Spirit sacramentally imprints in man.⁷⁴

We find, therefore, that the social and historic suffering and victory of Christ in unity with man are profoundly constituted in the Church. This must not only be believed but also be experimented every time when the baptized is challenged to recognize the concrete signs of his incorporation to the sufferings of Christ in his passion and death and his victory in the resurrection, all his difficulties and joys. All baptized are called to share their sufferings and consolations with one another. This connotes the idea that all the sacraments lead to the unity of all baptized (rich and poor, sick and healthy, sinners and saints) as one Church expressed in the joys of sharing the Banquet of the Lord.⁷⁵

⁷³ Cf. G. FOUREZ, *Sacramentos y vida del hombre*, 57.

⁷⁴ Cf. MARTÍNEZ OLIVERAS, *Los sacramentos*, 529-536.

⁷⁵ Cf. P. J. ROSATO, *Teología de los sacramentos*, 171-172.

PART THREE

**SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF
MAN'S VOCATION AND DESTINY**

VIII. Praxis, Human Person and Suffering

1. *Suffering in the Eyes of Christian Morality*

a. *Suffering and Moral Theology: A Contextualization*

Fundamentally, human beings are differentiated from other creatures for the fact that they are conscious of their own existence: their “I’s”, possibilities of reason, and even the capacity of projecting themselves towards the future. Moreover, man feels responsible of himself and, most of the time, suffers for the serious problems that come along the way. Throughout the years, man, in all his responsibility and freedom, has become the bearer of scientific and technical progress and he is conscious of its better or worse consequences. Furthermore, the society where he lives is organized to establish the rights and tasks of all members in order to maintain peace and promote justice. However, he is also conscious that he can also fail to establish the common good and be dragged by anarchy or the excesses of the different forms of dictatorship. Unfortunately, man suffers in his continuous struggle to fight for his “rights” violated before the law.¹ Hence, man thinks, knows the reality, establishes relationship with others, and pretends to control the development of his existence.

The Church is even more conscious of the reality that man yearns for the absolute truth and his knowledge of it. However, technological and societal progress “spurs us on to face the most painful and decisive of struggles, those of the heart and of the moral conscience” (VS 1). This even results to understanding the real sense of suffering in which modern society sees it as something absolutely insupportable. Between the modern and post-modern society, the reality of suffering is seen in its intolerable character of the idea of “suffering without sense,” rejecting the old idea of the heroic conception of it (for example, death in war and giving birth to a child). In this sense, suffering is not only produced by pain but also by abandonment, rejection, misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, failure, evil, etc.² In addition, it is necessary to consider that in the modern and postmodern societies, the Christian faith and morality underline some repercussions that can also lead to suffering such as cultural factors

¹ Cf. B. SESBOUÉ, *Creer. Invitación a la fe católica para las mujeres y los hombres del siglo XXI*, Madrid 2000, 22-23.

² Cf. H. STAUDINGER–W. BEHLER, *Preguntas básicas de la reflexión humana. Introducción al filosofar moderno*, Barcelona 1987, 164-165.

(secularization, cultural pluralism, empiricism, narcissism, ideals of freedom, communication and technology advancements), globalization, economic and values crises, tendencies to homogenization and cultural resistance, social identity crisis, culture in virtual reality, social networking with inequality and exclusion tendencies. These factors darken and empty the significance of suffering. It is then the essential task of Moral Theology to serve as bearer of the good and happiness to find the real sense of suffering that man can only encounter in his following of Jesus and acknowledge the action of the Holy Spirit in the history through the “signs of the times” (GS 4).³

The concept of suffering is deeply propelled by societal developments. From the very outset of the twentieth century, secularization has already been governing the mentality of the people. The modern man has renounced the idea of a god who serves as a refuge and protection from all his deficiencies and underlined the idea of freedom and independence. Man is converted into the principle of interpretation of himself. Such is that secularism delimits the relations between God and the world and defends its ethics based on reason distinct from the moral criteria of faith.⁴ Together with this, the question of man’s relationship with God and His meaning for the totality of human life induces directly to the comprehension of moral autonomy.

From the perspective of modern Philosophy, R. Descartes asserts subjectivity as a starting point of moral autonomy that even converts God as a subject while I. Kant’s moral theism speaks about the autonomy of the will as the only principle of all laws and tasks. These approaches lead to create a profound understanding of the autonomy from the inter-subjective existence and man’s aperture to the concept of otherness. Moreover, in such conception of the autonomy, man’s subjective search for the truth and his continuous experience of suffering lead to moral atheism’s assertion of the idea of man as a measure of morality and thus leading to the impoverishing moral criteria of God and enriching of man’s moral criteria (L. Feuerbach); socially compromised atheism of K. Marx (religion as opium of the people, as erroneous conscience of the world and its religious misery is an expression of the real misery); immoralist atheism of F. Nietzsche (the death of God as moral death), etc. These situations are considered as an “absolute

³ Cf. J. L. MARTÍNEZ–J. M. CAAMAÑO, *Moral fundamental. Bases teológicas del discernimiento ético*, Santander 2014, 17-36.

⁴ Cf. E. LÓPEZ AZPITARTE, *Hacia una nueva visión de la ética cristiana*, Santander 2003, 50-53.

humanism” (H. de Lubac) in which the freedom of man can be easily led to the relativism of values and even nihilism of reason.⁵

The Church, most especially in Vatican II Council, undoubtedly embraces the concept of autonomy. GS 36 acknowledges the legitimacy of the autonomy of the created realities since modern atheism “stretches the desires for human independence to such a point that it poses difficulties against any kind of dependence on God. Those who profess atheism of this sort maintain that it gives man freedom to be an end unto himself, the sole artisan and creator of his own history” (GS 20). Moreover, VS 41 says that it is necessary that man consider accepting the commandment of God to be able to participate in God’s wisdom and providence (participated theonomy). For Benedict XVI, man should accept his dependence, his necessity of creation and of others, his limits and his own destiny. He is free when he identifies himself with his own essence, will and attitude. In this way, man, though he suffers from his enslavement to false inclinations and tendencies, finds the real truth in the incarnated Christ (1 Jn 2:22; 4:2).⁶

b. Man’s Freedom and Responsibility: A Moral Response to Suffering

Suffering can also be detected in dealing with the concepts of sin and conscience, freedom and responsibility of man towards himself and towards others. Moral theology knows that all sin brings in itself indications of the destiny of life. Men start to suffer for what they have done and they are being deceived by it. This diminishes the dynamism of freedom. In this sense, the concept of conscience must be taken into consideration in order to discover the limitations of freedom and search for a moral responsibility to determine the guilt or sin disguised behind many appearances both personal and social.⁷ Benedict XVI would concur that conscience is presented as the bastion of freedom against the limitation of the existence imposed by the authority. However, it must not only be reduced to a mere subjective certainty that can renounce the truth. In the theory of salvation, man can see the truth of God in virtue of his being a creature of Him (see Rom 2:1-16). The self-consciousness of the “I” with subjective certainty and moral behavior cannot identify one’s conscience. It can be a mere reflection of his surrounding and collected social opinions. Man suffers and faces all contradictions from within him

⁵ Cf. J. M. CAAMAÑO LÓPEZ, *Autonomía moral. El ser y la identidad de la Teología moral*, Madrid 2013, 76-179; Cf. J. L. MARTÍNEZ-J. M. CAAMAÑO, *Moral fundamental*, 267-302.

⁶ Cf. J. L. MARTÍNEZ-J. M. CAAMAÑO, *Moral fundamental*, 323-325.

⁷ K. DEMMER, *Introducción a la Teología moral*, Estella ⁶1994, 109.

and from without that may lead him to confusion. However, in the truth, man discovers the beauty that constitutes redemption for him. Man's freedom without the truth is empty that could lead one to suffer from desolation and nothingness. Accepting the truth is but a yoke for men but it becomes "easy" (Mt 11:30) when the Logos, the truth in person, loved and consumed their guilt. Only through this that man would joyfully and fearlessly hear the message of his conscience.⁸ It is only when man may find meaning in his suffering if he is loved and restored by the truth.

Man has freedom and is freedom, which constitutes in his very being as basic structural element. However, God's freedom is distinct from man's given the fact that in God, there already exists a perfect coincidence between what He is and what He wants, between his essence, will and conduct. God's freedom is absolute and pure while man is just free in such a way that "authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man" (GS 17). Moreover, God willed man to be under the control of his decisions (cf. Sir 15:14) and due to this, sufferings and damages caused by sins govern his whole being. Since his freedom is both situated (man with the world) and has its experiential dimension, it is probable that it is always near to contradictions, limits and conflicts that affect human life. Through a fundamental option, man accepts his finitude and establishes an absolute trust in God (J. M. Velasco) and opts for a true happiness or the real transcendence who is God. Furthermore, freedom is a gift that comes from his faith and his life as God's creature (1 Cor 3,21.23). While the power of *sarks* (flesh) enchains the suffering man, the *pneuma* (Spirit) liberates him from it (2 Cor 3:17; Phil 3:10). Also, man finds in Christ the freedom from the law (Rom 10:4; Gal 2:4) that demands love (Gal 6:2) and that exercises love towards others (Mt 25:34 ff; Rom 13:8; Gal 15:4). Furthermore, freedom is a radical option for the poor and gratuitousness is one of its concrete expressions from a Christian understanding of life. This gratuitousness is an attitude that is reflected in the deliberation, decision and responsibility that comes from the fundamental option of life towards rejection of suffering and searching for good and happiness. Benedict XVI clearly affirms, "the *earthly city* is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion" (CV 6). Gratuitousness is also an expression of fraternity in social,

⁸ JOSEPH RATZINGER-BENEDICTO XVI, *Conciencia y verdad*, in: ID, *La Iglesia. Una comunidad siempre en camino*, Madrid ³2005, 145-177.

economic and political developments (CV 6) in which justice can be attained (CV 38).⁹ In this manner, it can be deeply affirmed that suffering can be remedied from the fullest expression of his freedom based not from lies and forms of idolatry but from relations of gratuitousness that generate good and truth.

Furthermore, from the personalist point of view, the freedom and responsibility can be understood as co-responsibility viewed from humane tasks. Man lives in a community in which he is crucially obliged to make decisions. Man cannot be removed from being united with others and must not hide himself from the face of others who suffer greatly and who call for service and responsibility. Jesus, on the other hand, assumes responsibility towards sinners and lived on earth in service for others (Lk 22:27; Phil 2:7) while inviting his followers to do the same and to form as one body with Him (1 Cor 12:27). Moreover, Vatican II links responsibility to freedom and human dignity (DH 2b) and promote the development of personal and social responsibility (DH 7b; GS 27c.34c). Thus, freedom and responsibility must be understood as liberation in which one offers his spaces, strengths and motives to others and suffers with those who are also suffering for his own realization and good communal living.¹⁰ With this, the Christian praxis, which is free and responsible in the Church (who manifests in the history the commandments of God in Christ), is the one that frees the history from its radical impossibility in constructing a humane history in a suffering world for a full realization of man's existence towards a solidary communion of the divine life (filiation) and of the human life (fraternity).¹¹

2. Man's Existence before the World

a. Human Life and its Ethical Demands

Human existence is very much grounded on his dignity as creation of God and suffering must be considered important in looking for ways to preserve one's dignity from his miserable conditions. It is then proper to begin from the Christian comprehension of the theology of creation that says that man is created in the image of God and is called to imitate Jesus, the Christ, the image and the definitive icon of God. Man then is the

⁹ Cf. J. M. CAAMAÑO LÓPEZ, *Gratuidad y libertad*, in: J. SOLS LUCIA (ed.), *Pensamiento social cristiano abierto al siglo XXI. A partir de la encíclica Caritas in veritate*, Santander 2014, 73-95.

¹⁰ Cf. J. R. FLECHA ANDRÉS, *Teología moral fundamental*, Madrid 2010, 185-187.

¹¹ Cf. R. RINCÓN ORDUÑA, *Teología moral. Introducción a la crítica*, Madrid 1980, 118-123.

imago Dei. The Scriptures tell about the image of God in various contexts. One important passage is the priestly narrative that describes of man's creation in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-28). Such designation highlights first the relation of God with man and then, posteriorly, man's relationship with God. Thus, as man is created in the image of God, he is asked to live this three relationship images: as representative of God, as interlocutor of God on earth and as manifestation of God's glory and honor on earth. This is even concreted in Christ as the image of the invisible God and the first-born of all creation (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and as a model of all Christians called to be images of the true living image of God (1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29; Col 3:10).¹² From the Old Testament context, the creation of man in the image of God (Gen 1:26) dignifies the human being and underlines his nearness to God in his order of being: a creature most similar to God; a possibility of communication and dialogue between God and man.¹³ This is even more affirmed in Christ in whom all things were made and for through his death, gave life to all humanity (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; GS 22). However, the question of the sense of suffering arrives even to conflicts and frustrations in man's relationship with God and even up to negating Him: before the suffering of the world and before injustice, the existence of God could hardly be believed.

For Benedict XVI, "suffering is a part of our human existence. Suffering stems partly from our finitude, and partly from the mass of sin which has accumulated over the course of history, and continues to grow unabated today" (SS 36). Moreover, "to suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves—these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself (SS 39). Hence, the Church has in its deep reason to protect the dignity of the human person in the light of the revelation (cf. GS 12-22). The Church explicitly expresses this way: "Though made of body and soul, man is one... man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day." (GS 14).

The Church then pronounces valiantly the protection of life and it is for this reason that she considers a very serious sin that causes of suffering the killing of one's life (cf. Mt 19:16-19; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; 1 Jn 3:15). Thus, it is a call to love one's

¹² Cf. J. L. MARTÍNEZ, *Libertad religiosa y dignidad humana. Claves católicas de una gran conexión*, Madrid 2009, 199-202.

¹³ Cf. E. SANZ GIMÉNEZ-RICO, *Ya en el principio. Fundamentos veterotestamentarios de la moral cristiana*, Madrid 2008, 48.

neighbor (Mt 22:36-40). It is in this manner that the living Tradition of the Church fights against any forms of killing: oppress the suffering, having no compassion and unjust judgment for the poor, etc. (EV 54). Moreover, since human life is sacred and inviolable, many serious cases encountered could be of violation to the dearly held principles of the Church. The Church condemns crimes against life: “any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful suicide” (GS 27), which cause many people to suffer from their grave effects. Foremost, the social and moral problems of abortion¹⁴ have been a challenge for the Church throughout the history. The Church defends that “human life must be protected and favored from the beginning, just as at the various stages of its development.”¹⁵ With this, the Church rejects whatever means would interrupt the generative process and would hinder the first principles of human and Christian doctrine of marriage (i.e., unlawful birth control methods).¹⁶

Moreover, sufferings can also be a product of threats against life. The Church doctrine supports other lives in danger of being considered less valuable, especially those lives of old people who normally suffer from being forgotten and those who are suffering from terminal illnesses. No State, other institutions or authorities have a say in the life of a person.¹⁷ In particular, the case of suicide and Euthanasia (easy death without severe suffering) were also seriously taken into consideration by the Church since “death is unavoidable; it is necessary, therefore, that we, without in any way hastening the hour of death, should be able to accept it with full responsibility and dignity” (CDF Declaration “*Iura et Bona*”). However, there are still many considerations to take most especially in the use of the argument of autonomy in the decisions over the end of life and in particular, the use of freedom as counterargument against the sanctity of life. It is then a matter of pondering the welfare of those who are suffering and are sick (i.e., principle of informed consent, palliative care, etc.) especially in the final stage of their lives. In the situations of pain and suffering, human principles such as gratuitousness, the logic of love and surrendering are held as the most decisive

¹⁴ See more essential and informative arguments in L. GONZÁLEZ MORÁN, *Aborto. Un reto social y moral*, Madrid 2009, esp. 85-115.

¹⁵ *Declaration on Procured Abortion* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 18 November 1974: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19741118_declaration-abortion_en.html (Retrieved 7 May 2016).

¹⁶ HV 14.16. Cf. J. DE LA TORRE, *Anticonceptivos y ética. Una historia, una realidad, una decisión moral*, Madrid 2009, 229-301.

¹⁷ F. J. ELIZARI BASTERRA, *Bioethics*, Slough 1994, 145.

remedies.¹⁸ One must be a good care provider, especially to those who are suffering in many aspects, who can put him/herself in the place of others, who shows solidarity with him/her and shares his/her experience of vulnerability and affection.¹⁹

To give value to the dignity of every individual is to accept it as basis of freedom, justice and peace in the world and not as object of suffering. Dignity is “transcendental” in human condition and to affirm the dignity in man means that one cannot threaten the other or treat him/her as inferior to his/her ontological category.²⁰

b. *The Communion of Love despite Suffering*

The absence of love makes present every kind of suffering: “God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion... God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion” (CCC 2331). Even in history, there had been a series of conflict between Christianity and sexuality that caused its true identity to suffer. In particular, the problems of suffering in sexuality sets out to Christians are as follow: obligatory celibacy of the priests, moral valuation and methods of birth control, incorrect comprehension of sexuality to matrimony, new methods on sexual normativity, etc. However, just as M. Vidal²¹ would purport, the Church must reconcile with sexuality and rediscover the true biblical message about and accept critically the orientations provided by sexual anthropology: principle of de-sacralization (rupture of jewish religion with myths and rites: Ex 3:13-15; 20:1-3; Dt 6:4); principle of hominization (human configuration and the responsibility of a man to the other); principle of “communitarianism” (interpersonal relation, Gen 2:18a; equality, Gen 2:18b; integration, Gen 2:23; unity, Gen 2:24-25); principle of the “integration of human love in the mystery of salvation” (drama of love and infidelity, fecundity and infecundity: cf. Hos 1; 3; Jer 2:20-25; Ez 23; Is 54:60-62; Eph 5:22-23); and, principle of “virginity” as Christian novelty (cf. Mt 19:10-12; 1 Cor 7:7-8.37b). The mystery of human sexuality discovers the mystery of the human person, vice-versa. Moreover, suffering as seen in

¹⁸ See for more information J. M. CAAMAÑO, *La eutanasia. Problemas éticos al final de la vida*, Madrid 2013.

¹⁹ Cf. J. VIELVA ASEJO (ed.), *Acompañar en la fragilidad. Relatos de profesionales de la salud*, Madrid 2010, 12-13.

²⁰ Cf. R. MORENO ORTEGA, *Principio de dignidad*, in: ID, *Voces de Bioética y Excelencia*, Madrid 2013, 172-176.

²¹ cf. M. VIDAL, *El nuevo rostro de la moral. De la «crisis moral» a la «moral crítica»*, Madrid 1976, 304-320.

the sexual aspect of man makes possible the encounter with others since sexuality co-exists with his existence and it has its dialogical character (intersubjectivity).

In biblical tradition and even on Christian thinking, sexuality is very linked with matrimony. “The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity” (GS 52). Every matrimonial act must be open for the transmission of life (HV 11) and is always called for unity and procreation (HV 12) and thus, sufferings that are induced in all activities (i.e., contraceptives), which are against procreation, must be excluded (HV 14). With this, the family fecundity must be creative, “who opens the eyes of the heart to discover the new needs and sufferings of our society and gives courage for accepting them and responding to them” (FC 41).

In many cases, the family can also be “the path of suffering and blood” (AL19-22). The presence of pain, evil and violence provoke the rupture of the family bond. Christ himself was a true testimony of this as he travelled and responded to the needs and sufferings of every family along his way (AL 21). His teaching on marriage is even inserted on his discourse on the divorce (cf. Mt 19:3-9). The Word of God accompanies every family that is in constant crisis or experiences of pain (AL 22).

It cannot be denied the reality that there are many causes of sufferings that could affect the sacredness of the image of family in which the Church continues to consider since it could not only harm and cause an individual to suffer but the whole society as well. The cases on homosexual marriage, prostitution, pornography, and the like can lead to the loss of the profound sense that a conjugal love has in human existence and the sense of transcendence of the paternal and maternal functions. Thus, there is a need for a proper doctrinal and pastoral approach through the way of charity and solidarity and appeal to those who are strong in faith to help the weak and the suffering.²²

c. Justice and Peace for the Suffering World

Suffering that reflects the society has already inserted as factor for the need to have indications and concrete norms oriented towards a harmonious life in accordance with God’s salvific plan revealed to men. In the Old Testament, the perspective of the covenant through the observance of the law interprets the past, present and future of humanity (cf. Ex 19:3-8) where the justice of God is represented (Dt 6:25). In this

²² Cf. G. FLÓREZ, *Matrimonio y Familia*, Madrid 1995, 264-265.

sense, suffering caused by injustice are denounced by the prophets to defend the rights of the humble, poor, widows, orphans, strangers and the marginalized. At times, God shows his deception for the unfulfillment of his project of fraternity and justice (cf. Is 5:7). The liberation from oppression and suffering is related with the prophecy of the “future king” (Is 32), the Messiah “prince of peace” and the bringer of freedom, justice and peace (cf. Is 32:17). Hence, salvation is both freedom from external slavery (Egypt/Babylon), sufferings and internal oppression. Furthermore, in the New Testament, Christ even interprets and fulfills the Old Testament message (cf. Mt 5:17; Lk 24:27; Rom 16:25-26; DV 16). Jesus, anointed by the Spirit, announced the Good News to the poor and those who are suffering from oppressions (Lk 4:18); declared that they are blessed (Lk 6:20 and par.); taught them to detach themselves from material goods (Mt 6:19-34 and par.) and rather opt for a voluntary poverty (Mt 9:16-26); and exhorted the society to practice the works of mercy (Mt 25: 31-46). This became the ethical criteria of the first Christian communities (cf. Acts 4:32-36) with the practice of human social projection of loving one another as the “new commandment” (Jn 13:34; 15:12.17) and in unity with those who suffer.²³ The Church has responded to numerous social, political and economic issues throughout the history. In her long Tradition, she has responded to the questions that concern life’s sufferings in the society and for this, she offered her own social teaching with the so-called “Social Doctrine of the Church” that could inspire multiple political programs, social projects and diverse economic models. There are permanent principles like dignity of the human person, solidarity for the common good of all, universal destiny of goods, preferential option for the poor and subsidiarity that yearn for autonomy, responsibility, development, social justice and solidarity especially with those who are oppressed and suffering.²⁴

The first organic intervention of pontifical magisterium was brought out in 1891 through the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII. The pope denounces the sufferings caused by the exploitation of the poor and the wagers and opts for human dignity and rejects the Marxist socialism and anarchism. He also affirms the right to private property (RN 8) and calls for a harmonious mutual agreement between the poor and the rich (RN 14). Moreover, the pope is conscious about the sufferings against oppressions in the working class (excessive work that harm the health, improper to sex and age) and

²³ Cf. E. ALBURQUERQUE, *Moral social cristiana. Camino de liberación y de justicia*, Madrid 2006, 57-74; cf. F. GUERRERO, *Mensaje social de la Iglesia. De León XIII a Benedicto XVI*, Madrid 2009, 77-84.

²⁴ Cf. L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Entre la utopía y la realidad. Curso de Moral Social*, Santander 1998, 31.

calls for the government to intervene in all its authority and power to serve for commonwealth and common good (RN 36). This will later be enriched in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) of Pius XI who would defend the right to property, capital and work, just wage and restoration of social order. Also, the pastoral constitution of Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes* underlines the dignity of the human person and calls for individual and social mission against suffering. In this world where there is an abundance of wealth and economic resources, many are still suffering from being poor, hunger and illiteracy (GS 4) that such imbalance would lead one to suffer from internal divisions that cause great discords in the society (GS 10). Moreover, it calls the attention of the actual questions that affect and cause suffering to society especially matrimony and family, human culture, social, political and economic life. Many of them violate human dignity: “whatever insults human dignity... where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons” (GS 27). The Council also rejects the war and the accumulation of weapons (GS 81) through collaboration of every society to construct peace through justice and love.²⁵

Furthermore, the concept of the development is deemed very important in the Church’s social teachings. *Populorum Progressio* (1967) of Paul VI gives importance to integral anthropology and solidarity in which human and society would be alleviated from suffering brought about, for instance, by “less than human conditions” such as material and moral poverty, oppressions and exploitations of wageworkers (PP 21). Moreover, the transcendent humanism can be noted in the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) of John Paul II in which he also points out that, “side-by-side with the miseries of underdevelopment, themselves unacceptable, we find ourselves up against a form of superdevelopment, equally inadmissible” (SRS 28) and calls up for solidarity (SRS 39-40). In addition, the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) of Benedict XVI marks such anthropology on the loving search for the truth (cf. CV 1), in the conditions of social justice and the very essence of human being (CV 55).²⁶

The Catholic Church in her developing way has defended human dignity by the protection of human rights in the suffering world. Pius XII in his Christmas radio message in 1944 has already made a concrete stance to uphold the inviolable human dignity above the rights to be promulgated by the United Nations in the Universal

²⁵ See more information in E. ALBURQUERQUE, *Moral social cristiana*, 123-139.

²⁶ Cf. J. M. APARICIO MALO, *Desarrollo humano integral*, in: J. SOLS LUCIA (ed.), *Pensamiento social cristiano abierto al siglo XXI. A partir de la encíclica Caritas in veritate*, Santander 2014, 73-95.15-42.

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Later, the UDHR would be recognized by John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) as: “a solemn recognition of the personal dignity of every human being; an assertion of everyone's right to be free to seek out the truth, to follow moral principles, discharge the duties imposed by justice, and lead a fully human life” (144). Vatican II Council still defends human dignity and calls to protect in through inviolable fundamental rights that is inherent to men who is the image and likeness of God (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*).²⁷

The Church teachings are still subject to new developments in this changing world. She still recognizes her positive contributions to society: “it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ” (EG 183). Amidst sufferings and the ever-growing demands of society, the Church still defends the dignity of every individual. She still stands for the preferential option for the poor and includes them in the society in the light of the Gospel through solidarity, concern for the vulnerable, stand against sufferings of indiscriminate exploitations, improve economic, political and social orders, etc. (cf. EG 186-216). Furthermore, with different conflicts and human oppressions which make most of the people suffer, every society nowadays is challenged with the problem of migrations. Thus, given such right to migrate and return to one’s country (art. 13 of UDHR²⁸), the entire society must consider these migrants as persons, help them and incorporate them into the social life of the countries or regions that receive them (cf. GS 66).²⁹ Lastly, another important issue that the whole of society should consider is the suffering brought about by crisis which is both social and environmental (LS 139). Pope Francis calls for dialogue to create frameworks on ethical behaviors and principles. Modernity is marked by excessive anthropocentrism (LS 116) and thus, suffering can also be derived from practical relativism and replacement of human work by technological progress (LS 122-129). The Church, in this present world continues to defend the human person replete by dignity as being the image and likeness of God. Her preoccupations for protecting the ecosystem and promoting human progress against many threats are just a way of saying she continues to be the “expert in humanity” (Paul VI) in the light of the Gospel and Tradition.

²⁷ J. M. CAAMAÑO LÓPEZ, *Dignidad y derechos humanos*, in: J. SOLS LUCIA (ed.), *Pensamiento social cristiano abierto al siglo XXI. A partir de la encíclica Caritas in veritate*, Santander 2014, 97-122. .

²⁸ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Retrieved 7 May 2016).

²⁹ L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL SANTABÁRBARA, *En defensa de los humillados. Los derechos humanos ante la fe cristiana*, Santander 2005, 227-253.

IX. The Fulfillment of God's Covenant to the World: Man's Triumph over Suffering

1. Christians Confront Suffering with Faith, Hope and Love

a. Suffering Contemplated in Faith, Hope and Love

Suffering is not a virtue in itself but it is related to it.¹ Nonetheless, the Sacred Scriptures create a concrete relation of faith, hope and love through the *trust* that is created by man in God and God in man. In the Old Testament, faith is very much present in the sufferings of his people of God. The word faith is designated from the verbal form “heemin” that is the hiphil form of the verb ‘*mn*’ which means “to make oneself firm,” “to trust” and “to believe” (to be resistant, hopeful, stable or firm). Man suffers but believes and puts his trust in God who is stable, firm and safe rock: to rely solely in him.² The epitome of faith that can be reflected upon is Abraham's faith in God. With all the blessings Abraham received from God, he still suffers curse from not having the hope to have descendants after him but God promised him numerous descendants for his act of righteousness and obedience to his commandments (cf. Gen 15:5; 22:17). This only affirms that “faith ‘sees’ to the extent that it journeys, that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God's word” that makes a remembrance of the future bounded up with hope (LF 9). Moreover, the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22) is another test of faith to Abraham: obedience to God amidst suffering in terrible darkness of believing but with a full trust in God. This would mean, “This primordial love is capable of ensuring life even beyond death” (LF 11).

On the other hand, one who has faith even tested and could be a subject for suffering “will not waver” (cf. Is 28:16). It is subjecting oneself to God and trusting to the indefectible fidelity of his promise that opens up hope of man to the new future of God will surely bring salvation.³ Faith demands firmness and perseverance towards the end through a life of fidelity and justice of God amidst the test of suffering (Ps 140, 14; 56:10; 20:7; 135:5). Moreover, faith and trust is based on the covenant concluded through the salvific gesture of God (traversing the desert or experience of being saved)

¹ S. HAUERWAS–C. PINCHES, *Christians among the Virtues. Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, Notre Dame 1997, 114.

² Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 400.

³ Cf. J. ALFARO, *Actitudes fundamentales de la existencia cristiana*, in: ID, *Cristología y antropología*, Madrid 1973, 417.

in the promise of God maintained even in the night of suffering (cf. Job 19:25).⁴ Hence, it is trustingly abandoning of oneself to God (waiver), taking his word as truth (assent) and recognizing that God is God (recognition).⁵

Moreover, the concept of hope cannot be separated from the faith. It plays an important role in the way that it influences man's form of living and that the world triggers the need of it given the complexities and sufferings experienced. In its religious aspect, hope could be seen relevant in God's promise of his unfailing covenant. The hope, rooted in faith and in trust, can move towards the future and activate with dynamism the life of the believers. Zimmerli⁶ would define hope as "the certain strength of faith which lives from the love of God as it is poured into human hearts by the Spirit of God." "Ordinary" human hope which appears in Proverbs and Job is a kind of hope whose deferral saddens (Prov 13:12). Job, in the midst of sufferings, even asks if there is really hope (Job 14:19-20; 19:10).⁷ But, those who believe waits in the Lord (Ps 25:3; 37:9): this expresses security and hope, obedience and patience in times of suffering as man's response to the promise of the salvific initiative of God (Yahweh is the hope of Israel: Jer 14:8; 17:13) linked in trust.⁸

Furthermore, the love in the Old Testament takes its profound sense in *shema* (Dt 6:4ff) that reminds man of the only one God, who loves him unconditionally and freely despite his infidelity (Dt 4:37; Os 4:12; Jer 31:3; Is 49:15-16). This demands a true fidelity to God and love to one's neighbor (God even causes suffering and punishment to the descendants of the ancestors because of their wickedness but, on the other hand, he loves those who keep his commandments: Dt 20:5-6).

The theological virtues in the New Testament can also be connected with the experience of man with suffering. Faith, hope and love are being measured in the singular event of Christ: in the revelation God-Love (1 Jn 4:8). It is God himself who searches for the "lost sheep," a suffering and lost humanity (a father who embraces the prodigal son, a woman who finds the lost coin, etc.): a concrete expression of the radical love of Christ culminated in his death and suffering on the Cross in order to raise up and save men. "God is love" can be understood by contemplating the pierced side of Christ (Jn 19:37). It is from that point where the real definition of love begins (cf. DCE 12).

⁴ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Pistis y gnosis*, in, GLORIA I., *La percepción de la forma*, Madrid 1985, 124.

⁵ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 726.

⁶ W. ZIMMERLI, *Man and his Hope in the Old Testament*, London 1971, 3.

⁷ J. GOLDINGAY, *Old Testament Theology. Israel's Life*, vol. III, Downers Grove 2009, 111.

⁸ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 726-727.

Moreover, the new creation in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17) is concentered in one's trust and total abandonment in God, in a total hope in him and in loving him with all his being even in the most painful and miserable experience of suffering. This is expressed in the faith, hope and love as distinctive sign of Christian life (cf. 1 Thess 1:3; 1 Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5; Rom 5:1-5; Eph 1:5-18; Col 1:3-5; 1 Tim 6:11; Tit 2:2). These theological virtues give the possibility to live one's life in faith-trust, faith-hope; in realizing the idea "for me" brought by Christ's salvific event that is concentered in the *agape* with God who self-communicates with man.⁹

St. Paul¹⁰ himself, who presented with much emphasis these theological virtues, manifests in his life and writings how faith, hope and love sustain him and lead him to a total configuration of his life in Christ. He writes to the Corinthians about his sufferings and tribulations and how he links his faith to preaching the Gospel (cf. 2 Cor 4:13) that involves painful testing. It is in weakness and suffering that he discovers God's power that triumphs over one's suffering and weaknesses. Moreover, he experiences a dying that would eventually become a life for Christians (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-12). "Faith brings light" (LF 56) and sufferings and weaknesses give evidence to preaching not about Christians themselves but Christ as Lord alone (cf. 2 Cor 4:5). Moreover, the letter to the Hebrews concludes by presenting those who suffered for their faith (cf. Heb 11:38-38). These moments of suffering induce the Christians to entrust themselves totally to God who does not abandon them and who leads them to grow in faith and love (cf. Mk 15:34). Christ himself, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2), endured suffering.

Additionally, suffering makes possible to link the faith with hope (LF 57). Christians are led to hope for a better dwelling place prepared by Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:16-5:5), for "hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). This can also be Paul's testimony why he wrote to Philemon to entrust his runaway slave Onesimus (Phil 10-16): for in Christ is "an encounter with a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within" (SS 4). Hence, hope, together

⁹ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *La existencia cristiana en la fe, esperanza y amor*, in: A. CORDOVILLA–J. M. SÁNCHEZ CARO–S. DEL CURA ELENA (dirs.), *Dios y el hombre en Cristo. Homenaje a Olegario González de Cardedal*, Salamanca 2006, 564-567.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, in his Encyclical *Lumen Fidei* (LF), reflects about consolation amid suffering that is very much connected with the life of St. Paul and the testimony of the Christian saints who gave light to overcome the darkness of suffering and miseries of the world such as St. Francis of Assisi and the leper and Mother Teresa with her poor. See, LF 56-57.

with faith and charity, leads man to progress and to strain forward to a sure future (LF 71).

The first Christian communities manifest in their lives in the martyrdom: surrender of one's life for love (Ignatius of Antioch, Origen, etc.) and later on in virginity and monastic life of virtues. Such Christian existence is directed towards communion with God in his very image and likeness (Irenaeus of Lyon) in which the principle mediation is Christ and virtues as principle of dynamism of the Spirit (Origen). Moreover, Christ is the source of all virtues that are necessary in this vale of tears and of suffering; also, faith, hope and love are received in God (St. Augustine). The necessary interdependence of these theological virtues will later be developed by St. Thomas Aquinas and in the Council of Trent (DH 1531; 1544).¹¹

b. Divine and Human Relationship Enriched in Suffering

Suffering reflected upon faith, hope and love can also be described in the encounter between God and man through Christ as mediator. Thus, Christ's participation cannot only be regarded as functional but also as the pioneer of faith and, "For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb 2:10). Such difficulty entered upon recognizing the faith, hope and love "of" Jesus. However, the faith of Jesus does not mean negating his divinity but simply taking seriously his human condition (Heb 4:15; GS 22). This would also vivify man's filial trust and even up to his incorporation with the most intimate attitude of Jesus. This "correlativity" (A. Vanhoye) creates a sound relation between the "faith in Jesus" (trust in him) and the "faith of Jesus" (being worthy to be trusted: Heb 2:17; 3:2): faith manifested by Christ in man, configured by his death and resurrection and makes possible one's life in Christ.¹² Such expression can also be supported by the idea that Paul underlines the Christian participation on the life and death of Christ and that through faith, one takes part in his sufferings on the cross and in his resurrection (cf. Gal 2:20): "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:19b) and, in faith: to "die-with" him (Gal 2:20; see also Rom 3:21-26).¹³ Moreover, Christ's hope stands against the mockery during his cross

¹¹ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 735-738.

¹² Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 742-744.

¹³ Cf. A. GONZÁLEZ, *La fe de Cristo*: Revista latinoamericana de Teología (1993.28) 68-71.

(Mk 15:32-33 and par.), the experience of abandonment (Mt 27:46; Ps 22:9) and suffering up to his death. It is all about his total surrendering in the hands of God (cf. Mt 6:28; Mt 6:34). His cries for Jerusalem, even in the failure of his preaching, in his resentments against the people who surround him, his sufferings on the Calvary and the cross etc: they are not all about desperations but a demonstration of a total communion with God made possible for men.¹⁴

Thus, in Christ, the revelation (the unique gift of God expressed as manifested self-giving) is responded in faith; the promise (anticipation of his self-giving) is sustained in hope; and the love (his very own self-giving) that is capable of responding through the Spirit. In the sufferings of Christ and in his being the paradigm of faith, he became obedient to the will of the Father (the paradigm of charity): Jn 3:16. The Holy Spirit, the paradigm of hope that waits for the redemption embedded in the expectant heart of creation (cf. Rom 8:19-26). It is the Holy Spirit who makes men as Sons of God (Rom 8:5) and who sustains their hope (Rom 4:18), assuming their human condition in suffering towards their full manifestation as sons of God (Rom 8:19) and guiding them in truth (Jn 16:13) and leading them to eternal life (Rom 6:22).¹⁵

It is in this sense that Christ who lives in this theological virtues of life in human situation, also calls for a life in conformity with him made possible through a faithful following of his paths. Through his incarnation, Christ lived his divine life in and according to humanity. It is in the theological virtues that man encounters God and lives a divine life with him. His invitation is to live theologically: “repent and believe”, “this I command you: love one another” (Jn 15:17). It is to live what he also had lived in the same circumstances, failures and sufferings, etc. By following him without fear, life and death acquire new sense because there is security in the union with the Father and the sure hope of life and happiness.¹⁶ In addition, to be a Christian is “to be in Christ,” that is, incorporation to the sentiments of Christ, participating in his mission and uniting with him in “doing” and in “suffering.” The disciples are called to participate and to fill up what is still lacking in regard to the sufferings and afflictions of Christ (cf. Col 1:24) as an expression of love and communion of love with the person loved [cf. EE 53.104.203.221.167]. Suffering takes its fullest sense when one, in all humility, gives reverence and respect to those who suffer. To escape from suffering is not a solution. As

¹⁴ Cf. Ch. DUQUOC, *La esperanza de Jesús*: Concilium 59 (1970) 314-323.

¹⁵ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 744-747.

¹⁶ Cf. M. GELABERT BALLESTER, *La vida teologal en el seguimiento de Cristo*, in: ID, *Para encontrar a Dios. Vida teologal*, Salamanca 2002, 63-78.

human beings, it is impossible to remove sufferings and pains since life is lived with limitations. Christ, who is the human paradigm par excellence (cf. GS 22) lived with the suffering and sinful world and died by suffering for all. In his passion and death, Christ restored the people in all their freedom and dignity. Christ also lived by giving hope, love and happiness to the desolate humanity.¹⁷

c. Suffering and its Relation with the Virtuous Dynamism

The theological virtuous dynamism is growing in the life of grace in which man is being configured in Christ through the Holy Spirit. These theological virtues, which God calls and confers, affect the totality of the person and move him/her to respond through communion and the life of grace even in the state of suffering. These gifts of grace constitute the conversion of the person and of the world. Since faith, hope and love clearly emerge from the “basic trust” or the “fundamental hope of man” established from the sense that one is being loved and taken cared of most especially in the moments of suffering: that one is worthy of being loved. In this sense, one suffers in this world but he/she feels secured for the trust in himself, in the world and in his existence (fiducial); he/she contemplates the future as possibility and not as threat or continues obstacle or suffering (expectant); and the capacity to interchange one’s gift to another (lover). Thus, the basic trust that can be developed in this idea brings man towards his self-comprehension of the one worthy of love through grace that God confers him as a free and relational gift.¹⁸ Moreover, Benedict XVI explicitly affirms that:

The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society. A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through “com-passion” is a cruel and inhuman society (SS 38).

Today’s society intends to put away or keeps hidden the reality of inevitable pain of which it is incapable of eliminating it. Thus, there is the need to consider the reality of weaknesses, suffering, vulnerability and the like in the human history. It is not only a mode of staying away or avoiding evil but a matter of transforming man’s

¹⁷ N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Los excesos del amor. Figuras femeninas de Reparación en la Edad Media (siglos XI-XIV)*, Madrid 2012, 37-40.

¹⁸ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Virtudes teologales*, 714-724.742-744.

relationship with God through his access to the world and his relationship with others. To believe, hope and love “others” especially those who are suffering is converted as an internal imperative for man’s existence. God cannot suffer but he “can suffer with” just as what he showed us in his Passion. Thus, “hence in all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering *with us*; hence *con-solatio* is present in all suffering, the consolation of God's compassionate love—and so the star of hope rises” (SS 39). Love needs one to renounce himself because when it is converted to pure selfishness, it ceases to be love and to find meaning in suffering is to accept the reality that each one suffers (this is a journey of hope in maturity and purification) and to accept other’s sufferings as his own too (SS 38).

God must enter into the sufferings of the history (Benedict XVI) of man’s sinfulness. God enters with love in these sufferings not to punish, to make a vengeance or remove man’s freedom but to repair the broken balance. In this way, the Church must reject sufferings that can silence man and can lose human appearance and thus can destroy all capacity of acceptance and the possibility of his being (J. B. Metz).¹⁹ According to Rahner, the love of God and the love of neighbor are one and the act of love to one’s neighbor makes possible the transcendental, gratuitous and immediate experience of God. And, this love of God is the source of the love for God, of neighbor and of self (H. U. von Balthasar).²⁰ It is then apt to remember that God can be found in faith, hope and love: in him, from and in human situation, in the search for justice and in communal and fraternal living.²¹

2. Hope: True Testimony of Man’s Triumph over Suffering

a. The Hope Grounded in Christ in the History of Salvation

Suffering can also be considered an essential element inculcated in Eschatology. This is very much in line with the ultimate things that are kept on reminding of one’s future: “Whatever you do, remember that some day you must die. As long as you keep this in mind, you will never sin” (Sir 7:36). It is with this idea that the *eschaton*, which literally means the *last*, took its definitive significance in Christ whom God revealed his face in

¹⁹ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Los excesos del amor*, 30-31.

²⁰ Cf. Á. CORDOVILLA, *La unidad de amor a Dios y amor al prójimo*: *Gregorianum* 90, 1 (2009) 29-50.

²¹ See M. GELABERT BALLESTER, *La vida teologal se vive sacramentalmente*, in: ID, *Para encontrar a Dios. Vida teologal*, Salamanca 2002, 79-97.

the figure of a sufferer by taking the very condition of man. “This innocent sufferer has attained the certitude of hope: there is a God, and God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive; yet we can begin to grasp it through faith” (SS 43). And this certainty of hope opens in an eschatological sense its dimension of the future and makes possible God’s revelation to man, even though limited, due to man’s finitude. Man, therefore, according to K. Rahner, must know his future (at least the idea of the “open future”) since he is directed towards the future through his prospective experimentation in his present viewed from and in his historico-salvific future. This is made possible through faith in the incarnation of the Logos, in his suffering in death and resurrection through whom God communicates to men.²²

Thus, Eschatology is an expression of faith: that the history is in the hands of God and the world can reach its fulfillment in communion with God brought and fulfilled in Christ who is the incarnated promises of God. This is not about counting on the afterlife but on the experiences of sufferings and evils through which Eschatology expresses the faith in which the true believer, in his freedom, can mold its present history for the salvation of all.²³ In the Sacred Scriptures offer a new comprehension of God as “our future” who creates the basis of humanity’s hope through their faith in Yahweh who reveals himself in the present and the future times as the living God. God’s faithfulness is itself an expectation of the future even in his plan of creation, which is itself the beginning and the eschaton: a creation that is “very good” (Gen 1:31). Such eschaton is very much referred to future that is realized within this world (cf. Is 2:2; also, the day of judgment in the books of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah). Moreover, the eschatological expectation of the Israel boils down to their present relationship with the living God even after death: Ps 16, 49 and 73 (that even death caused by sorrows and sufferings cannot have the power against the loving God).²⁴ It can also be noted that the retribution has something to do with the life in God (Wis 5:15) and through the suffering of Job, the deception of Qoheleth, the personalization of responsibility with prophecy (Ezekiel), prayers of the psalms, through the blood of the martyrs, Israel passed from a communitarian retribution to a conception and retribution of the justice of

²² Cf. K. RAHNER, *Principios teológicos de la hermenéutica de las declaraciones escatológicas*, in: ID, *Escritos de Teología IV*, Madrid 1964, 422.424-435.

²³ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Algunas ideas sobre la interpretación de la escatología*: Concilium 41 (1969) 55.

²⁴ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, 43-57.

a personal God of the resurrection. With this, Israel did not lose hope.²⁵ The Sacred Scriptures do not offer any anticipated historical description about eschaton. More so, the ideas of judgment, return of Christ, heaven, hell, etc. are not so explicitly mentioned in the Bible but can only be interpreted from the relationship of the God of the covenant and of humanity, in particular in Christ as “new Adam” who is the man of eschaton (1 Cor 15:45; Rev 22:13). This leads to the idea of the new creation in Christ (Col 1:16) as the *proton of proton* (H. U. von Balthasar).

Christ does not bring history to an end; rather, he brings history to its fulfillment in him—without suffering—where “there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain” (Rev 21:4). This is the “Life” that the Christian faith professes: “transformed, renewed, consumed and is brought to the fullness” and “is eternal” which is Life itself in Christ. This is the hope founded through God’s communion with the world consumed in the mission of the Son and the Spirit, who works for the liberation, renewal and consummation of creation (cf. Rom 8; Acts 2:33-36, etc.), for the restoration of all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10) in the filial participation with the Father.²⁶ The hope for the eschatological salvation that is presented in the New Testament is very intense (Rom 8:23-25); sustained with patience especially in a great contest of suffering and afflictions (Heb 10:32-37); lived in vigilance (Mt 24: 42-44) and trust (2 Cor 1:10). This is made possible in Christ (Eph 3:16) in whom God has already made his promise (2 Tim 1:1) and showed to men his love and fidelity (1 Cor 1:8-9).²⁷ This reality of Christ can lead to the assurance that the Word the alpha and the beginning, the omega and the end is man’s hope and eschaton.²⁸

With the rapid changes in human history, Christianity has been attentive to the signs of the times especially to the question of this life bounded by conflicts and sufferings and the life to come: “buffeted between hope and anxiety and pressing one another with questions about the present course of events, they are burdened down with uneasiness” (GS 4). From the rapid advancement of technology and the industrialization in the nineteenth century (cf. SS 20) up to the time when Christianity has put his attention to individual and his salvation in which “it has limited the horizon of its hope and has failed to recognize sufficiently the greatness of its task—even if it has continued

²⁵ Cf. T. MURO UGALDE, *Escatología cristiana. Esperanza en tiempos de desesperanza*, San Sebastian 2009, 171-179.

²⁶ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 636-637.638-643.

²⁷ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *La otra dimensión. Escatología cristiana*, Madrid 1975, 17.

²⁸ J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *El último sentido*, Madrid 1980, 66.

to achieve great things in the formation of man and in care for the weak and the suffering” (SS 25). It is in this sense that Christian Eschatology that is made profound by its fundamental Christological kerygma in its future and present sense, must be injected within the eschatological market. Eschatology must be duly emphasized with great sense the idea of the future that is yet to be realized. The creed expresses it clearly: from the past (Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension), present (Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father) to the future (his coming in power and final judgment). Man still hopes for his own resurrection in the future.²⁹ This richness of the eschatological revelation rooted from the present that assures of the future in Christ that is yet to come must still be made relevant to the people of today. It is in sense that G. Uríbarri would see the need to make such eschatological message intelligible and in connection with the daily lives of the people. He coins the idea of the “Ecological Eschatology” that can clearly make a parallel between the end of humanity and the world: the death of the life of the earth and all creations, biological destructions, extinction of species, sufferings caused by man’s destructive activities both in the environment and societies. This may create an understandable and clear eschatological language that may awaken the world that suffers towards one’s openness to the joy transcendence brought by the promise of the future resurrection.³⁰ This hope in the Kingdom of God does not forget the destiny of the one who proclaims this hope and who suffered from crucifixion because of it. With Christ’s death and resurrection, the Kingdom of God combines the figure of the history and the end that transcends it.³¹

b. *Man and his Hope in the Coming of Christ*

In a world marked by so much suffering and injustice can hardly be considered as the work of a good God, the Last Judgment loses its significance: “Since there is no God to create justice, it seems man himself is now called to establish justice. If in the face of this world's suffering, protest against God is understandable, the claim that humanity can and must do what no God actually does or is able to do is both presumptuous and intrinsically false” (SS 42). This is deeply negated by some authors like A. Adorno who

²⁹ Cf. G. URÍBARRI, *Habitar en el “tiempo escatológico,”* in: ID (ed.), *Fundamentos de Teología Sistemática*, Madrid 2003, 253-281.

³⁰ See a more lucid presentation in G. URÍBARRI, *Escatología ecológica y escatología cristiana: Miscelánea Comillas* 54 (1996) 297-316; ID, *Necesidad de un imaginario cristiano del más allá: Iglesia viva* (2001) 61-62.

³¹ Cf. M. KEHL, *Escatología*, Salamanca 1992, 28; Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 644-646.

upholds the idea that without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there can be no true justice: “where not only present suffering would be wiped out, but also that which is irrevocably past would be undone” (cf. SS 42). In the Credo of the Church the line “he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead” identifies such hope in God’s justice and the criterion for one’s life at present (SS 41).

The early Christians’ eschatological expectation would designate such event as “Parousia” (coming: 1 Thess 5:23) thought of as unveiling, revelation, fulfillment and consummation of the Kingdom that is accompanied by the ideas of the epiphany (1 Tim 6:14) apocalypse or manifestation (1 Cor 1:7), the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2), the Coming of the Son of Man (Mk 13:26), etc. This leads to acknowledging the reality as the New Creation (cf. 1 Cor 15) which highlights the coming of Jesus in power which supposes the destruction of evil that causes human suffering and the glorification of those who pertain to Christ, the judgment, the end of the world and the cosmic renewal.³²

Moreover, the New Testament alludes also to the signs that precede such Parousia: the weakening of faith (Lk 18:18), apparition of the anti-Christ doomed to perdition (cf. 2 Thess 2ff); the conversion of Israel (Rom 11:25ff), etc.³³ The idea of the Parousia is imprinted in the celebration of the Eucharist that as the memorial of Christ until his coming (cf 1 Cor 11:26): the *maranatha* (“come, Lord: 1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20) as a confession of their faith that expresses of their hope in Christ as a basis of their conversion. This exhorts them to always be joyful in the Lord (Phil 4:4-5) and to face with braveness their present tribulations and to participate in the sufferings of Christ and in his definitive glorification (cf. 2 Thess 1:4-10; 1 Thess 1:3; Rom 5:3-5; 2 Cor 1:3-7) as they await for the glory that is the freedom from slavery in Parousia with the resurrection and the new creation. For “the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.”³⁴ These New Testament elements became a strong emphasis of the Vatican II Council, after a long progressive neutralization in the tradition, (esp. in LG 48 and 49; GS 39; AD 9 on Church’s missionary activity between the first and second coming; and, SC 8 on final manifestation of Christ expressed in the liturgical worship). Many have contributed to the data of the Parousia: the Consequent Eschatology (Schweitzer’s idea of Parousia in

³² Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 646-646.

³³ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *La otra dimensión*, 163.

³⁴ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA,, 164-166.

the imminent waiting of the coming of the Kingdom); the Realized Eschatology headed by Ch. Dodd with the idea that with Jesus, the Kingdom has come with total perfection; O. Cullmann's Eschatology of "already but not yet" in the history of salvation; R. Bultmann's idea of the adhesion of faith to participate in the hope of Jesus: confession that Christ has triumphed over death, sin, injustices, pains and sufferings and there's the possibility of the "already" instauration of the Kingdom.³⁵

However, idea of the Christian post-Paschal hope is rooted in the Resurrection of Jesus that makes possible the salvation of God to take place from the very dynamism of history (for having triumphed evil, sin, sufferings and pains) towards consummation.³⁶ The Church opens her eyes to the reality of the world: "Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the worlds citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy" (GS 4). Moreover, the Church strives in order that "the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one" for it is the vital concern of the Kingdom (GS 39). Thus, there arose the idea of the liberation of man and the Kingdom of God that mutually demands each other. For Rahner,³⁷ the history of the world and the history of salvation are overlapping. Moreover, authors like I. Ellacuría, L. Boff, G. Gutiérrez center on the practical projects of liberation that makes believable the utopic project of Christian liberation.³⁸ Ellacuría underlines the sin of the injustice that causes suffering to death and the negation of the dignity of the sons of God: the death of the poor is the death of God (the continuation of the crucifixion of the Son). Thus, the criterion to know and interpret salvation and perdition is God's identification with the poor (Mt 23:31ff; Lk 10:25-37).³⁹ Also, there exist the demands to sustain the Christian hope in the midst of injustices in the world and the call for the Christian communities to respond in solidarity to the needs of the poor who suffer from hunger, thirst, sickness, etc.⁴⁰ But there is the need to consider correct relation with the history of the world and salvation

³⁵ Cf. Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *La Pascua de la creación. Escatología*, Madrid 1996, 93-100.

³⁶ J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *El último sentido*, 81.

³⁷ See his transcendental reading of the history in K. RAHNER, *Historia del mundo e historia de la salvación*, in: ID, *Escritos de Teología V*, Madrid 1964, 115-134.

³⁸ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 657.

³⁹ Cf. I. ELLACURÍA, *Historicidad de la salvación cristiana*: Revista Latinoamericana de Teología 1 (1984: 1) 5-45 esp. 15ff and 31.

⁴⁰ A. GONZÁLEZ, *Mateo 25 y la esperanza de los pobres*: Senderos 69 (2001) 427-472.

through a Chalcedonian principle: unity without confusion, distinction without separation.⁴¹

Furthermore, it must be rightly pondered that the Parousia is the coming to judge (with glory: DH 150) as the Creed with describe (also, 2 Tim 4:1). The verb “to judge” comes from the Hebrew word *Safat* which means to govern, to establish, to dominate, to judge (as exercise of a sovereign power like that of Kings’). The judgments of God are acts of salvation (1 Kgs 3:16-28; Dn 3: especially in times of difficulties). The experiences of suffering of Israel especially of the just provoke the faith in the justice of Yahweh to change to the future intervention where God will judge the enemies of his people (Is 13-27) and Israel themselves (Am 5: 16-20) in the “day of Yahweh.”⁴² This is linked to the definitive victory of the Resurrected Christ over the power of evil and sin as roots of suffering (Mt 25:31ff; Mk 8:38; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Jn 3:7-19; 12:47-48). Moreover, according to Kehl, the judgment of God is an expression of his “critical love” (that even disregards the possibility of hell), which is a moment of consummation, of the definitive reception of the Trinitarian love. This judgment is the crisis of the whole life of man.⁴³ Such crisis is expressed restrictively in the New Testament: crisis during one’s individual existence; his decision of destiny depends on his use of personal freedom⁴⁴ and responsibility and not the judicial sentence of the eschaton. The decision or the discrimination is something immanent in history and is understood as self-judgement. Thus, it is not the divine sentence that constitutes the salvation or condemnation (hell or the self-exclusion of the lordship of the Kingdom) but rather, the attitude of man over the constitutive principle of his definitive situation.⁴⁵ The image of the Final Judgment is the image of hope and only God can create justice (SS 43).

c. Hope in the Resurrection and Life Eternal

In the Sacred Scriptures, the post-mortal survival depends on one’s relationship with God (more of theological problem) and the question is if death becomes a barrier to the fidelity in God. Just as in the New Testament, Jesus confirms such faith in the resurrection against the Sadducees: God is not for the dead but for the living (Mk

⁴¹ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 657.

⁴² Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 662.

⁴³ Cf. M. KEHL, *Escatología*, 282-283.

⁴⁴ See also, J. R. SACHS, *Escatología actual: la salvación universal y el problema del infierno*: *Selecciones de Teología* 31 (1992: 124) 339-353.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *La otra dimensión*, 187-189.

12:18ff; cf. 2 Macc 7:9; Dn 12). Paul creates a synthesis of New Testament theology of the resurrection (1 Cor 15). “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (vv 12.13.15.16.29.32). If there’s no resurrection then “our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (vv. 12-21). Moreover, it will be the pneumatic corporeity (cf. v. 44), a pure expression of the Spirit that gives life (v. 45): “we shall all be changed” (cf. vv. 51-52) but the subject of the resurrected existence is the same subject of the mortal existence, although transformed (“for this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality”: cf. 53-54). Thus, the resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of the dead: Christ’s resurrection from the dead is called the “firstfruits” in which “a man has come also the resurrection of the dead” (cf. vv 20-23). With this, Paul instills that man can be resurrected because Christ has resurrected and in the image of Him (1 Cor 6:14-15: “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”). This would be equivalent to say that man’s resurrection completes what is lacking in the resurrection of Christ, just as man’s sufferings consume what is yet remaining in his Christ’s passion. The resurrection is the definitiveness of human life that is transformed (“When Christ who is your [a] life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory”: Col 3:4).⁴⁶ The universal sense of the resurrection and its somatic character has been the expression of the Church Fathers and the ecclesial faith. The Vatican Council II underlines it similarly in the resurrection’s communitarian and cosmic dimensions: “the restoration of all things” and the perfect reestablishment in Christ in the sense of the mystery of man’s communion with the Trinity (LG 48). It continues by reckoning that “the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18) that requires a strong in faith in Christ who will come “to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all those who have believed” (2 Thess 1:10).⁴⁷ Moreover, the Risen Christ also constitutes the foundation of the hope of humanity: “For then it was recalled that the Apostles obtained glory through their suffering; moreover, those who were led to martyrdom discovered

⁴⁶ Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *El último sentido*, 96-100.

⁴⁷ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 684-686.

strength in the hope of reaching Christ through their own death and in the hope of their own future resurrection.”⁴⁸

It is in this sense that the Christian faith professes such waiting for the “life of the world to come” in the sense that the resurrection frees man from a destiny to death. In the Old Testament, such concretion of the logic of love is revealed as capable of seeing the origin of life in its total gratuity that guarantees its culmination as definitive vocation of this love (see Wis 3:1; 3:7-9; 5:15; also, Dn 12:2; 2 Macc 7:9.14). Hence, God creates for life since he creates through love and this gives sense to believe in the consummation of this love. Moreover, the New Testament likens the “life” and the “eternal life” in the image of the banquet (marriage: Mt 25:1ff and par.; messianic: Lk 22: 29-30). John’s Gospel creates a sound reflection on the eternal life as the “life” in the Logos (Jn 1:4), a new birth in the faith: those who believe will have life/eternal life (cf. Jn 6:36.40.54.47). This idea of the eternal life grounded in one’s faith in the resurrection points towards the vision of God (Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). It is in this way that eternal life is the vision of God and the vision of God is the divinization of man. Also, the vision of God is the same as “to be with Christ” (Lk 23:42; 1 Thess 4:17; Phil 1: 23, etc.). God makes possible the divinization of man through the communication of his being, initiated in faith and consumed in vision. Some stance like the dogmatic constitution *Benedictus Deus* of Benedict XII puts its attention to the vision of God as essential constitutive of the eternal life: an intuitive and “face to face” vision (1 Cor 13:12) that lasts for eternity and effects joy and happiness, beatitudes, eternal life and eternal rest (cf. DH 1000). Later on, Vatican Council II underlines the communitarian and Christological dimension of this category of vision (cf. LG 48-49). With this, the idea of the eternal life as communion with Christ gives the idea of the *sanctorum communio* (universal fraternity) and consumed world in the New Creation (relation with the world oriented towards necessity and thus, elimination of suffering and edification of community under the dominion of God).⁴⁹

Furthermore, the facticity of life eternal does not dismiss the real possibility of the eternal death. The theological problem of the eternal death is based upon the premise that formulates the conditions of the possibility of life eternal. It is the

⁴⁸ INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Some Current Questions in Eschatology* (1992), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1990_problemi-attuali-escatologia_en.html (Retrieved 16 May 2016).

⁴⁹ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 696-705; Cf. J. L. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, *La otra dimensión*, 263-265.

theological problem of the authentic dimension of human freedom and does not need of the interpersonal love since life eternal can only exist in a free and loving gift of God. Thus, eternal death would be a fabrication of the rejection of freedom (this is very much in life with the Christian Anthropology). It is in this sense that the doctrine of eternal death affirms the possibility of a “no” to God in the course of human freedom (see also Mt 25: 31ff). In consequence, the eternal death is a possibility that denies the sincerity of the economy of grace.

Those who say they cannot believe in hell must ask themselves if they also do not believe in the hells that are already manifested on earth (suffering, wars, famine, etc). Later, there’s also a possibility that the meta-historical hell (J. L. Ruiz de la Peña). The free condition of man must open to possibilities of eternal life and eternal death. The Sacred Scriptures give the possibility of perdition associated with the image of fire of Gehenna (Is 66:24; Dan 12:2; Mt 18:19); fiery furnace (Mt 13:50); unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43.48), wailing and grinding of teeth (Mt 13:42), etc. It can also be associated with the negation of the communion with God. However, there’s a need the formulation of the said texts to avoid its literal interpretation. The universal message of the New Testament is the message of the Good News, of mercy and salvation and not threats, punishment or vengeance (cf. A. Tornos, Ch. Duquoc, etc.).⁵⁰ The ecclesial teaching assumes its content of faith and eschatological hope grounded in human freedom and responsibility (with a constant vigilance: cf. LG 48). In hope men are saved (cf. Rom 8:24) and redemption is offered in the sense that men have been given hope, trustworthy hope to face the present towards their own goal (SS 1). In this way Benedict XVI views Hell this way:

The prison here is a true image of everlasting Hell: to cruel tortures of every kind—shackles, iron chains, manacles—are added hatred, vengeance, calumnies, obscene speech, quarrels, evil acts, swearing, curses, as well as anguish and grief. But the God who once freed the three children from the fiery furnace is with me always; he has delivered me from these tribulations and made them sweet, for his mercy is for ever (SS 37).

⁵⁰ Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, *Escatología*, 705-708.

3. Mary, Icon and Model of an Authentic Christian Life

a. The Virgin Mother of a God Who Suffers for Humanity

Mary bears in her entire life the Gospel of suffering:

It was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysterious and supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the Cross together with the Beloved Disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son. And the words which she heard from his lips were a kind of solemn handing-over of this Gospel of suffering so that it could be proclaimed to the whole community of believers (*Salvifici Doloris* 25).

For H. U. von Batlthasar, all the functions of the Marian experience appoint towards a Christological mystery. He adds that being the “Mother of God” (Theotokos: DH 252) is a profound reference to Christology since the Immaculate Virgin leads towards the mystery of redemption and grace and being a virgin to become the mother of God expresses a Theology of the Covenant and of the people of God. Moreover, he reiterates that the Assumption of Mary remits to Eschatology since the Church confesses that all things that Christians aspired for were already given to her.⁵¹

The confession of faith that Christ was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary and was made man (DH 151) establishes a clear figure of Mary in her singular importance in the economy of salvation. In here, the divine maternity of Mary (Theotokos) is affirmed (DH 251). Moreover, there is also a strong concretion on the belief of her immaculate conception (LG 59) and assumption in heaven (LG 59). In addition, the Vatican Council II only declares the singular mediation of Christ and the maternal duty of Mary does not obscure or diminish this unique mediation of Christ but instead shows His power (LG 60). Her maternity has been a key to a historico-salvific consideration: in her being a creature and by the grace of God, she collaborated in the work of salvation; and, in her assumption to heaven (consummation of the life of grace), she manifested the eschatological hope in the design of salvation. Her being a Mother gives hope and serves as a model to Christians especially those who are

⁵¹ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *María en el dogma*: Sal Terrae 98 (2010) 883.

suffering. Also, she is the figure of the Church as Virgin and Mother. She is also the Mother of the believers by virtue of her being the Mother of the Head of the Church.⁵²

Furthermore, the Old Testament different basis on identifying the important contribution of Mary in the history of salvation. In particular, the image of Mary as the “second Eve” paves the way to repair the damage done by the first Eve of Genesis. The line, “They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel” of Gen 3:15 is interpreted in an eschatological way in which Satan, represented under the figure of the serpent, would be defeated by the “descendants” (interpreted as Christ) of the woman (Mary).⁵³ On the other hand, the typological character of Mariological exegesis can also be found in the Old Testament texts. This is better presented in the desire of God to establish a covenant with his people (Ez 36:28) that culminates in the new covenant in Christ who embraces all humanity. These people of Israel will be interpreted in a figure of a woman as the Daughter of Zion who appears to be the spouse, mother and virgin (cf. Hos 1-3; Is 1:21; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; 3:1). This idea will be applied to the New Testament. For instance, the woman whom Jn 19:26 speaks about the figure of the “Daughter Zion” in whom the Church will be born. Paul also speaks of the image of a woman-mother in comparison with Sarah and her descendants (cf. Gal 4:21-27).⁵⁴

The maternal virginity of Mary is developed through the birth of Jesus as the promised messiah in line with the descendants of Abraham and David. Matthew tries to present that that the son to be born is the Messiah pronounced by the prophets (1:16). Moreover, Mt 1:18-25 presents the virgin birth by Mary, which means, the birth of the Son is purely the work of grace by the Holy Spirit. This accomplishes the prophecy in Is 7:14: “the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel.” In addition, Luke parallels with Matthew as regards the work of the Holy Spirit for the birth of the Messiah (cf. Lk 1:26-38). This mystery resounds also in her virginity for being the Mother of God (LG 57), full of grace (Lk 1:28) and conceived without sin (DH 2803; LG 599), as she received the Word of God announced by an angel by her “yes” in her heart and through her faith in order to give Life and redemption to the world (LG 53; 63). Like Mary, the Church also becomes herself mother as she receives

⁵² Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología-Soteriología-Mariología*, in: *La Iglesia y su misterio*, in: Á. CORDOVILLA (ed.), *La lógica de la fe, Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid 2013, 376-378.

⁵³ Cf. H. GRAEF, *María. La mariología y el culto mariano a través de la historia*, Barcelona 1968, 13-14.

⁵⁴ Cf. G. URIBARRI, *Cristología-Soteriología-Mariología*, 379-380.

the Word of God in faith and she transmits redemption to her baptized sons (LG 64).⁵⁵ Mary, at the foot of the cross (Jn 19), received a *new kind of motherhood* (spiritual and universal) of all humanity, so that every individual, together with her, will remain closely united to him on the Cross: “so that every form of suffering, given fresh life by the power of this Cross, should become no longer the weakness of man but the power of God” (*Salvifici Doloris* 26). The maternal virginity of Mary is a calling for everybody to take her and consider her as their mother in order that, like Mary, they may also conceive and give birth to Christ for all humanity.⁵⁶

b. *The Mother and Model of the Church that Suffers*

The Church, “like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,” announces Christ’s cross and death until his coming (LG 8). With this, she keeps on repeating the words spoken by Mary during the Annunciation (Lk 1:38: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word”) and the Visitation (Lk 1:39-25) in which she pronounced the Magnificat. From the Magnificat, the Church derives such truth about God’s covenant: “the God who is Almighty and does ‘great things’ for man: ‘holy is his name’” (RH 37). The Gospel of suffering that is lived by Mary becomes the unlimited source for the new generations in the history of the Church. The Gospel of suffering also signifies “the revelation of the salvific power and salvific significance of suffering in Christ’s messianic mission and, subsequently, in the mission and vocation of the Church” (*Salvifici Doloris* 25). Finally, in the Magnificat (cf. RH 37), Mary is filled with the spirit of the “poor of Yahweh,” who also has put her trust in God and waits for salvation (cf. Pss. 25; 31; 35; 55). She proclaims “Messiah of the poor” (cf. Is. 11:4; 61:1) to the suffering and the poor. Like Mary, the Church must also be poor⁵⁷ (with simple and fraternal heart): for “she stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from Him” (LG 55).

⁵⁵ Cf. G. URÍBARRI, *Cristología-Soteriología-Mariología*, 380-386; cf. Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ PANIZO, *María en el dogma*, 2-7.

⁵⁶ Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *María en el misterio de la alianza*, Madrid 1993, 156.

⁵⁷ Cf. E. PIRONIO, *Pobreza y esperanza en María*, Madrid 1980, 28-30.

X. Conclusion and Recommendation

This [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil... (Heb 6:19).

Indeed, it is in our weakness that we are made strong! The whole of this study marks the real intention of understanding suffering not only as a human reality that one has to accept and carry its burden but also to comprehend it as a way of embracing its mystery through Christ: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). We are urged to develop a strong understanding of suffering by seeing in Christ the profoundness of God’s love for us. God’s greatest gift for humanity is Christ himself made possible through his incarnation and also “over to death” in the crucifixion. Christ assumed suffering and he triumphed over it!

Christ’s suffering is redemptive because of his love and this redemption is still open to this love expressed through human suffering. God does not want man to suffer and this is the very reason why he empties and suffers himself to show humanity how he loves and remains faithful to him.

This study has explored the depth of man’s suffering and its very negative consequences. However, it does not stop from letting suffering destroy man’s capability to hope and to wrestle in order to eliminate it. Rather, conscious of his finiteness, man exercises in full freedom to opt for or go against injustice, evil and sin. It then underlies the significance of man’s responsibility to suffer with others and for others by loving one another in order to establish the truth and to promote justice and freedom in God.

Moreover, this study has underlined the importance of taking courage and hope in Christ’s suffering on the cross and in his victory over death and sin through his resurrection. The Church assumes to live like Christ and, like St. Paul, to rejoice in sufferings and to fill up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions through her faithful preaching of the Word, celebration of the Liturgy and the sacraments and in her works of charity. Her presence amidst human sufferings fulfills Christ’s compassionate love, accompanies man to live life to its fullest and journeys with him in the way to God’s promise of salvation.

Finally, this study hopes to pave the way to make sense in our sufferings by taking God as the reason of our hope. However, this study does not assure, in all humility, the totality of comprehending the mystery of suffering. It only marks the beginning of not only understanding and accepting it as life's reality but also seeing it in the perspective of Christian love: to make and develop sympathy and compassion through love sustained by hope in our faith in Christ who leads us to enter into his mystery in order for us to find the reason of our suffering, as long as we are able to grasp the pinnacle of this divine love.

It is in this manner that this study recommends a new way of understanding and looking at the very core of suffering in our life in Christ. In the same manner, it is a call to action and an invitation for us to be responsible to one another and to transform human suffering as the conduit of grace.

I firmly believe that each Christian is called to offer his life in charity to others, to suffer with those who suffer and to be a beacon of hope to all. And this act of love is itself a vocation. Thus, this must be an apostolate driven with evangelical intentions and with a deep conviction of living out Christ himself by saying, "yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Gloria Deo. Pax Hominibus

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