

Torres, Larry (2025) *An examination of the contemporary typological interpretation in Oscar Romero's 1980 Homilies: towards a theological framework for contemporary typological preaching*. MTh(R) thesis.

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/85162/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

An Examination of the Contemporary Typological
Interpretation in Oscar Romero's 1980 Homilies:
Towards a Theological Framework for
Contemporary Typological Preaching.

Larry Torres

Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the 1980 homilies of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Particularly it is looking at Romero's contemporary typological interpretation in his preaching. There are some who are skeptical of a preacher using a contemporary typological approach in their preaching as they feel the biblical text is misinterpreted as the focus is on the present. Romero's preaching was studied to see if there is any discernible pattern to his contemporary typological interpretation and what were the theological foundations of his interpretation. The central claim of this work is Oscar Romero's 1980 sermons demonstrate he worked on the principle that a contemporary typological homiletic ought to be rooted in the principle of the continuation of the people of God within the unfolding of salvation history, and this is a helpful and effective homiletical option and framework for contemporary typological preaching.

Word Count: 33,288

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	4
Chapter 1: Biographical Sketch of Oscar Romero	9
Chapter 2: Overview of Romero’s Preaching	23
Vatican II on the Homily.....	23
Structure of Sermons.....	24
Exposition.....	25
“Vida de la Iglesia” (Life of the Church).....	26
“Hechos de la Semana” (Events of the Week).....	27
Fulfillment and Actualization.....	29
Typological Interpretation: Towards a Definition.....	33
Biblical Typology.....	33
Typology’s Use in Early Church History.....	34
Theological Foundation for Typology.....	35
Preaching and Typology.....	36
Conclusion.....	37
Chapter 3: Romero’s Use of Typology in 1980 Sermons	39
“The Epiphany, God’s Revelation to All,” January 6	40
“Baptism, Revelation of Messianic Gifts” January 13	41
“Christ reveals his glory in the happiness of people.” January 20.....	43
“The Homily, the actualization of the Word of God.” January 27.....	44
“God calls us to build our history with him.” February 10.....	46
“Poverty of the Beatitudes, Strength of true liberation of the people.” February 17.....	47
“Lent, the Triumph of God’s Saving Plan in History.” February 24.....	48
“Lent, our transfiguration through Christ” March 2.....	51

“Following the plan of God, conversion is the necessary requisite for true liberation” March 9.....	51
“Reconciliation of people in Christ, Project of True Liberation.” March 16.....	53
“The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation.” March 23.....	54
The final sermon of Oscar Romero. March 24.....	58
Strengths and Weaknesses of Romero’s Use of Typology.....	59
Conclusion.....	60
Chapter 4: Romero’s Foundation for Contemporary Typological Preaching.....	61
Continuation of the people of God.....	61
Ecclesial Typology.....	62
Salvation History.....	62
God as Lord of History.....	63
Addressing Some Objections.....	63
Church as Anti-Type and not Christ?.....	63
No Discernable Limits.....	64
Further Response to Objections.....	65
Conclusion.....	67
Appendix: Timeline of Oscar Romero’s Life and Significant Events in El Salvador.....	68
Bibliography.....	70

Introduction

Oscar Romero was the Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador from February 1977 until his assassination on March 24, 1980. Throughout his tenure as archbishop, Romero was openly critical of the Salvadoran government and military institutions in his sermons.¹ This thesis will examine the preaching of Oscar Romero during his tenure as archbishop; specifically, his sermons from 1980 and his typological interpretation in them.

Typology², in theological and biblical disciplines, often refers to typologies that are present in the Bible, mainly between the Old and New Testaments. Typology, regarding biblical interpretation, can be defined as:

...the method of noting what went on previously in the Old Testament (the type) and something later in the New Testament (the antitype). This intentional relationship between an earlier person (e.g., Moses), place or institution (e.g., temple), or event (e.g., the lifting up of the bronze serpent) and a later person (e.g., Christ), place or institution (e.g., the church), or event (e.g., Christ's crucifixion on a cross) underscores the divinely purposed unity of Scripture. Typology also highlights the promise-fulfillment theme, that earlier Scripture anticipates later Scripture, which presents its realization.³

The typological relationships are shown from one person, event, or institution in the Old Testament to one in the New Testament. Essentially typology in this context is connecting past events, in the Old Testament, with succeeding events in the more recent past, in the New Testament. Other examples include, in the Old Testament the return from exile in Babylon is a new or second exodus (Isaiah 51:10-11). In the New Testament, Jesus is described as the new Adam (Romans 5:12-21). The authors of the New Testament viewed people, institutions, and events as being prefigured, or foreshadowed, in the Old Testament. So, one can see how the New Testament authors compared a person of the past, Adam, to a future person, in Jesus, and an event of the past in Numbers, a snake pole that was lifted up and brought healing, compared to a

¹ In Catholicism, what Protestants call sermons Catholics and Orthodox Christians refer to as homilies. For the purpose of this thesis the term "sermon" will be used throughout unless Romero or another source used the word "homily." Both terms are essentially interchangeable, and the term "sermon" will be used as a more universal term since this thesis seeks to learn from Romero's preaching in a way that could apply to all denominations and sects of Christianity.

² The term typology can also be interchangeable with figural, as Ribbens notes that proponents of theological interpretation began using "figural reading" where other scholars would have used the term "typology." Cf., Benjamin J. Ribbens, "Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 1 (Spr 2011), 82. In addition, another interchangeable term for typology is analogy, as Stephen Farris used the terms interchangeably in his work *Preaching That Matters*. Farris noted that typology is essentially a form of analogical thinking and cited Gerhard von Rad, and in the rest of his book he preferred the term "analogy." Cf., Stephen Farris, *Preaching That Matters: The Bible and Our Lives*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 19. Throughout this thesis there may be references to sources that prefer the term "figural," or "analogy." For the purpose of this thesis, the term typology will be used throughout as this thesis is examining Romero's preaching in light of what Justo and Catherine Gonzalez claimed of Romero's homiletic and it is the term the Gonzalezes used in *The Liberating Pulpit* to describe Romero's preaching and the model of preaching they advocated. Walter Kaiser used the term typology as well to describe a homiletic he believed was inadequate, as will be discussed.

³ Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 215.

future event, Jesus's crucifixion, that also brought healing and salvation (see Num. 21:4-9 and Jn. 3:14-15).

In *The Liberating Pulpit*, Justo and Catherine Gonzalez advocated their view that the Church ought to return to its Early Church roots and engage in liturgical typological preaching.⁴ In the beginning of the chapter, "Making Connections," they argue that the Church of the last several centuries has separated elements that the Early Church held together, and those are Scripture, preaching, and liturgy.⁵ Oscar Romero was able to connect all three in his preaching according to the Gonzalezes.⁶ When the Gonzalezes use the term "typology," they are not referring to typologies within the Bible, as discussed previously. Their use of the term typology in this context concerns relating the events within Scripture to the preacher's present context. For this work the term, contemporary typological preaching, will be used to demonstrate that the typological interpretation discussed is between a biblical text and a preacher's lived context.

While Romero was an example of a preacher who properly engaged in liturgical typological preaching, the Gonzalezes gave examples of those who did not properly use typology in their preaching. One example of improper typological interpretation was the Puritans of New England who compared themselves to the Israelites of the Old Testament and Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land.⁷ Another example they described was Eusebius's comparison of Emperor Constantine with Moses.⁸ Even though there are challenges to this contemporary typological homiletic they advocated, they still believed this was a homiletic that ought to be rediscovered.

A more modern example of a typological relationship drawn between a biblical text and one's present context can be found in American History. In antebellum America enslaved Africans adopted and adapted the Christian faith of their enslavers. Most slaves were illiterate and only had the oral tradition of biblical stories passed on to them, and one story that resonated with them was the Exodus. The enslaved Africans saw parallels between their situation as enslaved people in a foreign land, the United States, and the Israelites situation as enslaved people in a foreign land, Egypt. The African slaves who were brought to the Americas lacked a remembered history or culture as the generations passed, so they adopted the Bible as their new history with Moses, Joshua, Samson, and Jesus as their leaders.⁹ In his book, *Reading While Black*, Esau McCaulley says this about the African slaves who were in the US:

⁴Justo L. González and Catherine Gunsalus González, *The Liberating Pulpit*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 96-97.

⁵ Justo and Catherine Gonzalez, *The Liberating Pulpit*, 96-97.

⁶ Ibid, 117.

⁷ Ibid, 116.

⁸ Ibid, 117.

⁹Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word That Moved America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 200.

It is also well known that these enslaved persons, over against their masters' wishes, viewed events like God's redemption of Israel from slavery as paradigmatic for their understanding of God's character. They claimed that God is fundamentally a liberator.¹⁰

African slaves in the US related to the oppression and injustice the Israelites experienced and they cried out to God for deliverance as the Israelites did (Exodus 2:24-25). They expected God to hear their cry and to act on their behalf as he did in the past. One could argue that this interpretation emphasized their context and imposed it on the biblical narrative, but the parallels of their situation and that of the Israelites in the Exodus cannot be ignored. Here is a clear example of typological relationships between the biblical text and the present or one's own context. Is this typological interpretation valid? Does it have any merit? Some would not see validity in this type of contemporary typological interpretation.

In his book, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, Walter Kaiser argued against contemporary typology preaching, as he called it, of Old Testament prophetic texts. His argument against a preacher using typology in a sermon that compares the biblical context and his or her present context, is that there is a danger of misinterpretation. Namely, the preacher will misinterpret the biblical text and its context because the focus is on their present context and the present guides the shape of the sermon rather than the text.¹¹ Kaiser says:

The first inadequate model is "prophetic typological preaching." While there is a legitimate typology in Scripture where the exegete can point to textual clues that some person, event, or institution in the Old Testament illustrated in shadow form the full reality that was to come, that is not what is meant here. Perhaps it would be better to label this deficient approach "contemporary-typology preaching," *for the modern situation controls both the shape and almost all of the content of the sermon.*¹²

The danger for the preacher, according to Kaiser, is imposing their context on the biblical text.¹³ Therefore the exegesis of the biblical text is not done adequately to determine its original meaning, and therefore the proper original meaning is not used for the basis of forming the sermon. Even though Kaiser wrote specifically about Old Testament prophetic texts, it is reasonable to assume that he would not agree with any contemporary-typological preaching no matter which genre of Scripture it came from because his view of legitimate typology was limited to typology within Scripture and not outside of it. Another potential issue with contemporary typological preaching is determining the limits. What are the parameters for the

¹⁰ Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 17.

¹¹ Walter C Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 187.

¹² Kaiser, *Towards an Exegetical Theology*, 187. Emphasis added.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 188.

types or parallels that a preacher can discern between the text and their context? Is there a framework to do this?

This thesis will examine Romero's contemporary typological preaching, considering what Justo and Catherine Gonzalez claimed of his homiletic in their work, *The Liberating Pulpit*. The reason for an analysis of Romero's preaching is that the Gonzalezes concluded their work with an excerpt from Romero's final sermon as an example of the liturgical typological homiletic they advocated.¹⁴ The Gonzalezes described Romero as practicing true liturgical typological preaching.¹⁵ They said: "What follows is only a selection of a few relevant passages that illustrate the character of true liturgical, typological preaching."¹⁶

So the question becomes: should a preacher engage in a contemporary typological homiletic? If so, what are the limits or framework that should be employed when discerning typological relationships? Does Romero's preaching offer a model or framework? To help answer these questions this thesis will engage the preaching of Oscar Romero. This thesis argues that the theological foundation of Romero's contemporary typological homiletic is the principle that the Church is the continuation of the people of God within the unfolding of salvation history.

The research is limited to the sermons of Romero during his tenure as archbishop from 1977-1980, specifically his sermons from 1980. Romero's 1980 sermons were chosen as the sample as they were Romero's final sermons and reflect the fullness of his developed homiletical method. In addition, Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980. The fact that Romero was assassinated this year gives significance to these sermons because it is evident that those who sought to silence Romero saw his sermons as causing them issues.¹⁷ This is shown with two bombings, one failed attempt, and one successful both of them occurred in January 1980. The first failed attempt was a bomb placed under the altar in the cathedral sanctuary where Romero preached. For some reason this bomb malfunctioned and never went off, saving Romero and his parishioners. The second bombing was successful, and it targeted the radio station YSAX where Romero's sermons were broadcasted throughout the country.

Romero's sermons were accessed from the Archbishop Romero Trust website.¹⁸ The website contains manuscripts of Romero's sermons in both Spanish and English, and audio where

¹⁴ Justo and Catherine Gonzalez, *The Liberating Pulpit*, 118.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Justo and Catherine González, *The Liberating Pulpit*, 118.

¹⁷ It is unknown who shot Romero but given the fact that his assassin killed him with one shot to the heart, it is clear that this was a skilled shooter and most likely a member of the military or some security force ordered to kill him by the military dictatorship or with some connection to the government. According to many observers at the time, including US Ambassador Robert White, it is believed that army major Roberto D'Aubuisson ordered Romero's assassination. D'Aubuisson was the founder and leader of ARENA ("National Republican Alliance" in English), see Anna L. Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 65. In his biography of Romero, James Brockman dedicated an appendix to discuss who possibly killed Romero, see James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2005), 249-255 for further discussion of this question.

¹⁸ "Homilies," Homilies and Writings, The Archbishop Romero Trust, <http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/homilies-and-writings/homilies>.

available. For the purpose of this thesis, the Spanish manuscripts were studied and translated directly. As each of the 1980 sermons were studied, a pattern of a biblical person or people, event, or institution that Romero related to his present context was sought and looked at to see if there was a consistent theological theme or pattern.

The questions to be researched are: What are the characteristics of Romero's typology as evidenced in his 1980 sermons? Is there a discernible method or pattern to Romero's typological interpretation in his 1980 sermons? Was his use of typology in preaching theologically grounded? To what extent can Romero's preaching serve as a model of a contemporary typological homiletic? The hope is that at the conclusion of the research, practical principles will be derived and can be applied by preachers today.

The first chapter will be a biographical sketch of Oscar Romero's life to give background to his life and who the man was to better understand the context in which he preached. The second chapter will be an overview of his preaching that includes, Vatican II and other official Catholic stances on preaching, the structure of his sermons, and Romero's view of preaching in relation to the idea of fulfillment or actualization with further discussion of typology and typological interpretation. The third chapter will deal specifically with his 1980 sermons and give analysis of his typological interpretation in those sermons with attention to the types and the theological foundations for the types he employed. The fourth chapter will lay out Romero's foundation for contemporary typological preaching can contribute to a typological homiletic, and what are some important features of an effective typological homiletic. Oscar Romero's 1980 sermons demonstrate he worked on the principle that a contemporary typological homiletic ought to be rooted in the principle of the continuation of the people of God within the unfolding of salvation history, and this is a helpful and effective homiletical option and framework for contemporary typological preaching.

Chapter 1

Biographical Sketch of Oscar Romero

Before we can engage in a study of Oscar Romero's preaching, it is important to understand the man and his life. Understanding his life is crucial because, it will give context to the environment in which Romero preached. As this work explores Romero's preaching, it is helpful for the reader to have insight into his life and the events that shaped him as a person, and by extension his preaching.

This section is not intended to give an exhaustive biography of Romero, but to help give context to who he was, and survey the events that shaped his life and his tenure as archbishop. There are several biographies that were written about Oscar Romero.¹⁹ Each biography has its own unique approach in discussing and summarizing the life of Romero. James Brockman's work *Romero: A Life* is a popular biography that is more thematic than chronological. Brockman begins his biography with a discussion of Romero's first months as archbishop then proceeds in chronological order discussing Romero's life.

Kerry Walters' work *Saint Oscar Romero: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr*. Walters is concise and focused on the events that shaped Romero's thought and work in chronological order. Most of the major biographies written about Romero were written by Catholic authors. This does not mean that their work is not critical, but it is clearly written to honor Romero's life and work.

Oscar Romero was born on August 15, 1917 in Ciudad Barrios, San Miguel, El Salvador. Oscar was the second of eight children, one of whom died young.²⁰ Ciudad Barrios is located in the northeastern part of El Salvador, and it had a population of roughly one thousand people during Romero's childhood.²¹ The town is located ten miles south of the border of Honduras and was only accessible by horseback at the time.²² It was not a wealthy town, but it was not a poor town either. Even though the town was isolated it was economically stable, as it had cobbled streets, merchants selling goods, a post office, a telegraph, and a plaza lit by carbide lamps.²³ Most people in the town made their living through selling cash crops, mostly coffee due to the climate.²⁴ The Romero household had some financial difficulties with such a large household, and it became worse after the death of Santos, the father.²⁵ The fact that Oscar Romero was not born in extreme poverty, but was by no means wealthy either, would have helped him to relate to poor people and rich people in his preaching later. He understood what it was to struggle financially and to have to work, but he would have seen a stable economy in his town with various merchants and people selling goods to make a modest living. This sort of in-between

¹⁹ See, James R Brockman, *Romero: A Life*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2005), Kerry Walters, *Saint Oscar Romero: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr*, (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2018), and Plácido Erdozaín, *Archbishop Romero: Martyr of Salvador*, Translated by John McFadden and Ruth Warner, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981).

²⁰ Kerry Walters, *Saint Oscar Romero: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr*, 2.

²¹ Walters, *Saint Oscar Romero*, 2.

²² Brockman, *Romero: A Life*, 33.

²³ Walters, 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

economic upbringing (but more on the side of financial struggles and poverty) would have made Romero relatable as a preacher later in life.

Romero was baptized at the age of one and grew up in a Catholic family. Oscar's father Santos Romero was not a native to Ciudad Barrios. Santos moved to Ciudad Barrios in 1910 to work as its telegrapher and postmaster.²⁶ Santos then met and married Oscar's mother, Guadalupe, who was a native of Ciudad Barrios.²⁷ His father Santos was not known as a pious man, but he did teach his son Oscar to pray as a child.²⁸ Romero was known as a serious child by the older townspeople, they remembered him as studious and pious.²⁹ Even a couple of his siblings noted that Oscar seemed sad as a boy.³⁰

Despite the lack of religious modeling by his father, Romero desired to join the priesthood and further his education. The school system in Ciudad Barrios only offered schooling up to the third grade, but Oscar's parents allowed him to study privately with a teacher which lasted until he was eleven or twelve years old.³¹ His father was against him getting further education and instead had Oscar apprenticed to a carpenter.³² It is interesting that Oscar Romero started as a carpenter before formally entering seminary and beginning his journey into the priesthood, as Jesus was a carpenter like his earthly father Joseph then began his ministry. In his biography of Romero, Brockman gave a subtle hint of the significance of Romero as a carpenter by titling his chapter on Romero's early years "From Carpenter to Bishop."³³

At the age of thirteen Romero spoke with Father Monroy, who had just returned from studies in Rome at the time, about his desire to join the seminary and enter the priesthood.³⁴ Father Monroy probably would have garnered respect from the people because he had studied in Rome and may be the reason why Romero sought him out to discuss his desire to go to seminary. His father Santos was not willing to allow Oscar to go at first, but eventually he gave in and Oscar started at the minor seminary in San Miguel, which was run by the Claretians, a missionary order within the Catholic Church.³⁵ The minor seminary was essentially a secondary school for teenage boys who desired to join the priesthood. In 1932 while Romero was in the minor seminary a campesino rebellion occurred and it led to a mass killing known as "La Matanza." In this massacre, the Salvadoran military killed around 10,000-30,000 people.³⁶ Even though the minor seminary was secluded, Romero and his classmates would have heard of the massacre through the newspapers, radio reports, and word of mouth.³⁷ This tragedy would have most likely made an impression on the young Romero, as it was a once in a generation type of event

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brockman, 33-34

²⁹ Ibid., 34

³⁰ Walters, 3.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Brockman, 34

³³ Cf. Ibid., 33-61.

³⁴ Ibid., 35

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Christopher M White, *The History of El Salvador*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 77.

³⁷ Walters, 11.

that shaped Salvadoran history. This same type of indiscriminate killing of campesinos would happen again while Romero was archbishop forty-five years later. Romero graduated from the minor seminary in San Miguel in 1935 at the age of eighteen.³⁸

Two years later in 1937, Romero entered the national seminary in San Salvador, which was a formal theological training school for future clergy in the Catholic Church run by the Jesuits.³⁹ His father, Santos, died a few months after he began in the national seminary.⁴⁰ After his father's death Romero returned home to help his family. He expressed his grief in a poem, which in part said: "My Father is dead! Dear Father, I who each evening turned my gaze to the distant east, sending you my loving distant thought..."⁴¹

In the midyear of his studies in San Salvador, Romero's bishop sent him to Rome, Italy to complete his studies at the Gregorian University.⁴² Studying in Rome was not a common thing for Latin American Catholic students, but Romero's bishop was able to secure some scholarships for him and two other students.⁴³ In the Gregorian University, Romero studied at Colegio Pio Latino Americano which was dedicated to training clergy from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. It was run by the Jesuits like the National Seminary in San Salvador.⁴⁴ It is important to discuss the Jesuits and their influence in El Salvador. Even though Romero was educated in a Jesuit school, he would clash with them when he was a bishop and he supported their removal from the national seminary in 1972.⁴⁵ The Jesuits were viewed as a group that was responsible for spreading Marxist propaganda after the Medellin conference in 1968. Despite this, Romero was devoted to Ignatian spirituality and its exercises,⁴⁶ and one of Romero's closest friends was a Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande.

Romero's theological education in Rome is noteworthy, because he would later be a bishop deeply devoted to the Vatican and its teachings. One biographer said Romero had *Romantia* (deep devotion and dedication to the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy) due to his time spent learning in Rome.⁴⁷ While studying in Rome, Romero regularly assisted at Mass services, observed prayer periods, attended classes, and ate meals in silence, as was the custom of the seminary, while they listened to readings from spiritual works.⁴⁸

In his later years, Romero's dedication to the Catholic Church was questioned, but Walters believes this is overstated, and rightly so. He believes Romero was a creature of *Romantia* till

³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁹ Brockman, 36.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Cf. Brockman, 36 and Walters, 14-15.

⁴² Brockman, 36

⁴³ Walters, 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Brockman, 19.

⁴⁶ Walters, 47.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 20.

the end, but it was not his dedication to the Catholic Church that changed it was his understanding of the Church and its role that changed.⁴⁹ One can see that Romero firmly believed in the authority and teachings of the Catholic Church as he cited its official documents countless times in his homilies, and they were a foundation on which he rested his teachings. For example, Romero mentioned the Vatican II council one hundred and sixty-nine times in his sermons on record from March 1977 to March 1980.

Romero spent six years (1937-1943) in Rome before returning to El Salvador. While in Rome, Romero developed great admiration for Pope Pius XI. Later in life as archbishop he would say that Pius XI was the pope he admired the most.⁵⁰ Pope Pius XI was known for standing up to Mussolini and Hitler in the lead up to World War II. Kerry Walters described Pius XI's opposition to Mussolini and Hitler this way:

Although the pope worked with Italian prime minister Benito Mussolini in 1929 to arrive at the Lateran Treaty which granted sovereignty to Vatican City, Pius also issued an encyclical three years later blisteringly critical of Italian fascism. He launched an even fiercer denunciation in 1938 when Mussolini, under pressure from Hitler, began persecuting Jews. Similarly, although he signed a concordat with Germany in 1933 in the hope of containing Soviet expansion, Pius issued no fewer than thirty-four public rebukes of the Nazis over the next three years. He finally broke with them altogether in 1937 when he ordered German priests to read from their pulpits his encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, a no-holds-barred denunciation of Nazism as antithetical to Christianity. Like Pius, Romero would later be willing to work with power brokers in his own nation so long as there was the chance of converting them and mitigating their oppressive political and economic institutions. But in his final years he fearlessly spoke truth to power when pastoral efforts at changing the hearts of the elite failed.⁵¹

Pius XI showed courage when he spoke against dictators and would have possibly been an inspiration to Romero as archbishop when he began to preach against the injustices in El Salvador.

Romero was ordained as a priest in 1942 at the age of twenty-four.⁵² Romero then began doctoral research focused on the sixteenth century Jesuit Luis de la Puente and his doctrine of Christian perfection.⁵³ He would not complete his doctoral degree. The Allies were bombing parts of Rome killing thousands of civilians and Romero's bishop summoned him back to El Salvador because it was too dangerous.⁵⁴

Romero's first assignment as a priest was in the parish of Anamorós.⁵⁵ The parish of Anamorós was a small mountain village that was only accessible by horseback, and it was not far from

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰ Brockman, 37.

⁵¹ Walters, 19.

⁵² Erdozaín, *Archbishop Romero: Martyr of Salvador*, 4.

⁵³ Walters, 22.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵ Erdozaín, 4.

Ciudad Barrios, Romero's hometown.⁵⁶ Romero's bishop, Machado, sent him there to gain hands on practical pastoral experience, but Machado did not keep Romero there for long, only three months, because he had other intentions for his Rome educated priests.⁵⁷ Romero was then called by Bishop Machado to San Miguel, and he served there as secretary for him,⁵⁸ and edited the weekly diocesan publication *Chaparrastique*.⁵⁹ Soon afterwards Romero became the pastor of a cathedral parish at Santo Domingo, and chaplain of the colonial church of San Francisco.⁶⁰ During this time Romero received acclaim as a preacher. A story is told of a ten year old boy, Moises Gonzalez, after hearing Romero preach, tell his grandmother that he thought Romero would be a bishop one day.⁶¹ The residents of San Miguel remembered his time there and one person recalled how five local radio stations broadcasted his sermons simultaneously on Sundays.⁶² Salvador Barraza, who heard Romero preach in 1959, noted that his preaching focused on religion and faith that dealt with daily life and not just piety.⁶³ Romero's experience as a pastor in San Miguel would have been formative for his development as a preacher.

Alongside his preaching responsibilities Romero participated in other pastoral duties. Romero he set up catechism classes, and first communions; and he promoted Alcoholics Anonymous, and the diocesan branch of Caritas which distributed food to the poor.⁶⁴ One woman, who worked with Romero in San Miguel, noted how he always cared for the welfare of the people.⁶⁵ His experiences as a pastor were important because later people would criticize his appointment as archbishop because they saw him more as an administrator and not a pastor. Walters notes how this was not the case:

Although it's true that Romero's administrative duties grew heavier as the years progressed, it's not the case that he lacked pastoral contact with the people. Despite being swamped by administrative duties for a few years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he performed as a priest and not simply an administrator throughout his tenure at San Miguel. Bishop Machado appointed him pastor of the city's cathedral parish with additional responsibilities in two other smaller churches. Moreover, because he was secretary to the bishop, his pastoral mandate extended far beyond the parishes actually assigned to him.⁶⁶

Romero was certainly a busy priest during this period of his life. One important issue that Romero dealt with in this period was the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II. Romero was concerned about how the people would receive the reforms of Vatican II. His main fear relating to Vatican II was that many Salvadorans would be upset by the reforms and liturgical changes of

⁵⁶ Walters, 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 28

⁵⁸ Erdozaín, 4.

⁵⁹ Brockman, 39.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁶¹ Walters, 24.

⁶² Brockman, 40.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Walters, 29.

the church, so his response was to address this in his sermons and radio addresses and he assured the people there was no need to fear.⁶⁷ Romero showed great concern and care for his people, and if there were issues he had no problems addressing them from the pulpit. This was something that would continue during his time as archbishop. Romero spent time with his people and took his responsibility to provide pastoral and spiritual care seriously. This is why his preaching focused more on the practical day to day things people experienced. This stage of life would end with difficult transitions into other roles.

From 1967-1974 Romero was sent to San Salvador to serve in other capacities. Romero served as an administrator and auxiliary bishop, and this period of his life have been characterized as the dark years.⁶⁸ In 1966 he was appointed the Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador, and in 1967 he was appointed the Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Council of Central America and Panama.⁶⁹ On May 3, 1970 he was officially appointed the auxiliary bishop of Monseñor Luis Chavez.⁷⁰ As an auxiliary bishop Romero was essentially an administrator and performed numerous administrative duties. One person noted this when they said: "He [was] the pastor to his paperwork."⁷¹

The causes of Romero's "dark years" were numerous and complex. Romero had a sense of inadequacy, he was not good at making friends, and he was at odds with fellow clergy over liberation theology.⁷² There was a divide in the clergy of El Salvador between those who embraced liberation theology and the conclusions of the Medellin conference, and those who thought that they went too far and became too political. At this point in his life Romero was part of the latter group. Latin American liberation theology was born out of the Medellin Conference that happened in 1968. The Medellin Conference sought to apply the reforms of Vatican II to Latin America, and Romero, as a man devoted to the Catholic Church, accepted the reforms of Vatican II but was not ready to draw the same conclusions some bishops from the Medellin Conference drew.⁷³ After Romero was consecrated as a bishop, there was a scheduled pastoral week where Archbishop Chávez scheduled meetings to discuss how the principles from Medellin could be applied locally in El Salvador.⁷⁴ Romero attended a few of the meetings but did not participate in them and would later publish an article in the archdiocesan newspaper, *Orientación*, criticizing some of the Jesuits, saying they were preaching Marxist ideology and not the gospel.⁷⁵ This led to the feud between Romero and the Jesuits. The Jesuits that Romero attacked published an angry rejoinder, but Romero did not back down.⁷⁶ This shows that

⁶⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁹ Erdozaín, 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Walters, 43.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Brockman, 45.

⁷⁴ Walters, 49.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Romero was extremely petty at this point in his life, as he did not engage in the bishop meetings and instead started a back and forth conflict through articles with the Jesuits.

In May 1971 Archbishop Chávez chose Romero to become the new editor of *Orientación*.⁷⁷

There was a noticeable change in the content of the newspaper. Before there were discussions of social injustices in El Salvador and abuses of the oligarchy, but with Romero as editor the paper focused on less controversial issues such as pornography, alcoholism, and drug abuse.⁷⁸ These were issues important to Romero as evidenced by his first stint as a pastor. This is where he diverged from his colleagues who embraced liberation theology. They focused more on the social, economic, and political issues, whereas Romero saw those moral issues as more important to deal with in his role as a pastor. The archdiocesan newspaper, *Orientación*, under Romero's leadership as editor, even went so far as to defend the military coup that happened after the election in 1972.⁷⁹ In this election, Jose Duarte of the UNO party, which was made up of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and moderate socialists, won the election but the military took charge and did not allow Duarte to take power claiming there was voter fraud.⁸⁰ After protests erupted the military declared a national emergency was declared and the military placed their candidate as president, Colonel Arturo Molina, whom Romero considered a friend.⁸¹ The military had great control over the country to the point that in the 1974 election they declared all their candidates winners.⁸² Molina's presidency was characterized by anti-communist nationalism that would dominate Salvadoran policy for the next twenty years.⁸³

In 1974 Romero's roles changed again as he was appointed the new bishop of Santiago de Maria.⁸⁴ This diocese included his hometown, Ciudad Barrios, and it was an expansive region with two-thirds people living in poverty and most people were campesinos who worked on coffee, sugar, and cotton plantations.⁸⁵ Santiago de Maria was a relatively new diocese that was divided from the larger diocese of San Miguel twenty years earlier.⁸⁶ After being appointed bishop of Santiago de Maria, Pope Paul VI presented Romero with a chalice as a gift and gave the diocese \$5,000 in much needed aid and Romero flew to Rome to thank the pope personally.⁸⁷

This period of his life has been described as a time where Romero had first stirrings; "His time there would begin to stir in him the beginnings of an awareness that Medellín's analysis of the Church's mission was worthy of serious consideration."⁸⁸ Romero served as bishop of Santiago de Maria until he was appointed archbishop in 1977. Romero was back serving as a pastor and in a role where he flourished. This was a necessary transition for him out of the office and

⁷⁷ Brockman, 47.

⁷⁸ Walters, 49.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ White, 91.

⁸⁴ Walters, 59.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 59-60.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 59.

administrative roles and being around people and using the pastoral gifts he had. Romero traveled frequently throughout his new diocese as there was a shortage of priests and the people had many unmet pastoral needs. Unlike his time as a pastor in San Miguel, there was no radio stations able to broadcast his sermons to the people in the various towns and villages, so Romero put loudspeakers on vehicles so that he could preach while he traveled where he would pause frequently to offer the campesinos encouragement and celebrate the Eucharist with them.⁸⁹ This is an example of Romero's dedication to his people and caring for their pastoral needs. Romero spent time with the people and knew their concerns which made his preaching relatable.

While Romero was bishop in Santiago de Maria, violence against campesinos in El Salvador was on the rise. On June 21, 1975 guardsmen from ORDEN, an intelligence gathering group that turned into a death squad, attacked Tres Calles, a town in Romero's diocese, and killed five campesinos by hacking them with machetes.⁹⁰ Romero went to the site to console the people grieving and to find out what happened. It was at this point that Romero realized the rich had to be converted so that they can change.⁹¹ Romero's response was to protest. He went to the commander of the national guard there who had no concern for what Romero said and even threatened him by saying that cassocks are not bulletproof.⁹² The threat did not frighten Romero but instead made him angrier, and he wrote a letter to President Molina objected to the extrajudicial killing while not supporting the actions of those who were killed.⁹³ This event was a stirring in Romero where he saw the violent injustices happening, but he was not fully "converted"⁹⁴ by this point because he thought the campesinos actions could have been wrong. Romero's response to this atrocity was noticed by some in his diocese. One person recounted how Romero upset him with his sermon for the five campesinos, because Romero condemned violence but made it seem like it was their fault for being violent and that is why they were killed.⁹⁵

Another area of contention in Romero's diocese at the time was the base communities. These were communities inspired by the Medellin Conference to educate and train the campesinos to be delegates of the Word and be leaders within the base communities as well. Romero visited Los Naranjos, which was a teaching center run by the Passionist priests.⁹⁶ Romero had great concerns for this teaching center. The center taught a course called "National Reality" which examined the history of El Salvador, the wealth gap, and the need for agrarian reform, eventually Romero had the center shut down.⁹⁷ Romero shutting down the center gained him recognition

⁸⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ "Conversion" here means the change of heart Romero had when he saw the oppression of campesinos as the fault of the government and began to actively denounce their actions.

⁹⁵ Walters, 65.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

from the papal nuncio and was a factor in him being chosen as archbishop later.⁹⁸ He was viewed as a safe conservative pick by the papal nuncio and the Salvadoran government.

Even though Romero had the Los Naranjos center shut down, his exposure to it and Juan Merino, the priest who ran it, slowly began to change his mind on Medellin and the plight of the campesinos.⁹⁹ The publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI was another event that helped change his thinking.¹⁰⁰ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was focused on evangelization, and since it was published by the pope Romero was inclined to take it seriously, especially since he had great respect for Paul VI. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Paul VI connected liberation and evangelization and wrote that issues of justice cannot be ignored in evangelization.¹⁰¹ Romero went on to cite *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ten times in his sermons as archbishop from 1977-1979.

Romero's Tenure as Archbishop

Romero was officially installed as Archbishop of San Salvador¹⁰² on February 22, 1977. The formal announcement of his appointment came on February 10, 1977.¹⁰³ The previous archbishop, Luis Chavez y Gonzalez, wanted Bishop Rivera to succeed him because he was the only other bishop who embraced the vision of the Medellin Conference and the Church's need to call out and fight against social injustice.¹⁰⁴ At this point Romero was still antagonistic to the conclusion of Medellin reached by other bishops, and to the assessments of liberation theology. Luis Chavez y Gonzalez made his case to the Vatican and advocated for Rivera to succeed him as archbishop.¹⁰⁵ These efforts failed. Papal nuncio Gerada was vehemently against Medellin and worked to undermine Chavez, and he consulted with the elite of El Salvador who concluded that Romero was the safest pick.¹⁰⁶ This was a move to calm tensions between the Catholic Church and government of El Salvador, and ultimately to appease the rich elites of the country. The same day of the announcement of Romero's appointment, he did an interview which surely appeased the nation's elite where he laid out his view that the Church should stick to traditional pastoral duties and not politics.¹⁰⁷ This would of have put the Salvadoran oligarchy at ease that Romero would not cause trouble, and that now they had the two pillars of Salvadoran society in their control, the Catholic Church and the government. This ease they felt would not have lasted long as the violence continued in the country and Romero's "conversion" happened not long afterwards, and he became an outspoken critic of the elite and the government.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 66-67.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Evangelii Nuntiandi," Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, Vatican, December 8, 1975, paragraph 31, https://www.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html

¹⁰² This position is essentially the national bishop of El Salvador within the Catholic Church hierarchy.

¹⁰³ Walters, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Romero was installed as archbishop in a low-key ceremony.¹⁰⁸ He faced his first test as archbishop not long afterwards. The Massacre in Plaza Libertad happened on February 28, 1977. On February 20 El Salvador had their presidential election amid reports of massive fraud.¹⁰⁹ The two candidates were General Carlos Romero (no relation to Oscar Romero), of the government party (PCN), and Colonel Ernesto Claramount, retired officer, of the opposition party (UNO).¹¹⁰ The government party committed election fraud with violence, intimidation, and ballot-stuffing.¹¹¹ As the extent of the electoral fraud was coming to light, on February 24 Claramount organized rallies in the downtown area of San Salvador in Plaza Libertad and vowed to remain there until an honest election result was announced.¹¹² Two days later the government announced General Romero as the winner by a margin of two to one.¹¹³ This caused more outrage among the people and led to more people joining the rally in Plaza Libertad. The day after the election announcement, February 27, the crowd in Plaza Libertad had reached 40,000-60,000 people and most left by the evening for mass which left about 6,000 remaining in the plaza.¹¹⁴ Shortly after midnight the military surrounded the plaza and gave the protesters ten minutes to disperse.¹¹⁵ The remaining 1,500 people were shot at by the military and the number of people killed is estimated to be greater than three hundred.¹¹⁶ Romero was not there the night of the massacre. He was at his old diocese wrapping up final matters.¹¹⁷ Romero returned to San Salvador that night and was briefed by Bishop Rivera and former archbishop Chavez.¹¹⁸ The next day Romero had his first meeting with his clergy as archbishop. Placido Erdozain noted how the clergy asked Romero to change the agenda of the meeting in light of the massacre and how this was Romero's first test and he passed.¹¹⁹ The next week was the bishop's conference where the Salvadoran bishops met to draft a response to the violence where Romero toned down the initial response but still worried it was too strong.¹²⁰

The next significant event, and arguably turning point, during Romero's tenure as archbishop, was the assassination of his friend Rutilio Grande on March 12, 1977. Grande was a Jesuit priest and was still friends with Romero even though he had a bad relationship with the Jesuits at the time. Kerry Walters noted that Romero and Grande had much in common and that their friendship made sense. The things in common were that they were both from rural towns, preferred to pray rather than play soccer as kids, and that they both suffered from anxiety and religious scrupulosity.¹²¹ The Salvadoran elite saw Grande as an agitator. Grande was

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Brockman, 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ White, 93.

¹¹² Brockman, 5.

¹¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Walters, 81.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Erdozaín, 10-11.

¹²⁰ Walters, 82.

¹²¹ Ibid., 83.

responsible for organizing base communities that gathered campesinos to read the Gospels and discuss their application to their situation.¹²² Grande organized a demonstration in Apopa, which was where a Colombian priest had been serving before he was beaten and deported to intimidate Grande and others working with him.¹²³ During that demonstration there was a mass held and Grande delivered a homily. In the homily Grande said El Salvador was filled with “Cains,” who are the powerful elite that torture and kill the “Abels,” who are the campesinos, and this homily would be the event that sealed his fate and led to his assassination.¹²⁴ Grande was shot and killed while driving himself and four other people. Two others, adults, were killed along with Grande and the two children in the car were allowed to escape by the gunmen.¹²⁵

The news of Grande’s death was devastating to Romero. In his sermon for Grande’s funeral, Romero described him as a brother and how he would never forget his gestures of brotherhood.¹²⁶ Outgoing president Molina called Romero to inform him of the news and assured him the government had no part in it, and he promised Romero that there would be an investigation into the matter.¹²⁷ Romero arrived in Aguilares, the town where Grande worked and was assassinated, at 10:00pm that night and they celebrated a mass for the three victims.¹²⁸ Romero’s response to the killings was to cancel the regular curricula of the parochial schools, against the wishes of the papal nuncio, and to hold a single mass for the diocese the following Sunday, March 20.¹²⁹ This mass was known as the *misa unica* (one mass). Romero wrote a letter to President Molina saying that the church would not be involved in any official government activities until the facts of the murder of Father Grande were clarified.¹³⁰ Romero kept his word and was noticeably absent from all government events for the next three years.¹³¹ Even though Romero was absent from official state events, he worked diligently with the government his first few months as archbishop to help ease tensions and improve the relationship between the church and the government.

Some people viewed the murder of Grande and Romero’s response as a sort of miraculous conversion.¹³² This is not the case. Walters made the case that Romero’s conversion was a process; “Such spontaneous conversions are rare, and it’s even rarer that they abide. In Romero’s case, it’s much more likely that Grande’s death was the final straw in a long process of coming to terms with the time and place in which God called him to serve.”¹³³ Romero’s time as bishop of Santiago de Maria began to open his eyes to the wider reality of campesino oppression.

¹²² Ibid., 85.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 86.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Oscar Romero, “Motivation of Love,” March 14, 1977, Archbishop Romero Trust.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Brockman, 9-10.

¹²⁹ Walters, 87.

¹³⁰ Erdozaín, 14.

¹³¹ Walters, 88.

¹³² Jon Sobrino, whom Romero clashed with before, saw Romero’s conversion as “Rutilio’s miracle,” cf. Walters, 86-87.

¹³³ Walters, 88.

Grande's death was certainly the final straw as Romero would have been deeply concerned that the violence had reached a clergy member who worked with the campesinos. Previously, Romero was not as sympathetic to the deaths of campesinos, whom he did not know personally, and most likely believed were guilty of some sort of subversion against the government. Father Grande was different because Romero knew him personally and knew that he was not involved with any radical guerrilla group or with any plots against the government. This opened Romero's eyes to see that the government did not care to only stop radical groups but anyone who was critical of them.

Two weeks after Grande's murder, Romero flew to Rome to meet with officials in the Vatican and Pope Paul VI. As a response to Father Grande's murder, Romero initiated the *misa unica* (one mass)¹³⁴, which was against the wishes of papal nuncio Gerada, and Romero knew that there were probably negative reports about him that were going to be sent to the Vatican.¹³⁵ While in Rome, Romero met with the Congregation for Bishops and Vatican Secretariat of State and he tried to offset the negative reports from Gerada but he ended up being scolded.¹³⁶ Romero was warned to exercise more prudence like Jesus and he responded with the question; "If he was so prudent, then why was he killed?"¹³⁷ Romero's meeting with Pope Paul VI went much better. In the meeting Romero gave Paul VI a photo of Father Grande and discussed the issues he was facing in the country and with his bishops, and Paul VI responded by grabbing his hands and telling him to be courageous because he is in charge.¹³⁸ Romero left the meeting encouraged. This was a significant event early in Romero's tenure as archbishop. Romero's meeting with Paul VI encouraged him and emboldened him to continue the path he had recently begun, which was to speak out against the violence and injustice happening in El Salvador. If Pope Paul VI had not encouraged Romero, at this early stage of his "conversion," who knows if Romero would have strongly continued his struggle against injustice and the plight of campesinos.

On April 19, 1977, the guerilla group FPL kidnapped the foreign minister of El Salvador, Mauricio Borgonovo.¹³⁹ The reason for Borgonovo's kidnapping was to facilitate the release of political prisoners. Romero pleaded with both sides and offered for the church to mediate the process, but outgoing president Molina refused to negotiate with the FPL and claimed the people they sought to be released were either not in government custody or were awaiting trial.¹⁴⁰ It was not long after that Mauricio Borgonovo was murdered. He was found dead on May 10, 1977.¹⁴¹ It was not long after that another priest would be killed. Father Alfonso Navarro was shot and killed on May 11, 1977. Navarro preached the sermon in Plaza Libertad during the

¹³⁴ This mass was held in the main cathedral of the San Salvador diocese where all the local parishes met there to celebrate one mass in light of Grande's murder and other events happening in the country.

¹³⁵ Walters, 92.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 92-93.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹³⁹ Brockman, 25.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

protest on February 28.¹⁴² This is likely the event that sealed his fate and put him on the government kill list, and his murder was likely retaliation for the murder of foreign minister Mauricio Borgonovo. Romero conducted the funeral mass for both Borgonovo and Navarro.

After Navarro's murder and funeral, the government continued in their repression and revenge for the killing of Borgonovo. The government initiated a plan called "Operation Rutilio."¹⁴³ In this operation the government targeted Aguilaes, which was Father Grande's hometown and viewed as a place of subversion, by evicting the campesinos off their land at gunpoint.¹⁴⁴ The government troops surrounded the town and wreaked havoc on the people. They broke into homes, raped women and children, and killed fifty people.¹⁴⁵ The troops did not stop there. They shot up the tabernacle in the church, scattered the consecrated Hosts (wafers used for the Lord's Supper), and used the church as a military barracks.¹⁴⁶ When Romero heard about what happened he went to Aguilaes. Romero was not allowed to enter Aguilaes and he met with the interior minister and President Molina the next day.¹⁴⁷ Romero was angered by government actions and made a public statement accusing the government of deliberate persecution of the church, and after President Molina did not respond to this statement Romero sent him a letter questioning his claim to be a Catholic and asking whether he himself, as archbishop, was genuinely seen as a threat to national security.¹⁴⁸ The fruits of his "conversion" showed as Romero became bolder in his opposition to government actions and it would continue until his death. Operation Rutilio lasted for a month in which no one was allowed to enter or leave the town.¹⁴⁹ After the military left, Romero went to Aguilaes to rededicate the church and install a new pastoral team.¹⁵⁰

In July 1977, president-elect Carlos Romero (no relation to Oscar Romero) was due to be inaugurated. Traditionally, the archbishop attended the event, but since May of the same year, archbishop Romero was wrestling with whether he should attend or not.¹⁵¹ Eventually Romero decided he would not attend the inauguration. Romero urged the other bishops not to attend but papal nuncio Gerada, Bishop Barazza, and Bishop Alvarez attended.¹⁵² In a write-up in his diocesan paper, Bishop Alvarez asserted that there is no persecuted church just those who have lost their way.¹⁵³ This partially illustrates the struggles Romero had with some of the bishops under him.

¹⁴² Erdozaín, 19.

¹⁴³ Walters, 98.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 99.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵¹ Brockman, 68.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 69.

Romero began to be recognized internationally as a defender of human rights, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from Georgetown University, a Jesuit institution, in February 1978.¹⁵⁴ Romero accepted the honorary doctorate in El Salvador which was unusual because virtually all recipients of honorary doctorates received their award at the University granting the degree. He received the degree in the San Salvador cathedral with the president of Georgetown there to confer the degree, and with many people there to watch.¹⁵⁵ The president of Georgetown decided to award the degree in El Salvador as a statement against the objections some officials in the Vatican had against Romero receiving the degree and to honor Romero.¹⁵⁶ As Romero received international recognition it came at the price of the Vatican taking notice of his work and becoming dissatisfied with him.

Romero did not have a lot of support from the Vatican and some of his own bishops during his time as archbishop. The government of El Salvador was antagonistic towards him and some of the priests under his care, which led to some being killed as mentioned earlier. This led to a tumultuous tenure for Romero the next couple of years up until his assassination on March 24, 1980.

Conclusion

This biographical sketch has given background and context as to who Oscar Romero was. Romero was a proud Catholic and Salvadoran. He was committed to the teachings of the Vatican and the authority of the Holy See. The experiences of his life contributed to his theological convictions and his pastoral praxis. Particularly, his education in Rome and his experience of violence with his friend and priest Rutilio Grande, and other priests under his tenure as archbishop. At first Romero was antagonistic towards liberation theology and the movements happening in Latin America, but when he came to terms with the violence and oppression happening in his country, he became a voice for change in the social, political, and economic situations in El Salvador. After having his “conversion” experience he felt it would wrong for him to not speak about the injustice and violence that was happening. Romero saw it as his pastoral duty. Romero’s devotion to the Catholic Church and its teachings, and his sense of pastoral duty to speak against injustice set the context to understand and better and engage with his preaching.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 105.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹⁵⁶ Walters, 110.

Chapter 2

Overview of Romero's Preaching

Having looked at a brief overview of Romero's life, this chapter turns to the approach of his preaching. It is important to view Romero's preaching against the backdrop of his Catholicism. As mentioned previously, Romero studied in Rome for his theological education and developed a deep affinity, or *Romantia*¹⁵⁷, with the Vatican and its teachings. This thesis is focused on Romero as a preacher during his tenure as archbishop of San Salvador from 1977-1980 which occurred in the context of post-Vatican II reforms. So, it is helpful to begin with the official Vatican II statements on the function of the homily and preaching. Romero cited the teachings and official writings of the Catholic Church because he strove to be aligned with them as well as defend his ministry and restrain his accusers.¹⁵⁸

Vatican II on the Homily

The first Vatican II document to be discussed is the constitution on the sacred liturgy or *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states this regarding the homily:

By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text, during the course of the liturgical year; the homily, therefore, is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself; in fact, at those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the people on Sundays and feasts of obligation, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason.¹⁵⁹

This framework of preaching would have been what Romero subscribed to as Romero quoted this exact paragraph in his sermon, "The Homily, the Actualization of the Word of God." He prefaced the quote of the document by saying: "The Vatican II Council, which has promoted the current renewal of the Church, tells us what the role of the homily is."¹⁶⁰ This is how Romero viewed the role of preaching. The two important elements from this definition are: "expounded from the sacred text," and "during the course of the liturgical year." These two elements clearly influenced Romero's sermon preparation and his view of the sermon. As will be seen later in this section, he began his sermons with an exposition of the biblical texts assigned in the liturgy, and he frequently would reference the liturgical calendar and which season of it was taking place at the time of his preaching. Even some of Romero's sermon titles referenced the liturgical

¹⁵⁷ A term used by Walters in his biography of Romero. Cf. Walters, 13.

¹⁵⁸ Priscilla Pope-Levison, "Evangelization in the Writings of Latin American Liberation Theologians," PhD diss., University of St. Andrews (United Kingdom), 1988, 120.

¹⁵⁹ "Sacrosanctum Concilium," Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican, December 4, 1963, Paragraph 52, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

¹⁶⁰ Oscar Romero, "The Homily, The Actualization of the Word of God," January 27, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

season: “Lent, Renewal of our Covenant with God,”¹⁶¹ “Advent, A Time of Joyful Hope,”¹⁶² and “Easter, Celebration of the New Covenant.”¹⁶³

The dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*, says this about the homily: “By the same word of Scripture the ministry of the word also, that is, pastoral preaching, catechetics and all Christian instruction, in which the liturgical homily must hold the foremost place, is nourished in a healthy way and flourishes in a holy way.”¹⁶⁴ The homily or sermon is an important part of Christian teaching and formation according to this document. Romero held this conviction as well and the structure of his sermons demonstrate this as he sought to teach his parishioners.

Structure of Sermons

The titles of Romero’s sermons were usually simple but straightforward and helped to make the theme of the sermon clear. Here are some examples from his time as archbishop:

“The Church, The Body of Christ in History,” preached on August 6, 1977.

“The Mission of the Prophets,” preached on August 14, 1977.

“The History of Salvation,” preached on February 12, 1978.

“The Church, a Spiritual Israel,” preached on February 19, 1978.

“Baptism as the Epiphany of the Messianic Reality,” preached on January 14, 1979.

“Lent, the Transfiguration of the People of God,” preached on March 11, 1979.¹⁶⁵

The structure of Romero’s sermons typically had three parts. The first part was exposition where he gave a teaching on the lectionary readings of the day. The second part was known as “vida de la iglesia” (“life of the church” in English), where he discussed events happening in the archdiocese. The final section was known as “hechos de la semana” (“events of the week” in English), where he discussed the news and events that were happening in El Salvador at the time.¹⁶⁶ It is important to note that Romero’s sermons in 1980 reflected this structure in the order described. In the beginning of his tenure as archbishop you would have these elements but at times they would come in a different order. For example, Romero would sometimes begin with his discussion of events of the week (hechos de la semana) and then would go into the exposition of the biblical texts. The structure described here is to reflect what Romero’s final

¹⁶¹ Preached on March 4, 1979.

¹⁶² Preached on December 3, 1978.

¹⁶³ Preached on April 22, 1979.

¹⁶⁴ “Dei Verbum,” Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican, November 18, 1965, paragraph 24, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

¹⁶⁵ Archbishop Romero Trust Website

¹⁶⁶ The sections “vida de la iglesia” and “hechos de la semana” are clearly labeled in the manuscripts on the Archbishop Romero Trust website.

years of sermons showed and is the most developed structure of his homiletical approach up until his death.

Exposition

Romero would begin his sermons with greetings to his listeners and he would introduce the theme of the sermon for that day. Every sermon had a theme or main idea and that would be Romero's sermon title. Romero would title his sermons and then offer the three points or thoughts that would develop his main idea. In the three points of his sermon, he would give a catechesis or teaching based on the lectionary readings where he would expound on the biblical texts to make his points. Romero usually referenced all of the readings from the day, but some would not get much attention. He sought to show the unity of the Scripture readings and teach his parishioners that the texts for this Sunday all relate to the theme. Here are some examples of his transition from introduction to expounding the texts and his points:

All of you—beloved laypeople, religious men and women, beloved brother priests—we are all the people of God, and on our shoulders rests the responsibility for this kingdom of God. No one should be just a spectator. All of us, according to our vocation, have to be in the arena struggling to implant this kingdom of God in the world. So I begin our reflection today with Elisha, who is called through the prophet Elijah.¹⁶⁷

And it is in this environment that Christ is calling us to be authentic and how we ought to be a community, and so from today's three readings I can draw the title of my homily: "The Church: a Prophetic Community, a Sacramental Community, and a Community of Love." That's what the church is! If we don't understand it that way, then we don't know what the church of Christ is. These three characteristics serve as a summary of today's three readings.¹⁶⁸

I have entitled today's homily: true independence comes only from Christ. And my three complementary points will be arranged in this order: First, Jesus is God in person who comes to free the human person; Second, Jesus is concerned about saving the whole person; Third, the salvation that Jesus brings us does not destroy us but makes us anew. I believe that these ideas, based on the readings, are most appropriate for our tragic situation that each day becomes bloodier. Let us be calm and with faith let us approach this reflection on the Word of God. As a complement and as usual we will look at how this applies and is achieved in our Archdiocesan Church and in the environment of our country.¹⁶⁹

I therefore entitle this morning's reflection on this new epiphany: Christ reveals his glory in the happiness of people. To the degree that people are happy, so too will people reveal the glory of Christ. As people discover the paths of peace and justice, brotherhood, and love, so too Christ is glorified. Christ is in history and his presence is reflected in history

¹⁶⁷ "The Responsibility of the Kingdom of God," June 26, 1977.

¹⁶⁸ "The Church: A Prophetic, Sacramental Community of Love," September 10, 1978.

¹⁶⁹ "True Independence Comes Only From Christ," September 9, 1979.

by the joy and trust of people. Therefore, we title our reflection: Christ manifests his glory in the happiness of people. The first point of this idea will be: salvation is revealed in the sign of a wedding feast; Second, Mary, the figure of the Church rich in charisms and powers in interceding before God; and the third point touches us: through faith we share in the joy of God's kingdom. Saint John writes what is referred to as the gospel of signs.¹⁷⁰

In the first example above, Romero addressed his listeners with affection in his use of the phrase, "beloved." This was common in his sermons as he displayed true affection for his parishioners. In the second example above, Romero explained that he was deriving his title from the lectionary readings which is another common feature of his preaching. Lastly, in each of these examples Romero had three points, a common feature in most of his sermons.

"Vida de la Iglesia" (Life of the Church)

After Romero gave his exposition and catechesis he turned to the events happening in the church and the diocese. At times he spoke of events that already occurred and events that were upcoming. This portion of his sermons was not only announcements and events for the future, but also a reflection on how the archdiocese was living out its faith commitment. Here are some examples of this portion of the sermon:

I want to rejoice also in this Christmas season, brothers and sisters, because during this week the church has experienced some delightful moments. For example, on Thursday we had a very worthwhile clergy meeting in which we evaluated the circumstances in which we have worked during this very complicated year. I think that I can characterize this meeting of the priests as having three qualities: sincerity, solidarity with the bishop, and optimism.¹⁷¹

For example, one thing to reflect on in light of God's word today is the fact that we are able to gather here in the cathedral once again. Last Sunday it was occupied by the Popular Revolutionary Bloc. That provided me the opportunity to make it quite clear that the church is not the Bloc. The signs speak for themselves. Those who occupied the cathedral have returned to their homes.¹⁷²

Therefore, from this perspective of the Church, let us look at the perspective of the world. In the first place this community that attempts to be faithful to the Lord and that I, as pastor, am responsible for --- this morning, during this Mass the Archdiocese unites itself to the joy of the Dominican Sisters and priests, to the joy of the Congregation whose habit Father Coll wore.¹⁷³

As pastor of the Church and as the Christian community that we are, let us see if our work, from the perspective of our faith and our growth in faith, is the same as the work of

¹⁷⁰ "Christ Shows His Glory in Our Happiness," January 20, 1980.

¹⁷¹ "God Comes to Save Us," December 18, 1977.

¹⁷² "The Church, Christ's Return in the Spirit," April 23, 1978.

¹⁷³ "Grace the Divine Gift of Easter," May 13, 1979.

the three persons who were presented to us in today's readings: Peter, kneeling before Jesus in order to learn the meaning of his liberation; Paul, also learning about the gospel and asking to remain faithful to the gospel in order to be effective in his efforts at liberating people; Isaiah, feeling overwhelmed by the greatness of his mission and yet bold when God sends him into the world to proclaim his word. Are we truly messengers of the Kingdom of God?...The academic year has begun at the Major Seminary and we have great hope. Young men have been called to follow in the footsteps of Isaiah, Peter, and Paul.¹⁷⁴

The final example above, is a typical example of what Romero attempted to do in most of his sermons with the section "vida de la iglesia." Romero would discuss if the work of the church conformed to the message he preached from the lectionary readings. At times he would connect events happening in the life of the church and the diocese to events that took place in the lectionary readings.

"Hechos de la Semana" (Events of the Week)

In the final section of the sermon Romero turned to the events that were happening in El Salvador. His purpose for this section was to illumine the times through the Word of God. In addition, Romero sought to make people aware of what was happening so that they would know the truth and not the lies that the government were spreading. In fact, state officials would tune into his radio sermons to get accurate information since their campaign to spread lies was so effective that they did not remember what actually occurred.¹⁷⁵

Here are some examples of how Romero began this section which demonstrate how he viewed the function of it within the sermon:

Let me highlight, for example, some of the principal events of this week. All of us have witnessed the labor conflicts in factories between owners and workers. There have been strikes where even blood has flowed, where human dignity has been violated, and where there has been perhaps no effort at dialogue, which is the rational way to resolve conflicts. In this regard our office has always been honored to receive information and to ask for interventions. The church realizes that her competency is not in the area of sociology or labor relations, but she knows that there is a government ministry of labor and that there is desire to reach an agreement that should be explored. As pastor, I can only affirm that we must resolutely uphold justice and respect for human dignity, even that of the humblest workers, because that is the will of the Lord.¹⁷⁶

I speak here about events that are of interest to all of us. For example, one event is of special interest to me, but I feel that it is a family event because of your kindness and

¹⁷⁴ "God Invites Us to Build Our History With Him" February 10, 1980.

¹⁷⁵ Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric, "Microphones of Christ: Lessons from the Pulpit of Oscar Romero," *Homiletic* 42, no. 2 (2018): *Homiletic*, 01/16/2018, Vol.42(2): 9.

¹⁷⁶ "The Church at Prayer, the Missionary Church," October 16, 1977.

friendship, and so I express to you my gratitude for the solidarity and communion we experienced last Tuesday. It was an unforgettable moment in my life, not because of the honorary doctorate, which certainly is worthy of esteem, especially since it comes from a university of much prestige that rarely confers this honor. But I received this honor along with you, and I feel that it was conferred on me to honor the communion I feel with my beloved people and my beloved priests. Thus, within the solemn framework of this homily I once again express my gratitude to all those people who in one way or another communicated to me their sentiments of solidarity.¹⁷⁷

Here and for this reason I invite you to reflect on our own reality, from the perspective of Christ, giver of life and conqueror of death; and facing the devil who implants death like a black banner opposed to the white banner of Christ, and in view of the final outcome, which is the victory of life prevailing over the ephemeral triumphs of death which uncover the sad situation of sin. This is most painful: if death is an index of sin, then in El Salvador we are being denounced as one of the countries where sin and the powers of hell have been enthroned in a most absurd and insane manner. At least twenty-four people were assassinated this week because of political motives. They continue murdering teachers. Unidentifiable bodies continue to appear in different parts of the country. So many people have died that it becomes difficult to mention all their names or the political group to which they belong.¹⁷⁸

From the perspective of the Church that ought to be light to the world, let us look at the world that surrounds us and attempt to illuminate it with faith. When I spoke at Louvain about the political dimension of the faith, I concluded by stating that it is the world of the poor that marks the boundaries of the political dimension of faith. In the different social-economic-political plans our greatest concern is the people who are poor.¹⁷⁹

Jesuit priest James Brockman described this section in Romero's preaching as follows:

Romero included in his homilies a reflection on events of the preceding week, including an account of murders, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests and other violations of human rights, many of which went unreported or were distorted in the secular media.¹⁸⁰

This is a good description of what Romero did and attempted to do in this section of his sermons. It was a portion in which he reflected theologically and pastorally on the events that took place in El Salvador.

¹⁷⁷ "The Church, a Spiritual Israel," February 19, 1978.

¹⁷⁸ "Christ, Life and Treasure for All," July 1, 1979.

¹⁷⁹ "Poverty of the Beatitudes, Our Strength," February 17, 1980.

¹⁸⁰ James R. Brockman, "Oscar Romero: Shepherd of the Poor," *Third World Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1984): 449.

The structure of Romero's sermons were fairly consistent, however the exposition of biblical texts was not always in the expected place. At times Romero would often try to fit too much into his sermons whereas some of the information and reflections could have been placed in another part of the liturgical mass. There were also times when there would be a back and forth where one would expect something to be in the life of the church section and it ended up in the events of the week section and the other way around as well.

Romero using sections to discuss events of the week and what was happening in the church brings a unique perspective to preaching and homiletics. These tend to be viewed as separate announcements or aspects of a service or mass. Romero brought a holistic approach and view to preaching that the sermon should always be connected to what the church is doing and to what is happening in the community and the nation a church is located. For Romero, the role of the sermon included teaching on how the church should reflect theologically on its mission in what it is doing, and to reflect theologically on what is happening around them. Henri Nouwen wrote:

When we wonder why the language of traditional Christianity has lost its liberating power for nuclear man, we have to realize that most Christian preaching is still based on the presupposition that man sees himself as meaningfully integrated with a history in which God came to us in the past, is living under us in the present, and will come to liberate us in the future. But when man's historical consciousness is broken, the whole Christian message seems like a lecture about the great pioneers to a boy on an acid trip.¹⁸¹

For Romero's preaching to have a liberating message to his listeners, there had to be meaningful connection to the events transpiring alongside a historical connection to the events in Scripture. Romero sticking to his consistent structure of his sermons that included the life of the church and events of the week, allowed him to reflect on the biblical texts assigned in the liturgy in light of what was happening around him. In the context of El Salvador in the late 1970s this method was effective for Romero. In other contexts, this may not work as well. A preacher would be forced to look for meaningful connections between the biblical text, whether it was chosen or from a liturgy, and their present context. The connections may not always be there or be apparent and if one was committed to this structure they would run the danger of making or building bridges when they are not present.

Fulfillment and Actualization

At this point it is important to discuss the idea of fulfillment and actualization in the preaching of Romero. This was a central component of his approach to preaching and how he viewed the function of a sermon. The events of the biblical texts were viewed as parallel or juxtaposed to the preaching event in the thought of Romero. His own words help us to understand his preaching approach. In the opening words of his sermon on September 18, 1977, Romero said:

The object of preaching the homily is nothing else than to say to all reflecting on the word of God that this word is fulfilled today. The eternal word of the Lord becomes

¹⁸¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1972), 9.

present among us today. It is not preached at Mass for demagogic reasons, as some have accused me of doing, nor is it preached because we are obsessed with persecution. Rather, we are seeking to enlighten with the eternal word of the Lord the reality in which our archdiocese moves. As members of this church we want to be able to judge the events of history not just with our personal criteria but with the light of the eternal word of the Lord which prevails forever.¹⁸²

Romero firmly believed that God's word, the Scriptures, had meaning and implications for the present day. It is not simply a book about past events, but divine words that have meaning and application in the present. Where does this idea of Scripture being "fulfilled today" originate? The likely place is in Luke 4:14-21, as this was the assigned gospel reading in the liturgical calendar on the day the sermon above was preached. In this passage Jesus was in the synagogue in Nazareth and he read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Verse 21 says: "He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,'" (NIV). Following the model of Jesus, Romero saw preaching as showing people how the word read is fulfilled in the present context. Romero continued in the same sermon and said:

Our opinions and human judgments are fallible because they are from man, but the word of the Lord cannot fail. That is why Christians must always learn to illuminate the passage of history and the events of their lives with the eternal word of the Lord. There are so many events in the dizzying history of our nation in these days that need to be illuminated with this word of eternal wisdom!¹⁸³

History and the present are illuminated by the word of God. The Scriptures are a lens through which all actions and events are judged since the Scriptures are the word of God. This is what Romero sought to do in his preaching, illuminate what was happening in El Salvador in light of what the Bible said. He said in one of his sermons: "My preaching is a light that must enlighten the country's ways, to offer as the Church what the Church has to offer."¹⁸⁴

This is not an idea that only Romero held but it is prominent in Roman Catholicism. A Catholic preaching manual published in the United States in 1982, two years after Romero's death, was titled, *Fulfilled in your Hearing*. The first chapter of *Fulfilled in your Hearing* begins by quoting Luke 4:14-22, then saying: "These verses from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Luke present us with a picture of Jesus as reader and homilist in the synagogue at Nazareth."¹⁸⁵ Jesus' synagogue message at Nazareth, in Luke 4, is a key text for Catholic thought on preaching. As Christ quoted an ancient text, Isaiah 61, and said it was fulfilled in his day, then the Catholic preacher ought to meditate on the texts for the occasion and show the listeners how the Scripture is fulfilled in their hearing of the homily.

¹⁸² Oscar Romero, "God's Word in the World," September 18, 1977. Archbishop Romero Trust.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ "Poverty of the Beatitudes, Our Strength," February 17, 1980.

¹⁸⁵ Catholic Church, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*, Publication, No. 850, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Pub. Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1982), 3.

The Catholic document, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” presented by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, uses the language of actualization rather than fulfillment. It states:

Already within the Bible itself--as we noted in the previous chapter--one can point to instances of actualization: very early texts have been reread in the light of new circumstances and applied to the contemporary situation of the people of God. *The same basic conviction necessarily stimulates believing communities of today to continue the process of actualization.*¹⁸⁶

In the previous chapters, the document discussed the interpretation of the Old Testament by the New Testament authors where they showed the fulfillment of OT texts. The prior meaning is still preserved but reread as the document says, in light of Christ’s death and resurrection. The believing communities, the churches, ought to show the actualization or the fulfillment of the Bible in their context. Why is this the case? The document states:

Actualization is necessary because, although their message is of lasting value, the biblical texts have been composed with respect to circumstances of the past and in language conditioned by a variety of times and seasons. To reveal their significance for men and women of today, it is necessary to apply their message to contemporary circumstances and to express it in language adapted to the present time. This presupposes a hermeneutical endeavor, the aim of which is to go beyond the historical conditioning so as to determine the essential points of the message.¹⁸⁷

Essentially, without actualization or fulfillment there is no contemporary significance of the Scripture. The message of the Bible should be communicated in a way that makes sense to the modern listener and in a way that is applicable to the present church. This is where actualization or fulfillment is important because it communicates to the listeners that this text means something to you and to the whole community.

How does one go about showing the actualization or fulfillment in the passage(s)? The document “Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” gives an example from Church history: “In their turn, the fathers of the church made use of typology and allegory in order to actualize the biblical text in a manner appropriate to the situation of Christians of their time.” Romero used typology to actualize and show fulfillment. He drew connections between people, events, and institutions in the Scriptures and showed how they corresponded to his listeners’ present context. One example is in the Exodus, Romero compared the enslaved Israelites as oppressed people with the people in El Salvador who were facing their own kind of oppression, and they could have hope through reading the Exodus story:

Faith and hope encourage Moses that God is with his people and so begins the Exodus, the second book of the Bible. Read it brothers and sisters. In these moments of repression

¹⁸⁶“The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church.” Pontifical Biblical Commission, Catholic Resources, Presented to Pope John Paul II on April 23, 1993, https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

in El Salvador, our country, we do not lose hope. The situation of Israel in Egypt was much more difficult, and the Exodus is God's victory song.¹⁸⁸

What are the limits of actualization and fulfillment? "Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" states; "Actualization presupposes a correct exegesis of the text, part of which is the determining of its *literal sense*."¹⁸⁹ The original meaning of the text is to be respected. The preacher must do thorough exegesis to understand what the original was for the original audience of the biblical texts. That way the text can be applied in a way that is faithful to it and not in a way that is foreign to the text. An important aspect of this is knowing the historical context of the text. When the historical context is understood then the preacher can draw parallels to their present context and show how the text can be applied.

The language of actualization or fulfillment can be viewed as problematic. It implies that the higher sense of the meaning of biblical texts is fulfilled in one's present context. This is the criticism both Kaiser and Osborne had of contemporary typological preaching and interpretation. This means our context gives Scripture its ultimate meaning and fulfillment. In the case of Jesus in Luke 4 he was showing how the promises in Isaiah would be fulfilled in his ministry because he is the Messiah, God's anointed to bring salvation to the world, and the word made flesh (John 1:1). Jesus was showing how he is the fulfillment of history and the Scriptures (the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible in his time). In the case of preachers today, we are witnesses who proclaim Christ, his saving work on the cross, and his resurrection but we do so in a context. The foundation is Christ and his fulfillment of all things and the parallels drawn, or actualization, should show how the church, as the people of God, experience similar circumstances throughout history and we hope in a God who acts in history, and ultimately showed us this through the incarnation of Jesus Christ and we await his second coming.

This idea of fulfillment and actualization is related to Romero's contemporary typological homiletic. The fulfillment or actualization of Scripture was the goal for Romero and typological interpretation was the method to achieving it. At this point it is important to discuss typological interpretation further in-depth to better situate our discussion of Romero's preaching and his typological interpretation in them. The next section will further expand and explore what is typology and typological interpretation. It will do so beginning with biblical typology, as in typology located in the Bible, theological foundations for typological interpretation, and lastly typological interpretation in historical context, as in how the Early Church viewed and used typological interpretation.

¹⁸⁸ "The History of Salvation," August 7, 1977.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Original emphasis.

Typological Interpretation: Towards a Definition

A description of typology from *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* states:

Typology (also known as figural reading) is thus an extension of ancient Christians' vision of the patterns in the Bible they came to call prophecy, as evidenced in Paul's words to the Corinthians. If the 'ends of the ages' have indeed come, and the same God was at work before the crux of history, will we not see his fingerprints before Christ as well as after?¹⁹⁰

In his journal article, "Typology of Types," Ben Ribbens defines typology as: "...ikonik *mimesis*, which denotes a correspondence in both fact and significance between persons, events, institutions, and so on."¹⁹¹ The correspondence between persons, events, and institutions is primarily studied in the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. This idea of significance between persons, events, and institutions is consistent with other definitions on typology including the one cited in the introduction.¹⁹² These definitions are acceptable and are the basis for determining typological interpretation in Romero's preaching in the following chapter, and that is by looking for instances where he compared a biblical person, event, or institution to his present context.

Biblical Typology

Typology can be seen throughout Scripture. In the New Testament, the authors would cite Old Testament passages and use them typologically to shed light on the situation in which they lived. But what exactly is typology? It is helpful to start with what it is not. A distinction must be made between typology and allegory. Often these two things are confused as one in the same. The difference between typology and allegory is that typology is rooted in historical events and seeks to make analogies or connections between the past event and the present. We see the continuous nature of history is important for typology. History does not repeat itself, but it does have patterns. Patterns of the past can be discerned from the present. Since typology is concerned with history and real events, it is distinguished from allegory which seeks deeper spiritual meaning in symbols. Scholar Benjamin Ribbens gives helpful parameters for typology. He states that there must be a dual correspondence in fact and significance.¹⁹³ His article contains a helpful example showing the correspondence between the sacrificial system in Leviticus and the sacrifice of Christ. The correspondence of significance is the atonement of sins and forgiveness, and the correspondence of fact is the blood of the bulls and goats and the blood of Christ.¹⁹⁴ This shows that the blood sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament (OT) is

¹⁹⁰ Jason Byassee, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 523.

¹⁹¹ Ribbens "Typology of Types, 81.

¹⁹² See Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 215.

¹⁹³ Ribbens, 87.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

connected typologically to the blood sacrifice of Christ, both offer the forgiveness of sins while Christ's blood and sacrifice is done once and is lasting.

Another example of typology is Jesus as a Davidic king. In Scripture Christ is seen as a type of David or new David. Both are men rooted in a historical context. Jesus is David's lord whom he refers to in Psalm 110, and Jesus quotes the words of David in Psalm 22 when he is on the cross. Ultimately Jesus is a greater David, and Jesus is the archetype through whom all history should be viewed through.¹⁹⁵ History is key to typology. As the typologist makes the connection between the past and present. Whether it is in the Bible, from OT to NT, or today from Bible to present day.

One area of biblical studies where typology is employed is in prophecy fulfillment. There are passages in the New Testament where an Old Testament prophecy is cited and claimed to be fulfilled in the moment the author wrote about. This is seen particularly in the Gospel of Matthew. The issue is that the original Old Testament author would not have had the intended meaning of later fulfillment in an event in Christ's life. This would be foreign to them and incomprehensible. How can a prophecy have significance and fulfillment during the time of the prophecy and in a future event? Osborne would say that typological or analogical fulfillment adequately explains the multiple or progressive fulfillment of prophecies.¹⁹⁶ He believes the New Testament authors would have seen analogous situations in salvation history and link them prophetically.¹⁹⁷ The key concept for Osborne is the Jewish concept of telescoping time (a thousand years like a day 2 Pet. 3:8). God's acts within history form a conceptual link and would allow such analogous situations. This allows past, present, and future fulfillments and interpretations of prophecy.¹⁹⁸ Overall Osborne believes typology is sufficient to explain the use of the OT in the NT.¹⁹⁹

Typology's Use in Early Church History

The early Christians and Second Temple Jews saw salvation history as one continuous event.²⁰⁰ One school of interpretation who used typological hermeneutics were the Antiochene Fathers. In contrast to the Alexandrian school, the Antiochenes saw the continuity of biblical narratives and used typology as a historical method of exegesis.²⁰¹ The Antiochenes insisted that the two parts

¹⁹⁵ Justo and Catherine, *Liberating Pulpit*, 101.

¹⁹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Revised and Expanded, Second ed, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 266.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 329.

²⁰⁰ Osborne, 328.

²⁰¹ G. W. H Lampe, and K. J Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology*, Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 22, (Napierville, Ill.: A.R. Allenson, 1957), 72.

of the type-pair must be real and intelligible, and this led them away from allegory and more towards typology.²⁰² One of the Greek Church Fathers, John Chrysostom, distinguished typology in two parts the type and the antitype which have differing magnitudes in the divine purpose.²⁰³ The type and antitype only differed in magnitude but were no less real and divinely willed.²⁰⁴

Ribbens notes that eventually the dispute between the Alexandrians (allegory) and Antiochenes (typology) was won by the Alexandrians, and this allegory became the major influence in medieval theology.²⁰⁵ Eventually during the Reformation this debate was revisited and the Reformers adopted typology and rejected the allegorical interpretation used by the Roman Catholic Church.²⁰⁶

Theological Foundation for Typology

God is consistent in how he acts and deals with his people both in the past, present, and future. The main salvific event in the Old Testament is the Exodus where God freed his people from slavery. The main salvific event in the New Testament is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In salvation history we see God rescues his people. Osborne put it this way: “God is immutable or consistent and acts today just as he did in the past, so typology seeks to identify the theological correspondence between those salvific actions in past and present.”²⁰⁷ Therefore we can see historical patterns of how God and his people acted throughout history. We can look at those patterns and see connections to our present context. This is what a contemporary typological preacher does, connects the historical past of Scripture to the present context.

It is interesting to note that Osborne cites Walter Kaiser’s work *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Principles for Teaching and Preaching* where he laid out four ways not to preach Old Testament prophecy. The first way is typologically. The problem Kaiser and Osborne have with this method of preaching prophecy is that it imposes the present context on the context of Scripture.²⁰⁸ Osborne went on to say that this can be seen in liberation theology where biblical passages speaking against social injustice are used to justify modern revolutionary movements.²⁰⁹ This is a common critique of liberation theology²¹⁰, but this is a generalization

²⁰² Ibid, 73.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ribbens, 86

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Osborne, 328.

²⁰⁸ Osborne 270, Cf. Walter Kaiser, *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Principles for Teaching and Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 186-93.

²⁰⁹ Osborne, 270.

²¹⁰ See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013), 933.

and mischaracterization. Every human being exists or has existed in a historical context. There are social and cultural influences on every human being and this effects the way we view the Bible for better or for worse. The liberation theologian sees the situation in their context and draws parallels to situation(s) in Scripture. To say that they simply impose their present context on Scripture is misleading. To give one example, in the prophetic literature the prophets, speaking on behalf of God, took issue with how the Israelites as a collective were treating their poor, widows, and orphans. The liberation theologian is showing how that is happening in their context and showing how God is displeased with this in Scripture. This is a connection that is consistent with the character of God.

The second way of how not to preach prophecy is similar to the first, prophetic action preaching. This preaching takes individuals and episodes of a story and symbolizes them to speak to modern events. The same critique is given in that it forces the contemporary situation into the meaning of the text.²¹¹ Osborne and Kaiser take issue with someone preaching typologically using their present context in connection with the context of Scripture, because the present context might lead one to misinterpret Scripture or become more concerned with the present context and not the scriptural context. The way to avoid this is to take seriously both the context of Scripture and the present context. Goppelt described what was necessary for typological interpretation: “For typological interpretation, however, the reality of the things described is indispensable. The typical meaning is not really a different or higher meaning, but a different or higher use of the same meaning that is comprehended in type and antitype.”²¹²

As mentioned before, God is consistent. “Typological exegesis assumes a divine sovereignty over history, an assumption that admittedly not everyone is prepared to accept. But it may, nonetheless, be a defensible assumption.”²¹³ There is an underlying assumption in these definitions and that is that God is sovereign or must be viewed as sovereign for typological interpretation to be feasible. The reason there must be divine sovereignty for typological interpretation to work is because if there is none then the similarities between past and present are mere coincidence. It is appropriate to draw out the context of Scripture and connect it with the present.

Preaching and Typology

Much of the scholarly discussion surrounding preaching and typology is concerned with typology found within the Bible and the preacher making those connections. In his journal

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos, the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, Translated by Donald H. Madvig, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 13.

²¹³ E. Earle Ellis, Preface to *Typos, the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, by Leonhard Goppelt, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), xv.

article titled, “Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching,” Currid described the purpose of the article the following way: “The purpose of this paper is to introduce the reader to typology and to demonstrate its importance for the proper exegesis of Scripture.”²¹⁴ Currid is concerned with typology in relation to the exegesis of Scripture to demonstrate how a passage can be better interpreted through the lens of typology and the preacher making those connections in the pulpit. The example Currid used to conclude his article was the typological connections between Jesus feeding the 5,000 and the Old Testament passage in 2 Kings 4:42-44. Currid noted how these typological connections can add depth and richness to the sermons.²¹⁵

In *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chappell discussed a preacher using typological exposition, and he believes a preacher can safely do this when a New Testament author clearly cites or echoes an Old Testament text as a type.²¹⁶ The assumption here is clear, typology and typological exposition can only be done by a preacher when it is with the context of an Old Testament text prefiguring or being a type for something or someone with the New Testament.

Another example of scholarly discussion concerning preaching and typology can be found in a PhD dissertation entitled: “An Evaluation of Typology in the Sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren and Its Implications for Text-Driven Preaching.” This thesis written by Kiseong Lee explored the typology discussed in the sermons of Charles Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren. This work is the closest to the work that is done within this thesis. The author here analyzed the types within the sermons of these two preachers, and although he does not use the phrase “contemporary typological preaching,” some of the sermon excerpts do employ contemporary typological interpretation.²¹⁷ This demonstrates the need for further study and research into the relationship of preaching and typology, and more specifically contemporary typology.

Conclusion

Romero’s approach to preaching was largely rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church. His structure was unique and contained sections where he expounded the liturgical texts for the given day, and where he discussed events happening in the country and the life of the church. The belief that the text was fulfilled in the hearing of the congregation, was an important foundation for Romero’s view of preaching and his use of contemporary typology in his sermons.

Discussion of biblical typology, historical use of typology, theological foundations for typology, and preaching and typology were discussed to give further context to what is meant by typology

²¹⁴ John D. Currid, “Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1994): 115.

²¹⁵ Currid, “Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching,” 129.

²¹⁶ Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Third Edition, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018), 264.

²¹⁷ Kiseong Lee, “An Evaluation of Typology in the Sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren and Its Implications for Text-Driven Preaching,” PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019, 125-163.

and its relationship with preaching. In the next chapter there will be a detailed discussion of the typology in Romero's 1980 sermons.

Chapter 3

Romero's use of typology in 1980 sermons

Having briefly looked at Romero's life, his approach to preaching, and typology, this chapter turns to the content of Romero's 1980 sermons. In this chapter each 1980 sermon will be given attention in relation to Romero's contemporary typological interpretation, as in his typological connections between the biblical text and his context. There were other interpretative methods Romero used, for example, he did at times use allegory to interpret some passage of Scripture, but not as often.

What we will see in this chapter is the most developed representation of Romero's homiletical approach and thought. It will reflect a sense of urgency he felt to unite and help liberate a broken and repressive Salvadoran society through his role as Archbishop and using his platform in the pulpit. In addition, Romero's longest sermons were the ones described here in this chapter. To give context, Romero's median sermon length in 1977 was thirty minutes and twenty seconds, and in 1980 it was ninety-one minutes and thirty seconds.²¹⁸

The two aspects that will be looked at in each sermon the first will be the theological basis and justification for Romero's typological interpretation. The second will be the typological interpretation Romero employed relating the context of the Bible to his context in El Salvador; what types did he employ? It is important to note not every sermon has both of these aspects. Each sermon was read and listened to carefully to draw out the typological foundations and interpretations employed by Romero. A short summary is given of each aspect as it appears in the sermon. This is a contribution to the study of Romero because as of the writing of this thesis there are not many other theses or monographs that analyze the content of Romero's sermons, or his interpretative methods in depth.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ These calculations are based on the sermons where audio does exist, which means it is not exact, but it is sufficient to demonstrate the pattern that Romero's sermons became longer in length as his tenure as Archbishop progressed.

²¹⁹ For other works that discuss and analyze Romero's preaching: see Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Óscar Romero's Theological Vision: Liberation and the Transfiguration of the Poor*, Book Collections on Project Muse, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 2018, where he dedicates a chapter, "Microphones of Christ," to studying Romero's theology and practice of preaching by analyzing his sermon, "The Homily, the Actualization of the Word of God," preached on January 27, 1980. In addition, Colón-Emeric authored a journal article with the same title of the chapter where he analyzes the preaching of Romero within the context of Latin American history. See, Tod Swanson, "A Civil Art: The Persuasive Moral Voice of Oscar Romero," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 29, no. 1 (2001): 127-44, a journal article where Swanson discusses the content of some of Romero's sermons and the moral arguments and rhetoric he used. See Timothy Shortell, "Radicalization of Religious Discourse in El Salvador: The Case of Oscar A. Romero," *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 1 (2001): 87-103, a journal article where Shortell employs discourse analysis to analyze some sermons throughout Romero's tenure as archbishop. See, Michael Kibbe, "Light That Conquers the Darkness: Oscar Romero on the Transfiguration of Jesus," *Theology Today* 75, no. 4 (January 2019): 447-57, a journal article where Kibbe discusses Romero's theology of transfiguration through an

“The Epiphany, God’s Revelation to All,” January 6th

The first type Romero referenced in this sermon is the Magi. The gospel text was Matthew 2:1-12 and Romero compared the situation of the Magi and Herod with the situation happening in El Salvador at the time. Romero believed the Word of God found in Matthew 2 could illumine the situation of El Salvador. Romero said: “We are the Magi of today, of 1980, the Magi who twenty centuries ago were the first of the knowledge of Christ.”²²⁰ At this point Romero made a direct correlation between his parishioners and the Magi who sought out baby Jesus. This correlation is more of a spiritualization or allegory than a type or analogy. Romero went on to say in the sermon that his listeners should do a similar exercise like the Magi and go down and find Christ in the depths of their hearts. The difference between the Magi and his listeners was that the Magi were seeking infant Jesus who was alive in the flesh during their time, and the Salvadorans were told to seek not a literal living Jesus but find a spiritual Jesus living in their hearts.

The Magi would be a theme throughout this sermon. A big issue Romero saw in El Salvador was the idolatry of money and power. In the sermon he noted how the Magi worshipped Christ and humbled themselves by presenting gifts and kneeling before him. For Romero, the Magi were an example of humility to be followed by those in El Salvador. This is not necessarily a type but an analogous example to be followed.

In the *vida de la iglesia* (life of the church) section of his sermon, Romero compared the youth who had completed their confirmation the week prior with the Magi. The comparison was in relation to the procession of the Magi offering gifts and the youth offering gifts at the altar of the church. This comparison is a stretch considering there is not much in common with the two circumstances, but one can see Romero thought it was important to relate the biblical texts with what was happening in the church.

Romero then went on to discuss international affairs in this sermon. He announced that the archdiocese would be receiving a peace award from Stockholm. He spoke about then Pope John Paul II’s call with the Italian president and his campaign against nuclear arms and war, and he mentioned the threat of Russia invading Afghanistan. After discussing all these events and the international chaos happening at the time Romero said, “...it makes us ask like the Magi, ‘where is the king of peace our lord?’”²²¹

Another typological image used by Romero in this sermon was the star in the east. The Magi followed a star to be led to Christ in the Matthew 2 passage. Romero said the Church follows a calm path guided by the star of its faith. As the star led the Magi to Christ so the Church must follow the star that is its faith, according to Romero. The star took on a symbolic nature that could have different meanings in the context of El Salvador. Romero’s next mention of the star

analysis of his sermons concerning Jesus’ Transfiguration. Lastly, see, Darcy Gabriel, “Romero’s Rhetoric: Blurred Audience Identity as Unifying Tactic in War-Torn El Salvador.” Colorado State University, 2016, a thesis where Gabriel used discourse analysis to analyze Romero’s sermon, “The Church’s Mission in a Crisis,” from 1979. These works are a considerable contribution to the study of Oscar Romero’s preaching but differ in scope to this thesis.

²²⁰ Oscar Romero, “The Epiphany, God’s Revelation to All,” January 6, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

²²¹ Ibid.

came when he discussed human rights abuses. For Romero, it was important that the Church denounce human rights abuses so that the Church could be “the star of the east.” In this manner, the Church would be a guiding light that shone bright to lead people and society to what is just. Another interesting symbolic significance given to the star that the Magi followed. This is more in line with an allegorical interpretation than it is with typological interpretation as the star in the passage was an astronomical phenomenon that led the Magi to Jesus and for Romero the star symbolized more spiritual meanings like the Church’s faith and the Church’s role as a guiding light.

As Romero was concluding this sermon, he made an analogous connection between Jerusalem and El Salvador. He said: “Like Jerusalem, our country is also turbulent. Government officials and people disturb us as we attempt to make our future a reality but we, as a Church of hope and in imitation of the Magi, know that the King is in some part of the world.”²²² Romero was referencing the part of the passage where Herod and all of Jerusalem were disturbed by the Magi asking where was the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:3). Here we see typological interpretation at work. Romero showed the correspondence between Jerusalem as a geographic and political entity and El Salvador as the same. The typology here lacks correspondence between the Church and the Magi in this instance. Romero was referring to the Church’s role to bring hope and true liberation to El Salvador, but there is no correspondence to what the Magi were doing as they sought to worship Jesus and then returned home afterwards (Matt. 2:12).

In this first sermon of 1980, we do not see much of Romero’s typological interpretation at work other than the comparison of Jerusalem and El Salvador, but we do see his desire to bridge the events of the text with what was happening in his context through allegory and symbolism. What we do see is an important aspect of Romero’s typological thought which was the liturgy. This sermon was preached on the Feast of the Epiphany which celebrates the Magi visiting Christ and the revelation of the incarnation to the Gentiles.²²³ Romero viewed the knowledge or revelation of Christ to be an important aspect in his vision to see El Salvador transformed into a more just and Christian society.²²⁴ In his introduction, Romero said in this sermon that the Feast of the Epiphany was the time to resolve the national crisis. In his preaching Romero sought to bridge the liturgy of the church calendar to what was happening in El Salvador during his time. This sermon reflects his efforts to do so.

“Baptism, Revelation of Messianic Gifts” January 13th

The theme of this sermon was baptism. In the liturgical calendar this day was commemorating the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Romero used the analogy of citizenship to begin the discussion of baptism. He distinguished between one’s birth certificate which makes them a citizen of their country and one’s baptism which makes them a citizen of the kingdom of God.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Romero emphasized the Gentile nature of the Magi.

²²⁴ Romero, “The Epiphany, God’s Revelation to All.”

For Romero, being part of the kingdom of God was not contrary to being a citizen of a country but complementary.

It is important to understand Romero's view of baptism. As a Roman Catholic bishop, Romero believed and supported the teachings of the Vatican which in relation to baptism is a pedit-baptist view. In fact, Romero took time in sermon to address an objection some in his parish may have had to infant baptism. The hypothetical objection was that people may not think that infants should not be baptized since Christ was baptized as an adult. Romero's response to this was to distinguish between Jesus's baptism and the baptism that the Church practices as two different baptisms. This is important to understand because baptism served as a type in this sermon.

An important type, in relation to baptism, in this sermon was the mission of John. Romero viewed the mission of John as preparing the people to receive Christ, and this was evidence in his call to repentance and baptism. A part of the Church fulfilling this mission of John, according to Romero, was for the Church to denounce abuses, outrage, sins, and injustices. It is important to note that the Gospel reading for this day was Luke 3:15-16, 21-22. In the verses prior John the Baptist was asked by three groups of people what they should do in response to baptism and repentance and his response to the crowd was to share extra clothing and food (v.11), to the tax collectors, do not collect more taxes than required (v.13), and to the soldiers, do not extort money, accuse people falsely, and be content with your pay (v.14). One could say that John was denouncing abuses and injustices happening in first century Palestine in his exhortations to these groups of people. It is likely that Romero would have viewed John's exhortations as denunciations and believed that the Church should follow suit. The mission of John in preparing the way of Christ was the first type Romero used in this sermon. It is a type in which the figure of John the Baptist was fulfilling a duty that the church ought to follow.

Romero went on to compare the people of Palestine in the first century to the people of El Salvador. He said:

How different is it to simply be a Salvadoran, a member of the people of El Salvador and then to be a member of the People of God. This reality is demanding relating to virtue, renunciation, and holiness. We can say that in El Salvador all who are members of the People of God are Salvadorans but not all Salvadorans are members of the People of God. Let us keep this in mind because John the Baptist was a citizen of Palestine but not all the people of Palestine converted and not all were preparing to receive Christ. Those first fruits that Jesus was able to find when he began to preach, they became the new People of God and they were people of Palestine and Christians, whole-heartedly converted.²²⁵

At this point in the sermon Romero alluded to his remarks in the beginning of the sermon about being a citizen of a nation and being a citizen of the kingdom. The typology that was drawn here is between two groups of people, Salvadorans and Palestinians, and what connects them is the faithful who are converted and part of the people of God in Romero's thought.

²²⁵ Oscar Romero, "Baptism, Revelation of Messianic Gifts," January 13, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

In the third point of this sermon, Romero focused on two figures. The first figure was the servant of Yahweh described throughout Isaiah, but not in the Scripture reading for this day. Romero believed the servant of Yahweh to be Christ and not only Christ but also the community of Christ. Romero mused:

When he suffers, there we have the Christians of El Salvador, servant of Yahweh, Christ suffering with his Christians who are persecuted. When he is cheerful and happy, servant of Yahweh, who has received the epiphany, we have the joy of going with Christ to heaven, we will be with him a single servant of Yahweh, a single people of the redeemed, and all of us members of a glorious Christ. What an honor, what a destiny, that of the man who was baptized and joined Christ!²²⁶

Here the servant of Yahweh is a type that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ but also includes his people, the Church, according to Romero. This is an important theological conviction that Romero held. Much of his theological views were Christ-centered and he viewed the Church as the continuation of the work of Christ on earth, which is how he drew many typological connections within the Scripture and his context.

“Christ reveals his glory in the happiness of people.” January 20

At this point in the Catholic liturgy was the remembrance of Jesus’s first miracle as recorded in John 2, the wedding at Cana where he turned water into wine. After explaining the liturgy of the previous weeks and the one for this week, Romero said: “There we have the goal of our Sunday; to believe more in Jesus Christ, know him more this Sunday, so that it may be a new epiphany for our faith.”²²⁷ The idea of new epiphany that Romero stated was in relation to the feast of the epiphany that occurred during the first sermon of 1980. In Romero’s thought, the epiphany or revelation of Christ was an event that happened in history, but it is also a cycle where Christ is revealed again and again through the liturgy of the Church calendar and through the mass and preaching ministry of the Church. This is important in understanding Romero’s typological interpretation. The Catholic liturgical calendar provided Romero with a framework to interpret biblical passages typologically and relate them to his context. Essentially, Romero saw the liturgical events from the Scriptures as types that would repeat themselves in his context in El Salvador, and he used the sermon to make those connections for his parishioners.

Romero began his first point of this sermon with a discussion on Mary’s words to Jesus in John 2. The phrase, “they do not have wine,” is an expression of the anguish of all humanity according to Romero. He said that this phrase can be changed to “we do not have peace,” and “we have not found the path for our country.” Mary was a type for intercession for Romero, and he hoped that Salvadorans knew how to speak to Jesus with her confidence. There is a stark difference between Mary’s phrase and the phrase Romero suggested it could have been changed

²²⁶ Romero, “Baptism, Revelation of Messianic Gifts.”

²²⁷ Oscar Romero, “Christ reveals his glory in the happiness of people,” January 20, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

to. Mary's concern in the passage was that the wedding party ran out of wine and the consequence could have been public embarrassment and shame²²⁸, whereas the concern for Romero was peace and path forward for El Salvador. Romero was certainly not attempting to equate the concern of the lack of wine and the violence that was occurring in El Salvador. The main point he was making was that Christians ought to be bold in their intercessions to Jesus.

Romero continued in his exposition of the John 2 passage with a discussion of the jars of water. He believed that the jars of water were jars of water used for Jewish purification rituals, and when Jesus turned the water, symbolizing Jewish purification, to wine it was a symbol of the Christian worship ritual to come with the bread and wine for the eucharist. This interpretation is in the category of allegory rather than typology.

In his second point Romero focused on Mary. Romero viewed Mary as a symbol of the Church and her relationship with Jesus as analogous between Jesus and the Church. The role of the Church in praying for others is the role Mary played at the wedding in Cana where she interceded on behalf of the wedding party to Jesus. In his section "life of the church," Romero saw Mary's action in John 2 as a prefiguration for the Church, and in the events of that week he hoped to examine how the Church was doing in that role.

As the sermon progressed Romero addressed various ecclesial and national events. He concluded his sermon with a discussion of Mary again and said:

With Mary in the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee, we have faith in Christ's presence in the midst of our problems and we place our activities alongside the miracle, confident that Christ will perform this miracle if we collaborate in the transformation of our country.²²⁹

This conclusion resulted in applause from the congregation. We see the key typological figure in this sermon as Mary. Romero used her example in John 2 as an example of action that the Church should follow in its intercession for others. Romero's interpretation of the figure of Mary in this sermon could be viewed as allegorical in identifying her with the Church but the focus was not on Mary as a person but her actions in intercession. Romero's focus on her actions made it typological because there was valid correspondence between her action interceding and the Church interceding in prayer for others. As Romero concluded he connected the hope the Salvadoran church can have for their country if they collaborated with Christ and interceded to him on behalf of the country. Again we see the Salvadoran church, as the people of God as the present antitype for Romero.

"The Homily, the actualization of the Word of God." January 27

This Sunday, Romero gave a teaching on what the homily or sermon is. Romero gave a concise summary: "This is what a homily is, saying that God's Word is not a reading about times past

²²⁸ Romero, "Christ reveals his glory in the happiness of people."

²²⁹ Ibid.

but a living and spiritual word that today is being fulfilled here.”²³⁰ This view was a part of Romero’s foundation for typological interpretation and contemporary typological preaching. Romero viewed God’s Word, the Bible, as a living document that contained events from the past but at the same time had application in the present. In a sermon from a few years prior he said:

The object of preaching the homily is nothing else than to say to all reflecting on the word of God that this word is fulfilled today. The eternal word of the Lord becomes present among us today. It is not preached at Mass for demagogic reasons, as some have accused me of doing, nor is it preached because we are obsessed with persecution. Rather, we are seeking to enlighten with the eternal word of the Lord the reality in which our archdiocese moves. As members of this church we want to be able to judge the events of history not just with our personal criteria but with the light of the eternal word of the Lord which prevails forever.²³¹

It is important to note that in the sermon quoted above and the one discussed in this subsection shared the same gospel reading from Luke 4 in the liturgy. This is the passage where Jesus read a portion from Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth. The key verse in this passage for Romero was verse 21: “He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (NIV). This showed that the Scriptures written in the past can be fulfilled anew in a different time, according to Romero.

The figure of Ezra from the Nehemiah 8 passage had important significance for Romero. He believed that all Scripture centered on Christ’s death and resurrection and that the role of the preacher was to illuminate reality based on it. Romero viewed the preacher as a guide like Ezra when he spoke to the people and exhorted them to praise and thank the Lord after reading the Law.

Romero’s three points in this homily were titled, “Jesus is the living homily of the Father,” “The church is the prolongation of the homily of Jesus,” and “The effects of the homily of Jesus on people; some accept and some reject.” Romero used the incarnation in connection with preaching. For Romero, Jesus is the archetype of preaching. Based on the views he expressed in this sermon Romero believed Jesus was a living sermon and the church, and preachers, preach a message that testifies to the archetype and fulfillment of God’s revelation, which is Jesus. He summed up this view in his second point when he said: “The best microphone of God is Christ and the best microphone of Christ is the Church, and the Church is all of you.”²³²

While concluding the sermon, Romero said: “As we said, the homily is the application of the Word of God to our reality. The Word of God enlightens our reality.”²³³ This is another foundational element of Romero’s typological thinking. The Scripture must be relevant to the preacher and congregation’s present reality, whatever that may be. If the preacher does not make that connection then it is not a true sermon in Romero’s thought. This is similar to the thought of

²³⁰ Oscar Romero, “The Homily, the actualization of the Word of God,” January 27, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

²³¹ Oscar Romero, “God’s Word in the World,” September 18, 1977. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²³² Romero, “The Homily, the actualization of the Word of God.”

²³³ Romero, “The Homily, the actualization of the Word of God.”

John Stott and the analogy of the preacher building a bridge from the world of the Bible to the world of the listeners.²³⁴ Romero's method of bridging was typological interpretation that drew out the similarities of circumstances between the world of the Bible and his context in El Salvador.

"God calls us to build our history with him." February 10

This was Romero's first sermon after his visit with Pope John Paul II, and he began this sermon by discussing his meeting with the pontiff. Romero was also returning from Louvain where he gave a talk on the relationship between faith and politics, and he read some of his words in that talk to his parish. He used his own quote to tie it into the liturgy for that Sunday. He went on to say: "Today's readings offer us the criteria of serenity and effectiveness so that we might be what every person in El Salvador desires to be: creators of the nation's destiny but creators in light of faith."

In the third point of this sermon, Romero said:

Saint Paul has told *us this morning* that we should persevere in the gospel that he preached and that we should persevere in the gospel in all human activity and this includes politics because if we do not hold fast to the Word then it will appear that we have believed in vain. Can you imagine what Saint Paul would say to those who prefer their political identity and therefore are willing to betray their Christian identity!²³⁵

Romero used the phrase, "this morning," to emphasize that the Word had meaning to his parishioners presently. Paul's words were not only for the ancient church at Corinth but for the archdiocese of San Salvador. This shows another aspect of Romero's typological interpretation which puts the listeners of the sermon in the biblical text and conflated the present time in which he was preaching to the past of the original audience of the biblical text. From a theological perspective this makes sense since the Scripture reference here is 1 Corinthians 15:2 and Paul was addressing a church and Romero was preaching to his church. Even though there is a large historical gap between the first century church of Corinth and the 1980 church of San Salvador, they are both churches and part of the people of God post Christ's ascension to the Father.

In his "life of the church" section Romero sought to connect the three biblical figures in the passages for that day with the church's ministry. The three people were Peter, Paul, and Isaiah. Peter knelt before Jesus and told him to get away from him because he was sinful man (Luke 5:1-11). Paul spoke of remaining faithful to the gospel (1 Cor. 15). Lastly, Isaiah, whom God's glory overwhelmed, but was emboldened when God sent him out to proclaim his word (Isaiah 6). Romero asked, "are we truly messengers of the kingdom of God?" Romero went on to say that he is filled with joy because the church was ministering in the same way as Isaiah, Peter, and Paul. Romero viewed those figures not as individuals for individuals to follow their actions but

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Oscar Romero, "God calls us to build our history with him," February 10, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust. Emphasis added

in a communal sense that church body should follow, and he felt they were following in their path.

The following portion of his sermon, “events of the week,” Romero discussed his conversation with Pope John Paul II when he was in Rome. There were rumors Romero was scolded by the pope and in this sermon, Romero made the point he was not scolded. John Paul II grew up in socialist Poland and was skeptical at best or antagonistic at worst to the liberation theology movement happening in Latin America.²³⁶ To make the point that he was not scolded, Romero compared their conversation to when the apostle Paul went up to Jerusalem to speak with Peter and was open to correction. Romero did not give a biblical text reference, but he was most likely referring to Galatians 2:1-2. In this passage Paul discussed himself going up to Jerusalem to present the gospel he was preaching to make sure he was not doing so in vain. Paul made no specific reference to Peter, only to “esteemed leaders,” but Romero took creative license to assume Peter was there since he was a leader of the church. The typological connection here is Romero as a type of Paul and the pope, fittingly so, a type of Peter. Romero used typological thought to make his point and defend himself against potential slander from others.

“Poverty of the Beatitudes, Strength of true liberation of the people.” February 17

In the introduction of this sermon Romero reminded his parishioners of the liturgical season they were approaching, Lent. He said:

As the People of God we cannot forget our liturgical journey. Today we are celebrating the sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time. When the Christmas season concludes and till the beginning of Lent, these past weeks are referred to as Ordinary Time. Let us use this time for serious reflection. There is no more precious time to help our nation than this time of Lent, especially if during this time we pray and do penance.²³⁷

As mentioned previously, the liturgy was an important component of Romero’s typological interpretation. This quote demonstrates Romero’s view that the church calendar and liturgy was something that the contemporary church experiences, or journeys through, as they re-live the significant liturgical and biblical events each year at their appointed time. In this sermon Romero sought to use the season of the liturgical calendar as a call to reflection and a call for change in El Salvador.

The focus of this sermon was the beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew 5. Romero decided to give context to Jesus’s message, and felt that one could not separate Jesus’s words with the history of Israel. Romero began his discussion of the history of Israel with the promise given to Abraham that his descendants would be numerous as the stars and that they would possess the promised land. Romero then went through and retold Israel’s history concisely beginning with Moses, to the exile, and ended with what was happening in Israel during Jesus’s time. Romero emphasized

²³⁶ Romero, “God calls us to build our history with him.”

²³⁷ Oscar Romero, “Poverty of the Beatitudes, Strength of true liberation of the people,” February 17, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

how the Romans ruled over Israel and how they were dominated and subject to a foreign imperial power. Romero then said: “In the midst of these people Jesus preaches and says: Bless are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.”²³⁸ This was met with applause afterwards because Romero’s parishioners understood the implications of what he was saying. The implication was that they, Romero’s parishioners, were the like the Israelites of Jesus time who were under oppressive rule and it was as if Jesus was speaking those words, “blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours,” directly to them. The typological connection was the Israelites as the people of God and the poor Salvadorans as the people of God. Their situations were similar, therefore Romero felt the words of Jesus were applicable to them. The typology here is given further significance with Romero’s understanding of “poor” in the beatitudes. Romero believed that “poor” in the context of the beatitudes does not include all people. He recognized that in Matthew’s gospel it says “poor in spirit,” but in this sermon he pointed out that in Luke’s gospel it only says “poor.” Romero’s concern was that people reading this passage would spiritualize it so that “poor” does not mean poor people but everyone as spiritually poor. If “poor” does indeed mean “spiritually poor” then his typological hermeneutic here would not have been valid, because then everyone including the government forces, who oppressed the campesinos, would also have been considered blessed as the kingdom was theirs as well.

“Lent, the Triumph of God’s Saving Plan in History.” February 24

Romero opened the sermon for this week with a discussion of a bombing. The Monday prior to this sermon a transmitter was bombed and destroyed by an ultra-right group and this was a serious violation of free expression, Romero claimed. Romero viewed this as an attempt to silence the prophetic voice of the Archdiocese as it defended justice and sought to tell the truth. Romero compared this to Jesus’s time and how Jesus’s message shocked the powerful, but the poor accepted it. Romero saw his ministry in the archdiocese as modeled after the example of Christ.

The second point of this sermon was titled, “The action of the Spirit as the power of God’s saving plan.” At this point in the sermon Romero began with a discussion on the Deuteronomy 26:4-10 passage in the liturgy. He said:

Israel’s creed is pure history. It begins with the promise that was made to the Patriarchs -- - unbelievable promises. An old man, childless and sterile, is promised that he will be the father of a numerous people. A people that had grown more numerous in a situation of slavery is told by God that they will be given a land flowing with milk and honey. The people set out for the Promised Land and when the promise becomes a reality, the fruits of that land are offered as a sign that God has kept his promise. The offering is Israel’s

²³⁸ Romero, “Poverty of the Beatitudes, Strength of true liberation of the people.”

Mass and is like our own offering in which we give thanks for our land, for our country, recalling that God does not abandon the people.²³⁹

Again we see here that Romero used the type of the people of God. In the Deuteronomy passage the author gave a sort of liturgy for the Israelites to give offerings when they are in the promised land. This liturgy included a reminder of how God brought Israel out of Egypt and the offering was to be made after the reminder as a thanksgiving for what God has done with the first fruits of the harvest. Romero drew from this passage and typologically connected it in two ways, first to the mass which he viewed as an offering to God for the people of El Salvador to give thanks to him, and second to the assurance that God does not abandon his people because the liturgy in the Deuteronomy passage was a reminder of God's faithfulness in the past.

Romero then continued in this sermon with a discussion of history. He described the Bible as a book of the history of Israel's people and as the Holy Spirit's own book. He then said:

Although it was written by people living in different eras and cultures, the Holy Spirit is the author of the pages of Israel's history that make up the Bible ... a model for the histories of all people. All our people should read the Bible and learn from it the relationship between faith and politics.²⁴⁰

This view of history is another important foundation in Romero's typological hermeneutics. The key phrase here is, "model of histories of all people." This "model" is the typological framework through which Romero interpreted his own context. He saw the patterns of history in the Bible clearly in his own time, and his preaching sought to illuminate those patterns and realities for his parishioners. This "illumination," a word he used frequently, was intended to give practical views and actions to the Salvadoran Catholics under his care, as evidenced by the quote above which shows that Romero thought the patterns in the Bible were important for discerning a good relationship between faith and politics.

From a theological perspective, the idea of "the people of God," beginning with Abraham and Israel going to Christians and the Church, allowed Romero to discern typological correspondence between his context and the context of Scripture. Romero went on to say in this sermon:

When the Holy Spirit brings Israel's times to their fullness and Jesus is born through the Holy Spirit, Christ begins to form a new people. We Christians are that people²⁴¹ and we, a people formed by Christ, are the work of the Holy Spirit. God works out the history of salvation in each people's history.²⁴²

This is the theological foundation of Romero's typological hermeneutic. The Bible tells the history of the people of God from Abraham all the way to the Church. Therefore, Romero felt he

²³⁹ Oscar Romero, "Lent, the Triumph of God's Saving Plan in History," February 24, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²⁴⁰ Romero, "Lent, the Triumph of God's Saving Plan in History."

²⁴¹ At this point Romero's parishioners applauded. This can be heard in the audio clip of this sermon.

²⁴² Romero, "Lent, the Triumph of God's Saving Plan in History."

could relate the experiences of the Christians in El Salvador, who were part of the people of God in his time, to the experiences of Israel in the Old Testament, who were the people of God in the ancient world. The history of Israel is fulfilled through Jesus Christ and part of his work on earth was to form a new people, the Church, and this new people has been grafted into the people of God. Theologically that allowed Romero to make the typological connections that he made.

Romero went a step further in his view of history. According to Romero, the resurrection is a model for history as well. He said:

The Spirit who raised up Christ has provided in the risen Christ a model for history. The history of all peoples moves toward the resurrection. History must enable people who have lived the way of the cross, to rise to freedom --- to a freedom that can be enjoyed on this earth but that same freedom will not be definitive until we enjoy it in the fullness of God's kingdom. That does not mean that we are going to leave the people's liberation for the other side of death.²⁴³

This view of history influenced Romero's typological thinking, and his view on liberation for the Salvadoran people. Not only is biblical history a model for other histories, but the resurrection (of Jesus) is a model towards which history is heading and that is the renewal of all things. The typological thinking of Romero has a fixed goal or end point.

Romero continued in this sermon with a comparison of the faith of Israel in the Old Testament and the faith of Christians. Romero said: "My brothers and sisters, as you can see the content of faith in the Old Testament and the New Testament are distinct but we are being told that the spirit of faith is the same."²⁴⁴ He then discussed the history of Israel and spoke of Abraham and the Exodus. Abraham is an important type for Romero because through an old nomad God made and fulfilled his promise to make a new nation from his offspring and bless the world. The Exodus is an important event type for Romero because God liberated his people from Egypt and the Salvadorans of his time could trust in the God who liberates. He went on to say: "As a result of our creed we are invited to change history through the personification of Israel." The people of Israel as the people of God was a foundational type for Romero. Israel (from the Old Testament) is the type and the Church, as the people of God, is the antitype or fulfillment. Romero's view of this is shown above: "When the Holy Spirit brings Israel's times to their fullness and Jesus is born through the Holy Spirit, Christ begins to form a new people."²⁴⁵ This typological interpretation was the basis for Romero's call to action to his people.

²⁴³ Romero, "Lent, the Triumph of God's Saving Plan in History."

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

“Lent, our transfiguration through Christ” March 2

Romero continued with the theme of Lent in this sermon as it was the liturgical season. In the first point of this sermon Romero discussed the history of Israel and Abraham, as he did in the previous sermon. This is what he said about the history of Israel:

Israel is like the model of the history of salvation but after Christ the history of salvation becomes the history of every people. Therefore, during this Lenten season all Christians should call to mind the history of Israel in order to learn all that God desires to do today with the people of the world, remembering at the same time that this was anticipated by God and is revealed in the Old Testament.²⁴⁶

Romero believed that Christians could learn what God desires to do in the world in the present through reading the Old Testament and learning about the history of Israel. This is the foundation for typological preaching: the belief that we can learn from how God has acted in the past and apply it to analogous situations in the present.

In this sermon Romero focused on three figures: Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. The reason for this focus was the gospel text for this Sunday was Luke 9:28-36 which is about the Transfiguration. Romero described two Lents, the Lent of Moses, and the Lent of Elijah. The Lent of Moses was his forty years in the desert and forty days and nights with God on Mount Sinai, and the Lent of Elijah who went through the desert for forty days and experienced God in the still voice. Romero believed that in the midst of these two Lents there was one protagonist, Jesus. The Transfiguration was the revelation of God’s glory that was a secret before, according to Romero. He then went on to say: “Blessed are those Christians who do not wait for Christ, like the Israelites, but rather see him present in their history!”²⁴⁷ The transfiguration revealed God’s glory and in this sermon Romero made the point that God’s glory was revealed to them as Christians and that they can see Christ in their present history.

One can see here that Romero viewed salvation history as a progression of revelation. The significance for Christians is the blessings of knowing God’s ultimate revelation through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The revelation of God in the transfiguration was a typological event for Romero because there was the voice of God, as it was with Elijah and his theophany, and it occurred on a mountain as Moses spoke with God on Mount Sinai.

“Following the plan of God, conversion is the necessary requisite for true liberation” March 9

The sermon for this Sunday was preached with two unique guests in attendance, the Swedish ambassador to El Salvador, and the secretary of the Swedish Action for Ecumenism in Latin America. The two guests in attendance were there to give Romero the 1980 Peace Prize, which he accepted on behalf of his archdiocese. Their attendance and award presentation helped set the

²⁴⁶ Oscar Romero, “Lent, our transfiguration through Christ,” March 2, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²⁴⁷ Romero, “Lent, our transfiguration through Christ.”

theme for this sermon as it focused on reconciliation and peace. Romero stated in this sermon that the sources of reconciliation and peace were reconciliation with God, and conversion.

In the first point of this sermon Romero discussed the gospel passage in the liturgy from Luke 13. He spoke of the first verse in Luke 13 where it says that Pilate mixed the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices. Romero compared that event to what was happening in El Salvador. He said:

One event refers to those who died while making a religious offering. Some pious Galileans were killed while offering sacrifice. Without a doubt their death was the result of repressive action, death that came as the result of religious persecution. Here it is fitting to refer to the manner in which history describes Pontius Pilate: a man who carried out acts of violent repression, a man who sent soldiers into the midst of the multitude in the Temple to kill them. This man would certainly find a place here in El Salvador where we experience so much repression.^{248 249}

Romero compared the actions of Pontius Pilate described in Luke 13:1 with the actions of the political leaders in El Salvador. At this point in his life Romero knew of a failed attempt to kill him when a bomb was discovered by the pulpit in January 1980, and he mentioned in a previous sermon that he discovered that his name is on a kill list. In addition, numerous priests from his archdiocese were killed by government kill squads for subversion.²⁵⁰ The typological connection was clear for Romero that what Pilate did and what was happening then in El Salvador were the same, repression.

In the second point of this sermon, Romero returned to a familiar theme, the history of Israel. Again Romero discussed how the history of Israel is a model of history:

As you know, the plan of God is the fulfillment of the history of Israel. God chose these people from among all other nations to become a model for history. Because of Jesus and the cross their history would be the history of salvation amid the history of all people. Through the history of the Church the history of Israel becomes the history of the people of El Salvador. The history of El Salvador is also the vehicle of the plan of God to the degree that the people of El Salvador take ownership of the plan of the history of salvation.²⁵¹

The history of Israel is a framework for Romero. It is a framework through which all history can be viewed because of the work of Christ on the cross, and the Church being the people of God.

Later on in this same point of the sermon (the second point), Romero continued in discussing the Exodus passage (Ex. 3:1-8, 13-15). Romero said: "My brothers and sisters we have heard the

²⁴⁸ Oscar Romero, "Following the plan of God, conversion is the necessary requisite for true liberation," March 9, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²⁴⁹ The parishioners applauded at this point in the sermon.

²⁵⁰ See previous chapter "Biographical Sketch of Oscar Romero" for more detailed discussion of priests murdered during Romero's tenure as archbishop.

²⁵¹ Romero, "Following the plan of God, conversion is the necessary requisite for true liberation."

words that God could have spoken about the people of El Salvador...”²⁵² Romero then quoted the Exodus passage where God said to Moses that he has heard the cries of affliction of his people, Israel. This is a clear comparison of what Salvadorans were experiencing in the repression from the government, and the oppressive slavery the Israelites faced in Egypt before the Exodus. In El Salvador during Romero’s time, there was huge wealth inequality with only a few elite oligarchs owning most of the land and wealth²⁵³, so one could argue the campesinos were in a type of state of slavery. The repression they experienced was from the government who killed campesinos without trial or due process if they were suspected to be sympathetic to the leftist rebel groups. Romero was telling his parishioners that God could say to them that he has heard their cries of affliction and repression, and the theological basis for Romero’s statement is the fact that God is unchangeable, and the Salvadoran Church are his people in the same way Israel was his people in the ancient world.

Still in the second point of the sermon, Romero turned to the reading in 1 Corinthians 10. Romero said: “The Christian era is the last phase in the plan of God and should be like an apprenticeship that takes into account all the lessons of Israel’s history, the lessons of the history of salvation.”²⁵⁴ The history described in the Bible are lessons that can be applied to the people of God today, according to Romero. This is understood from the context of 1 Corinthians 10 where Paul wrote to the Corinthians that what the Israelites did in the desert served them as an example (*typos* in Greek) in verse six. Romero went on to say that it is not sufficient that to be members of the people of God but to also do penance. He was building on the idea of learning from Israel as a negative example from 1 Corinthians 10.

In his third point Romero asked his parishioners, “what does it mean to repent here and now in El Salvador? Who are the true Salvadorans who today could be called the people of God?” Romero built off of his previous point from 1 Corinthians 10 and the negative example given to ask his parishioners how could they repent of their sins and not be like the Israelites. The typological connection between Israel and the Church as the people of God was made clear here.

“Reconciliation of people in Christ, Project of True Liberation.” March 16

In the third point of this sermon Romero discussed the New Testament reading from 1 Corinthians. He related the way Paul spoke to the Corinthian church and how he is able to speak to the saints of El Salvador in the same way. Romero said:

With the words that Saint Paul spoke to the Corinthians I address you and say: God has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. For this reason we act as people who have been sent forth by Christ: we act in the way that God has exhorted us. Therefore, in the name of Christ we ask you to be reconciled with God. These words of the Bible become real in this homily that is being

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ William M. LeoGrande, and Carla Anne Robbins, "Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador," *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 5 (1980), 1085.

²⁵⁴ Romero, “Following the plan of God, conversion is the necessary requisite for true liberation.”

preached here in the Basilica. This is what we do and therefore just as Paul asked the Christian community to not view him as God so too I ask that you to see me as a poor pastor of God. Saint Paul and I are simply sinful instruments but, through means of us, God exhorts you to be reconciled with him.²⁵⁵

In his “events of the week” (*hechos de la semana*) section Romero spoke of land reform in El Salvador. He said:

Let us not forget the words that God spoke to Cain: the blood-soaked land cannot produce fruit. The blood-soaked reforms can never produce fruit. I have already said that no one can be opposed to the reforms because the just distribution of land is part of God’s revelation in regard to divine reconciliation and justice. We are not against these reforms.²⁵⁶

Here Romero made an interesting typological connection between the land in the story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis, and the land in El Salvador. Romero was urging the people of El Salvador not to seek reform through violence. The likely biblical reasoning was from Genesis 4:11-12 when God punished Cain for killing Abel and said: “Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth,” (NIV). This was a warning for Romero to say to the Salvadorans that land reform that involves killing others will not bear fruit and the clear example is from Cain and Abel. Land and blood are the types that corresponded to Romero’s present context. The blood led to the land no longer yielding crops for Cain, and Romero urged Salvadorans to not kill to gain reform because they will suffer the same fate. The land and blood types are understandable given what was happening in El Salvador but there is a lack of correspondence between the biblical narrative and what was happening with land reform. In the biblical narrative, Cain killed Abel not for land reform or any righting of actual injustice. Abel did not wrong Cain in the narrative, whereas in Romero’s context he saw the need for land reform because only a small elite owned most of the land.

“The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation.” March 23

This sermon would be Romero’s final sermon preached during a Sunday service.²⁵⁷ This was one of his longest sermons as it was over one hundred and five minutes.²⁵⁸

In the introduction Romero discussed Jesus’ death and resurrection. Romero viewed Jesus’ death and resurrection as typical of the Christian experience: “But those who have Christian faith

²⁵⁵ Oscar Romero, “Reconciliation of people in Christ, Project of True Liberation,” March 16, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²⁵⁶ Romero, “Reconciliation of people in Christ, Project of True Liberation.”

²⁵⁷ Romero was assassinated the next day while performing mass at a chapel. He preached a short homily prior to being shot in the heart.

²⁵⁸ This is based on the length of audio recordings on the Archbishop Romero Trust website.

and hope know that behind the Calvary of El Salvador lies our Easter, our resurrection. This is the Christian people's hope."²⁵⁹ The reference to Calvary, or Jesus' crucifixion, was Romero relating the terrible things Salvadorans were experiencing at the time to Jesus' own suffering. Romero sought to give his people hope with the hope of Easter and the resurrection which he related as a typical event that Christians would experience as the Bible describes (Rom. 6:5, 2 Cor. 4:14).

Romero returned to the common theme of the people of Israel. He described the ancient Israelites as a paradigm people, and a model people who received the promise of salvation from God. Romero then briefly summarized the lent readings and how they were about the history of Israel from Abraham, to Moses, and Joshua with their entrance into the promised land.

The readings of Lent also tell us how God makes his plan concrete in history, that is, how he makes the history of people, the history of salvation. Indeed the salvation of people and their happiness depends upon the way in which these same people reflect, in their own life, the plan of God, the plan to be saved in Christ through conversion. Therefore in the very first reading of Lent we listened to the history of Israel, a paradigm people, and an exemplary people, exemplary even in their unfaithfulness and sinfulness. We saw how God chastised the people for their infidelity and sin. Yet this same people became a model who received the promise of salvation from God. We walked with Abraham, wandered in the desert with Moses and celebrated with Joshua the entrance of the people into the Promised Land.²⁶⁰

Romero used the same technique he had in previous sermons, and that is inserting the listeners into the biblical narratives. He used the pronoun "we" when describing the stories of Abraham, Moses, and Joshua as if his listeners were there for those events. This is premised on Romero's theological conviction that the church as the people of God is a continuation of the people of Israel, therefore one can reasonably relate the experiences detailed in the Bible to the experiences happening in life.

Romero then turned to biblical typology as he described the Israelites return from Babylon as a second Exodus. Romero described this history as one that every people must imitate:

"Today we are invited to participate in a second Exodus: the return from Babylon. This is a history that every people must imitate, not because all people are like Israel, but because there is something like Israel in all people --- in the group that follows Christ, in the group known as the People of God (a group that is not composed of all people but rather a faithful group of people). This morning we have a beautiful example of this in our midst. The followers of Christ in the United States have come to share with the followers of Christ in El Salvador. This people from the great nation in the North are a gospel voice that cries out against the injustices in their own country and they come here

²⁵⁹ Oscar Romero, "The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation," March 23, 1980. Archbishop Romero Trust.

²⁶⁰ Romero, "The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation,"

and express their solidarity with us, the People of God in El Salvador. May we know how to denounce courageously the injustices of our own society!”²⁶¹

Again, Romero invited his listeners into the biblical narrative and to participate in it. This time it is the event of the Israelites return from exile in Babylon. Similar to his typological understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Romero used the return to exile as a way to acknowledge the injustices happening in El Salvador and give hope as the Israelites who returned from Babylon may have felt. He directly referenced Old Testament Israel as a model or type for the people of God in this portion of the sermon.

In the second point of this sermon Romero continued the theme of “people of God.” He said:

“My dear brothers and sisters notice that in the history of the Bible, in the Old Testament, there are references to this group called the People of God and there are other references to the people in general. How many times did the prophets of Israel reproach the people for boasting about their status as children of Abraham rather than obeying and believing in God? This group of believers, this remnant, was the true People of God. All others were seen as corrupt and this included that group of people who were called Gentiles. Through Christ, this remnant, this People of God, this collective personality with whom God speaks, passes through Christ to all Christians. It is no longer just a group of the people of Israel, but in each country there will be a group.”²⁶²

Romero continued on the discussion of “the people of God” that he began in the introduction. Here he directly stated that through Christ the people of God are all Christians with whom God speaks.

In this portion of the sermon Romero continued to limit who actually is part of the group known as the “people of God.” El Salvador, like many other countries in Latin America, was heavily Roman Catholic and mostly as a cultural and traditional practice. Romero understood that most people, even the military leaders who were harming the poor farmers, were officially part of the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador. Most people were baptized as infants and confirmed as youth as was expected. Therefore, Romero had to distinguish as to who is truly part of the church or people of God because there were people against him and what he viewed as the true teachings of the church and the gospel:

The People of God is no longer a group of people in Israel, but groups of people in every land and nation... When I as pastor speak to the People of God, I do not pretend to be a teacher for everyone in El Salvador but rather I am the servant of that remnant that calls itself Church, the Archdiocese, those who want to serve Christ and who recognize in their bishop the teacher who speaks to them in Christ’s name. From them I hope to receive respect and obedience. I feel that I am united with them and I am not surprised that some are not members of the Church (even though they are inside the Church). These are often

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Romero, “The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation,”

the individuals who criticize me and speak behind my back and want to destroy my ministry. These individuals are not the People of God. Even though they have been baptized and come to Mass, if they are not united in solidarity with the powerful teaching of the Gospel, and with the concrete application of the Gospel as outlined in our pastoral lines of action, then my sisters and brothers, we know how to distinguish these people and thus avoid playing games with this sacred and holy name: the people.²⁶³

Romero showed his understanding that people of God is not Israel any longer but the Church. And the true Church are those who seek to follow Christ and are truly the people of God. Romero called the Salvadorans, who sought to follow Christ and obey him, the people of God, not everyone who was a member of the church or went to mass.

Romero went on to say: "This People of God becomes a reality in history."²⁶⁴ He then paraphrased Isaiah 43:16-21 where the passage described a second exodus for the Israelites similar to the one in Egypt but instead, they were returning to Israel from their captivity in Babylon. Romero then said: "Thus a people reconciled with God will move toward Jerusalem. Here we are not talking about slavery in Egypt but rather exile in Babylon and throughout history there are new exoduses."²⁶⁵ Here it is clear for Romero that the Exodus and the Israelites return from exile are typical events, therefore the people of God (the Salvadoran Church whom he is preaching to) can and will experience new exoduses like the Israelites did in their return from Babylon. Another clear example of how Romero's understanding of The people of God was his theological justification for preaching typologically.

Romero went on to make the typological connection, with the exodus, more explicit:

Today El Salvador is living its own exodus. Today we are passing toward our liberation through a desert strewn with bodies and where anguish and pain are devastating us. Many suffer the temptation of those who walked with Moses, wanting to turn back and did not work together. It is the same old story. God, however, wants to save the people by making a new history.²⁶⁶

Here Romero continued a theme in his preaching, and that is salvation history. Romero truly believed that the church in El Salvador was a new chapter in the history that was described in the Bible. Romero's appeal to history was not for the purpose of hoping that El Salvador would imitate biblical history. He believed that history does not repeat itself as he said in this sermon. Romero appealed to the idea that God is involved in history and that is important to his typological thinking. If God was not active in history then he had no basis for his typological preaching. Romero believed that God makes all things new and he wanted his parishioners to understand this and have hope, also he wanted them to be able to embrace the change that was coming without betraying their faith as he said at this point in the sermon.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Romero, "The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation,"

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Still in the second point of this sermon, Romero continued with the idea that God makes all things new. He said:

God makes all things new. For this reason, God chastised the Israelites because they glorified the First Exodus and were blind to God's marvelous deeds at the time of this Second Exodus. During the present Christian era in which we are now living, God will bring about even greater marvels. History will not fail; God sustains it. That is why I say that insofar as historical projects attempt to reflect the eternal plan of God, to that extent they reflect the kingdom of God. This attempt is the work of the Church. Because of this, the Church, the people of God in history, is not attached to any one social system, to any political organization, to any party. The Church does not identify herself with any of those forces because she is the eternal pilgrim of history and is indicating at every historical moment what reflects the kingdom of God and what does not reflect the kingdom of God. She is the servant of the Kingdom of God."²⁶⁷

Romero's ecclesiology is a key component to his typological interpretation. Here he described the Church as "the eternal pilgrim of history." The Church's role, according to Romero, is to testify to what reflects God's kingdom in their context. Another important component of Romero's typological thought is his view of history. He mentioned above that history will not fail because God sustains it. This is important because since Romero believed that God sustains history then it was reasonable for him to look at biblical history and the present and see how God has worked in the past and how he may be working in the present.

The final sermon of Oscar Romero. March 24²⁶⁸

This was Romero's final sermon. Romero was shot and killed during this mass and did not even have the chance to complete the sermon as the gunmen shot him in mid-sentence. The occasion for the mass was to celebrate the anniversary of the death of Sara Meardi de Pinto. She was the mother of Jorge Pinto, the editor of the newspaper *El Independiente*.²⁶⁹ This service was similar to a memorial that some Christian traditions may hold for those who have passed away. The liturgical readings for this day were: Psalm 23:1-4, John 12:23-26, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. In the beginning of this sermon Romero focused on the figure of the kernel of wheat from the reading in John 12. Romero connected the occasion of the mass commemorating Sara Meardi de Pinto and the kernel of wheat Jesus discussed that must die to produce many seeds. Romero said that de Pinto did her part during her life and sowed her grain. The type from the Scripture in this sermon was the kernel of grain and Romero believed that de Pinto was someone who exemplified this kernel of grain.

Romero continued in the sermon with the type of the kernel of wheat and he related it to the eucharist as the body and blood of Christ. He said:

²⁶⁷ Romero, "The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation,"

²⁶⁸ This sermon was not titled as it was preached during a special occasion mass. The title in the following footnote is taken from the Archbishop Romero Trust website. See <http://www.romerotruster.org.uk/homilies-and-writings/homilies/final-homily-archbishop-romero>

²⁶⁹ Oscar Romero, "The Final Homily of Archbishop Romero," March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

By Christian faith we know that at this moment the host of wheat becomes the body of the Lord who offered himself for the redemption of the world, and that in this chalice the wine is transformed into the blood that was the price of salvation. May this body that was immolated and this flesh that was sacrificed for humankind also nourish us so that we can give our bodies and our blood to suffering and pain, as Christ did, not for our own sake but to bring justice and peace to our people.²⁷⁰

Christ is the ultimate example of this kernel of wheat that died to produce many seeds. Romero used the occasion to exhort his listeners to be willing to sacrifice their own bodies for justice and peace in El Salvador as the kernel of wheat, as Sara de Pinto, and most importantly as Christ did. The great irony here should not go unnoticed because within a few seconds after Romero made the above statement he was shot and killed.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Romero's Use of Typology

Romero did great work connecting the past events and people of Scripture with the present context of his listeners. In an unstable and violent environment as El Salvador was, one can imagine there was a lot of fear and anxiety among his parishioners. The people of El Salvador were looking for hope and encourage amidst violence and persecution. For Romero, the stories of the Bible was his source of hope and encouragement as he described how God had acted in the past and how he believed God was at work during in El Salvador at this time.

One weakness in Romero's approach was to stretch some of the comparisons of the situation in the Bible with his present context. One example is his first sermon where he compared the youth in his church undergoing confirmation with the Magi in Matthew 2. The youth leaving gifts to the church were similar to the Magi leaving gifts to young Jesus, for Romero. This connection was not as obvious as the people in the Scripture and the present context did not correspond, and Romero did not give much attention to making the connections more apparent. Another weakness was symbolism. At times Romero would look at certain elements within the narrative of Scripture and ascribe certain meanings to them that made sense to him in his context. In his first sermon, the star in the east the Magi followed symbolized faith, and it was a guiding light. This is more in line with allegory where an object take on spiritual meaning beyond what the biblical text states.

Romero was at his best with his contemporary typological interpretation when the focus was on the people and events within Scripture and describing how they were similar to the events happening during his time. This helped bring clarity, hope, and encouragement to his listeners as they could then view God as sovereign over history and acting presently on their behalf even if it did not seem like it. The best example was his second to last sermon "The Church, a service of personal, communal, and transcendent liberation." In this sermon Romero compared the events of the Exodus to what was going on in El Salvador by saying they were living through their own Exodus, and he encouraged his listeners with the hope that God would deliver them and make a

²⁷⁰ Romero, "The Final Homily of Archbishop Romero," March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero Trust.

new history a new story with them. This is the strength of Romero's contemporary typological homiletic, as it is one in which it offers hope and encouragement to those in difficult times by leaning on the knowledge that God is sovereign over history and acting in a way consistent with his nature in troubling times.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the types and theological foundations for Romero's contemporary typological interpretation in his 1980 sermons. One can see a noticeable theological foundation for Romero's contemporary typological homiletic and that was his belief in the Church as continuation of the people of God. Romero would easily transition from discussing the people of Israel in the Old Testament to the events happening to the church in El Salvador. Related to this theological foundation was Romero's view of salvation history. In his sermon, "Lent, the Triumph of God's Saving Plan in History" (preached February 24, 1980), he claimed that the history of Israel is a model for the histories of all people. This showed Romero's view that a preacher can and should look at the biblical history and discern the patterns of the past and how they correspond to the patterns of the present. Romero did not believe that history repeated itself but that the patterns of history can be seen. Another important aspect of Romero's contemporary typological homiletic was the liturgy or the church calendar. The Scripture readings for certain Sundays were chosen to correspond to events in the church calendar such as lent and advent for example. In Romero's 1980 sermons he sought to use the season of lent as a time of reflection and renewal to build a better society and future in El Salvador, and ultimately this would end in the holiday of Easter, the holiday of resurrection. Unfortunately for Romero he did not live to see Easter or a lasting peace in his country. The thesis statement of this project is as follows: Oscar Romero's 1980 sermons demonstrate he operated on the view that a contemporary typological homiletic ought to be rooted in the principle of the continuation of the people of God within the unfolding of salvation history. In the next chapter there will be an exploration of each of the different components of this statement, the principle of the continuation of the people of God, and salvation history, as well as a discussion on what framework can be applied from Romero's contemporary typological homiletic.

Chapter 4

Romero's Foundation for Contemporary Typological Preaching

Having looked at the content of Romero's 1980 sermons and his contemporary typological interpretation and foundations in them, we have found that Oscar Romero's 1980 sermons demonstrate he worked on the principle that a contemporary typological homiletic ought to be rooted in the principle of the continuation of the people of God within the unfolding of salvation history, and this is a helpful and effective homiletical option and framework for contemporary typological preaching.

This chapter will breakdown the theological foundation of Romero's contemporary typological homiletic. There are two theological commitments that undergird a foundation for a contemporary typological homiletic for Romero. The first is that God had and has a select people who are uniquely his and they exist across history, beginning with the Israelites in the Old Testament and continuing through the Church. The second is that God is sovereign over history, and it is unfolding in the framework of his goal of salvation. In addition, this chapter will address some objections to a contemporary typological homiletic and conclude with a discussion on what can preachers today learn from Romero and his typological homiletic approach.

Continuation of the people of God

Romero's belief in the continuation of the people of God is firmly rooted in biblical theology. One of the Bible's most important claims and central themes is that God is shaping a people for himself.²⁷¹ It is important to understand who the people of God are and what does their continuation mean. In the Bible, Israel is described as the people of God in the Old Testament. The Church or believers in Christ are described as the people of God in the New Testament. In the Bible God made covenants with his people. There is a covenant formula that can be seen in the covenants of the Old Testament and the New Testament going from Genesis to Revelation, and a key phrase is 'they will be his people,' and this shows the theological interconnectedness of the people of God in the Old and New Testaments.²⁷²

As noted in the previous chapter this was a foundation for Romero's typological interpretation. Romero viewed the people of Israel in the Old Testament as a paradigm for the people of God, the Church, in El Salvador whom he was preaching to. In other words, the Church is the New Israel. Regarding the New Testament, it was an easier connection for Romero to make because it is the story of Jesus and his people the Church, and many letters were written to churches in the past and Romero viewed it as containing wisdom for the church in El Salvador. This was a major focal point for Romero as he sought to relate the biblical history with what the church in El Salvador was experiencing.

²⁷¹ Elmer Martens, "The People of God" in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, eds. Scottt Hafemann and Paul House,

²⁷² Ibid., 227.

Ecclesial Typology

Romero viewed the Scriptures through the lens of ecclesial typology, which means that he made typological connections between the people of God in the past, Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament, and his parishioners in San Salvador. This is a communal view of Scripture and not individualistic. Certainly, the Scriptures do tell the stories of individuals but more importantly it fits into the larger narrative of God saving his people and creating a new people that includes all nations through the work of Jesus Christ. In biblical and theological studies the emphasis on typology tend to be between events in the Old Testament prefiguring or predicting events in the New Testament, but not how events in the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) relate to what is happening to the Church, the people of God, in the present. This is something that is part of the African American tradition of preaching and interpretation,²⁷³ and something that is not often done in other theological circles. One explanation is that other ecclesial and theological traditions do not have the same historical experiences of marginalization, the African American church with slavery, and Latin American churches with massive poverty and repressions from authoritarian governments. This makes it difficult to look inward into the Scriptures and relate to the stories of the people of God in the past and relate their trials to those in the present.

Salvation History

Salvation history was an important theme for Romero. It influenced how he viewed Scripture and how he interpreted the time he was living in. During his tenure as archbishop Romero preached two sermons titled, “The History of Salvation,” one in 1977 and one in 1978. In 1980, the focus of this thesis, he preached two sermons focused on history, one titled, “God Invites Us to Build Our History with Him,” and “Lent: God’s Saving Plan in History.”

In his work *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Goldsworthy gives a helpful diagram titled, “The Typological Structure of the Bible.”²⁷⁴ In this diagram he discerns three epochs: the kingdom in Israel’s history, the kingdom in prophecy, and the kingdom fulfilled in Christ. The first epoch begins with creation and ends with the split of the kingdom of Israel. The second epoch begins with the prophets Amos and Hosea in relation to the Assyrian captivity and ends with prophet Malachi going into the intertestamental period. The final epoch begins with Jesus and ends with new creation.

At various points in salvation history, the people of God, Israel in the Old Testament, Jesus’s disciples and the church in the New Testament, experienced different things. This did not prevent Jesus or any

²⁷³ See McCaulley and Lischer.

²⁷⁴ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 112.

God as Lord of History

A major theological commitment or assumption within ecclesial typology or typological interpretation more broadly, is the idea that God is sovereign over history and is acting within history. In their work, *The Drama of Scripture*, Bartholomew and Goheen's central thesis is that: "God is acting in history for the salvation of the world."²⁷⁵ This is a claim that one can reasonably assume that Romero would have been in agreement.

The patterns seen in history do not happen by accident or coincidence in this view. There are some biblical scholars who view typology as the means of understanding prophecy in the Old Testament relating to New Testament events (Hays and Osborne). They do not argue that Old Testament authors somehow knew or predicted certain events that would happen in the future, rather the New Testament authors had the typological understanding that patterns in history would repeat themselves and they had license to make the typological connections since God is sovereign over human history, see for example, Hosea 11 and Matthew 2. Simply put, this is how the New Testament authors understood and interpreted the Old Testament, therefore as a pastor and preacher, Romero did the same.

Addressing Some Objections

Church as Anti-Type and not Christ?

In typological interpretation there is a type, a previous event, person/people, or institution that prefigures the anti-type the future or present event, person/people, or institution. Goldsworthy argues that the Christian should never be the anti-type, it should always be Christ so that it remains Christ-centered.²⁷⁶ In the case of ecclesial typology, which was Romero's framework, it is clear the Church or the people of God are the anti-type as he preached to his parishioners and connected biblical events and people with his people and their time. Goldsworthy said the Christian should not be the anti-type so it is reasonable to say that he would argue neither should the Church since it is the collective of individual Christians and it should always be Christ in his view.

There are many examples of Christological typology in the New Testament, but there are examples of ecclesial typology as well. For example, in 1 Cor. 10:1-13. Here Paul cited Israel's history as a negative example or type (*typos* in the original Greek) for the church in Corinth not to follow. Goldsworthy's view that the Church should not be the anti-type is used as a caution against interpreters making typological connections that are fanciful or not rooted in the message of the Bible. Having a framework or limits are important so one does not stray from the biblical message or impose their own message on it, but in the case of the framework of the Church

²⁷⁵ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 22.

²⁷⁶ Goldsworthy, 113.

being the anti-type, it can be argued that it is still a Christ-centered framework and anti-type. The Church is the people of God, and its entire existence was founded on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without Christ, the Church would not exist. The Church is Jesus' followers across time and the globe, and its mission is to worship him and follow him. So when Romero used the Salvadoran church as his anti-type it was based on this view of the Church and how Christ is at the center and head of it. A couple of Romero's sermons about the Church were titled: "The Church, the Continuation of Christ's Incarnation," and "The Church, Christ's Return in Spirit." This partially shows what was his ecclesiology. Romero viewed the Church as the continuation of the work of Christ's ministry on earth, so the Church's very mission is in fact Christ-centered. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus gave his disciples a final commission to make disciples and essentially continue the work he did (Mt 28:19-20). In the New Testament the Church is described as the body and Christ is the head (Col 1:18-20). A focus on the Church or body of Christ as the anti-type does not take away from Christ or make the preaching not Christ-centered. The Church is the continuation of Christ's work and seeks his will through the Scriptures and understanding how his people have seen God at work throughout different points of history.

No Discernible Limits

Walter Kaiser's main critique of contemporary typological preaching is the fact that there is no clear framework or limits. Therefore, any preacher could take any aspect of the biblical text and make connections between it and the present that do not make sense and does not reflect an adequate exegesis of the biblical text. While discussing the hermeneutics of Old Testament prophecy, Osborne cites Kaiser and the inadequate ways to preach prophecy and the first way is called prophetic typology. The issue for Kaiser and Osborne is that the original meaning of the text is ignored, and the present situation controls the interpretation of the biblical text.²⁷⁷ Kaiser and Osborne are narrowly focused on the original meaning of the text that they neglect the modern application of the biblical text. Any preacher must be concerned with modern application alongside the original meaning, otherwise they are in danger of giving a lecture and not preaching in the context of worship.

This criticism is insufficient because it is like one saying that you may do something wrong therefore do not do it or attempt it at all. Any interpreter or preacher can come before any biblical text with sincere intentions of exegeting the original meaning but can make a mistake. This is the same with the interpretation of any written text.....

Romero's preaching offers a framework that gives some limits, namely, viewing the biblical text through the lens of the collective, the people of God, and at which point in salvation history does the text fall. In this framework, the preacher does not have the liberty to point out arbitrary or abstract things in the text and connect them to the present because the focus is on what is happening to the collective people of God and not minor details.

²⁷⁷ Osborne, 270.

Further Responses to Objections

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”

-Romans 15:4 (NIV).

Preachers who practice expository or textual preaching would do well to locate their biblical text within the wider context of biblical history. This allows them to relate the situation of the people of God in the past with what his or her congregation may be experiencing. The experiences of the past, in this case the Bible, are never the same as what the Church experiences in the present but there are parallels that can be relevant and relatable. In fact, reading typologically is one of the most natural ways that people read stories and texts. Leithart writes: “...once we discard the false assumption that texts are timeless, typological reading is the most natural thing in the world.”²⁷⁸ Prior to this Leithart explained that texts are not timeless in the sense that they can take on new meaning to future readers who may have different histories and prejudices. This may sound controversial to scholars such as Walter Kaiser and Grant Osborne, but the problem with them is their underlying assumption that Scripture can be understood apart from a one’s own biases and prejudices.

At this point it is helpful to bring into the discussion another scholar of hermeneutics to bring clarity into how texts from the past can be interpreted by contemporary readers. As two main scholars against contemporary typological interpretation were discussed previously, Kaiser and Osborne. Another scholar who can offer insight into interpretation of a text into a present context is Hans Gadamer. Although Gadamer is not a biblical scholar, some of his work has been cited in other works of biblical hermeneutics.²⁷⁹

In his work *Truth and Method*, Hans Gadamer discussed what he called “the fusion of horizons.” In this paradigm of hermeneutics there are two horizons, first, that of the past and tradition, and second, the present which is continually being formed and shaped by that past and the unfolding of history. Gadamer states:

In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Leithart, 39.

²⁷⁹ See Osborne, Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein*, 1st American ed., (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine : A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), as some examples.

²⁸⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 306.

Here Gadamer provides a helpful paradigm from which one can view contemporary typological interpretation. Our present understanding of Scripture has been influenced and formed through generations of scholarship, teaching, and preaching. One does not understand the Bible apart from this as one is not able to isolate themselves from history and tradition. Gadamer continued:

In the process of understanding, a real fusion of horizon occurs---which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded...It is the problem of application which is to be found in all understanding.²⁸¹

Gadamer was concerned with understanding history and historical contexts, but he understood that it is not done in isolation. For one to understand history and the past, they must fuse the horizon of the past by adequately understanding it, while also recognizing their own context to bring true understanding. This what Romero did in his preaching, he understood the past of the biblical text and brought understanding of it in light of what was happening around him.

²⁸¹ Gadamer, 307.

Conclusion

This thesis is arguing that it is theologically defensible, for typology to exist outside the Bible in the context of preaching a sermon. Romero's preaching, in particular his 1980 sermons, demonstrate a contemporary typological homiletic that can serve as a model for theologically sound contemporary typological preaching. The two theological commitments that Romero exhibited that made his typological interpretation theologically defensible were his view of the Church as the New Israel within the unfolding of salvation history, and God as sovereign over history. These two commitments are rooted in biblical, theological, and traditional teachings of the Church. The first theological commitment finds its basis in New Testament texts and the teachings of Early Church Fathers as discussed in previous chapters. It is based on the view that the people of God are a continuous group through history, beginning with the Israelites in the Old Testament and culminating with the Church in the New Testament which is represented by all nations and people groups. The second theological commitment is rooted in the view that God is sovereign over history and God is consistent, therefore the way events unfold in the present will be consistent with the unfolding of similar events in the past, particularly the past described in Scripture.

The criteria developed takes into account how the New Testament authors interpreted the Old Testament, and interpretative methods and traditions in Church history, particularly early Church Fathers and the African American Church tradition. Their interpretive methods resemble Romero's and they used contemporary typological interpretation to relate the context of the Bible with their context.

Appendix: Timeline of Oscar Romero's Life and Significant Events in El Salvador

- August 15, 1917: Oscar Romero was born in Ciudad Barrios.
- 1930: Romero enters the minor seminary in San Miguel.
- 1932: La Matanza massacre occurred during campesino rebellion in El Salvador.
- 1935: Romero graduated from the minor seminary in San Miguel.
- 1937: Romero enrolled in the national seminary in San Salvador, a school run by Jesuits.
- 1937: Santos Romero, Oscar's father, died.
- 1937: Romero was sent to Rome to complete his studies.
- 1942: Romero was ordained by the Catholic Church.
- 1943: Romero was summoned back to El Salvador as the violence from World War II continued.
- 1943-1965: Romero served in various roles; parish priest of Anamorós, secretary to Bishop Machado, rector of the cathedral at Santo Domingo, director of the San Miguel seminary, editor of diocesan publication *Chaparrastique*, chaplain of colonial church of San Francisco, and rector of the Interdiocesan Seminary in San Salvador.
- 1962-1965: The Vatican II Council
- 1966: Romero was appointed Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador.
- 1967: Romero was appointed Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Council of Central America and Panama.
- 1968: Medellin Conference of Latin American bishops in Medellin, Colombia.
- May 3, 1970: Romero was appointed auxiliary bishop to Monseñor Luis Chavez.
- May 1971: Romero is named editor of *Orientación*, the archdiocesan newspaper.
- 1972: Jose Duarte won the Salvadoran election but was not allowed to take power as the military took charge and declared a national emergency. Colonel Arturo Molina was installed as president of El Salvador instead.
- 1974: Salvadoran military declared all their candidates' winners in the election.
- 1974-1977: Romero served as bishop of the diocese Santiago de Maria.
- February 10, 1977: The announcement was made that Romero was to be the next Archbishop.
- February 23, 1977: Romero officially stepped into the role of Archbishop of San Salvador.

- February 28, 1977: Massacre in Plaza Libertad, as the military opened fire on protesters killing numerous people.
- March 12, 1977: Jesuit priest and friend of Romero, Rutilio Grande was assassinated.
- March 26, 1977: Romero flew to Rome and had an audience with officials in the Vatican and Pope Paul VI.
- April 10, 1977: Romero delivered his first pastoral letter, "The Easter Church."
- May 10, 1977: Salvadoran Foreign Minister, Mauricio Borgonovo was found murdered by a guerilla group.
- May 11, 1977: Father Alfonso Navarro was shot and killed.
- July 1, 1977: President-elect Carlos Romero was inaugurated, Archbishop Romero did not attend in protest.
- August 6, 1977: Romero published his second pastoral letter, "The Church, the Body of Christ in History."
- February 14, 1978: Romero received an honorary doctorate from Georgetown University. The president of Georgetown traveled to San Salvador to confer the degree.
- August 6, 1978: Romero published his third pastoral letter, "The Church and Popular Political Organizations."
- January-February 1979: Puebla Conference of Latin American bishops in Puebla, Mexico. Romero attended.
- August 6, 1979: Romero published his fourth and final pastoral letter, "The Church's Mission amid the National Crisis."
- March 24, 1980: Oscar Romero is assassinated with a bullet to the heart while celebrating mass.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Romero, Oscar A. *Archbishop Oscar Romero: A Shepherd's Diary*. Translated by Irene B. Hodgson. London: CAFOD, 1993.

The Archbishop Romero Trust. "Homilies." Homilies and Writings. The Archbishop Romero Trust. <http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/homilies-and-writings/homilies>

Secondary Sources

Allison, Gregg R. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016.

Bartholomew, Craig G., and Goheen, Michael W. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014

Brockman, James R. "Oscar Romero: Shepherd of the Poor." *Third World Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1984): 446-57.

Brockman, James R. *Romero: A Life*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2005.

Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*. Publication, No. 850. Washington, D.C.: Office of Pub. Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1982.

Catholic Resources. "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church." Pontifical Biblical Commission. Presented to Pope John Paul II on April 23, 1993. https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018.

Colón-Emeric, Edgardo Antonio. *Óscar Romero's Theological Vision: Liberation and the Transfiguration of the Poor*. Book Collections on Project Muse. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018.

Colón-Emeric, Edgardo A. "Microphones of Christ: Lessons from the Pulpit of Oscar Romero." *Homiletic* 42, no. 2 (2018): Homiletic, 01/16/2018, Vol.42(2).

Currid, John D. "Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching." *The Reformed Theological Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1994): 115–29.

"Dei Verbum." Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Vatican. November 18, 1965.

- http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.
- Enns, Peter. *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. Second ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015.
- Erdozain, Plácido. *Archbishop Romero: Martyr of Salvador*. Translated by John McFadden and Ruth Warner. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013.
- “Evangelii Nuntiandi.” Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI. Vatican. December 8, 1975.
https://www.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_pvi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html
- Farris, Stephen. *Preaching That Matters: The Bible and Our Lives*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Gabriel, Darcy. "Romero's Rhetoric: Blurred Audience Identity as Unifying Tactic in War-Torn El Salvador." Colorado State University, 2016.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- González, Justo L, and Catherine Gunsalus González. *The Liberating Pulpit*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Goppelt, Leonhard. *Typos, the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*. Translated by Donald H. Madvig. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982.
- Hafemann, Scott J., and Paul R. House. *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Kaiser, Walter C, Jr. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981.
- Kamieński, Łukasz. “Actualization of Sacred Scripture According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s Document ‘The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church’ as a New Way to Refer the Word of God to Life.” *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 69, no. 3 (2016).
- Kibbe, Michael. “Light That Conquers the Darkness: Oscar Romero on the Transfiguration of Jesus.” *Theology Today* 75, no. 4 (January 2019): 447–57.
- Lampe, G. W. H, and K. J Woollcombe. *Essays on Typology*. Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 22. Naperville, Ill.: A.R. Allenson, 1957.

- Lee, Kiseong. "An Evaluation of Typology in the Sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren and Its Implications for Text-Driven Preaching." PhD diss. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019.
- LeoGrande, William M., and Carla Anne Robbins. "Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador." *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 5 (1980): 1084-103.
- Lischer, Richard. *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word That Moved America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2020.
- Nouwen, Henri. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1972.
- Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and Expanded, Second ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Pope-Levison, Priscilla. "Evangelization in the Writings of Latin American Liberation Theologians." PhD diss., University of St. Andrews (United Kingdom), 1988.
- Ribbens, Benjamin J. "Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 1 (Spr 2011): 81–95.
- "Sacrosanctum Concilium." Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican. December 4, 1963. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.
- Shortell, Timothy. "Radicalization of Religious Discourse in El Salvador: The Case of Oscar A. Romero." *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 1 (2001): 87-103.
- Swanson, Tod. "A Civil Art: The Persuasive Moral Voice of Oscar Romero." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 29, no. 1 (2001): 127-44.
- Walters, Kerry. *Saint Oscar Romero: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr*. Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2018.
- White, Christopher M. *The History of El Salvador*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2009.