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A Grammar of Justice: The Legacy of Ignacio Ellacuría. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014. Pp. xvi + 283. Pb, \$25.

As Martin Maier writes in his chapter of this collection, “It belongs to the prophets to sense fundamental phenomena indicative of crisis and of historical change before others do. Ignacio Ellacuría was one of these prophets, [...] he had sensed that we stand before an epochal change. He was also aware [...] of the need for another model [...] a civilization of poverty” (227). *A Grammar of Justice* challenges English-language readers around the world to face up to today’s global reality, to take responsibility for the “common evil” that is so much a part of that reality (As Maier cites, Ellacuría once remarked “Never have there been so many people who have lived so poorly” [231]), and to commit themselves to a civilization of poverty to counter the globally destructive civilization of (the accumulation of) wealth.

This book emerged in El Salvador, from the 2013 gathering of the International Colloquium on the Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría. The sixteen chapters (plus introduction and conclusion, and the first English edition of a letter written by Ellacuría to Archbishop Oscar Romero less than a month after the assassination of Rutilio Grande, S.J.) are written variously by Ellacuría himself; scholars of his thought at all stages of their careers; and Jon Sobrino, S.J. and Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., the two survivors of the Jesuit community brutally devastated on November 16, 1989. This brief review of *A Grammar of Justice* focuses on two aspects of the Ellacurian vision presented in this very special book: the civilization of poverty and the role of the world’s crucified people.

“Not to recognize that we are living in a profound crisis of civilization is to close our eyes to reality” (227). Ellacuría touched on the need for a civilization of poverty in an article in *Concilium* in 1982: “A new civilization which is no longer built on the pillars of hegemony and domination, accumulation and difference, consumption and false well-being, but upon more human and more Christian foundations” (229; See also “The Kingdom of God and Unemployment in the Third World,” *Concilium* 10 [1982]: 91–96). And in his last major article, written in 1989 and appearing as a chapter in *Grammar of Justice*, Ellacuría writes, “The civilization of poverty is so named in contrast to the civilization of wealth, and not because it proposes universal pauperization as an ideal of life. [...] In a world sinfully shaped by the dynamism of capital and wealth, it is necessary to stir up a different dynamism that will overcome it salvifically” (231).

Employing Immanuel Kant's category of universality and Xavier Zubiri's call to "feel" reality, he critiques the promises held out by the dominant capitalist civilization: "What is most serious is that the offer of humanization and of freedom that the rich nations make to the poor nations is not universalizable, and consequently is not human even for those who offer it" (232). As a disciple of Romero, Ellacuría believed that the greater glory of God is "the poor person fully alive." To struggle to create a civilization of poverty was to seek the greater glory of God. If the civilization of poverty lies beyond the data, it does not lie beyond history—which is a history of both liberation and salvation.

Perhaps Ellacuría's clearest description of his vision of the civilization of poverty is found in his aforementioned 1989 article: "The civilization of poverty [...] rejects the accumulation of capital as the engine of history and the possession and enjoyment of wealth as the principle of humanization. It makes the universal satisfaction of basic needs the principle of development and the growth of shared solidarity the foundation of humanization" (40–41).

Many have spoken of the preferential option for the poor and the role of the poor and excluded in salvation history, but as Rodolfo Cardenal writes, "No one has done it the way Ellacuría did, analyzing, in light of the crucifixion of Jesus and of the people, the soteriological dimensions of the reality of the poor and of poverty" (147). In the development of his reflections on the world's crucified peoples, Ellacuría owed much to Vatican II, the Latin American bishops' meetings in Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), and especially to Archbishop Romero and Christian communities in El Salvador.

For Ellacuría, the poor are those who are dispossessed and excluded by the rich and powerful. The poor who are subjects of liberation and salvation are the poor with the spirit to resist and overcome. Analyzing Ellacuría's eschatology, Cardenal writes, "Simply by being powerless, weak, and the victim of injustice at the hands of the powerful, the poor person is preferred by God" (150). Ellacuría understood class conflict: "If we are scandalized by class struggle, we should likewise be scandalized by the existence of those classes. [...] Classes do not exist because there is a struggle: rather, the struggle exists because there are classes. [...] The point of departure is not hatred [...] but love for the other. The ultimate goal is the conversion of the oppressor" (152–54).

Just as Jesus's crucifixion revealed the depth of sin in the world and offered the hope of liberation, so too those throughout history who have shared in Jesus's crucifixion—the poor with spirit—are likewise the revealers of the world's sins, and the subjects of liberation. The crucified peoples of history have been chosen by God to be the saviors of humanity. As Cardenal points out, Ellacuría finds the answer to this radical paradox in Jesus and the scandal and madness of the cross. The deaths of Jesus and the oppressed have

historical—not natural—causes, and “the most important cause is the sin of the world” (157).

Ellacuría envisioned a civilization of poverty based on the universal satisfaction of basic needs through a spirit of shared solidarity; as a disciple of Romero he believed that the oppressed and excluded peoples of the world—the crucified and poor with spirit—are not just victims, but more importantly agents of liberation and salvation in a violent, sinful world. This vision and this belief sprang from what Sobrino calls “Ellacuría’s fundamental thesis, unifying the analysis of history—the signs of the times—and salvation” (76). Ellacuría’s fundamental thesis poses a radical challenge to the contemporary church: “Because of the historicity of the church’s mission, the church has to proclaim and realize salvation historically, and in a more secularized world it has to make clear the credibility of its mission” (113–14).

The experience and vision of Ignacio Ellacuría—an experience and vision that earned him a violent death twenty-five years ago—grew out of Central and Latin American reality. For many of us in this part of the world, his experience and vision is still valid and a source of energy and action. We have resisted efforts to stifle, even silence, the work of this twentieth-century prophet and martyr. The editors of *A Grammar of Justice* have done an extraordinary service for English-language readers, challenging them to take a stand before a civilization that, in the words of Ellacuría just ten days before his assassination, “is gravely ill” (74).

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