

## Comparing the deaths of Oscar Romero and Jesus

Written by Calvin Fox

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Contrary to popular belief, no one is saved by the Blood of Jesus or by his Death. If we were, all Jesus had to do was cut himself and let the blood flow or just live to be an old man and pass away like most everyone else does. No. the Blood that washes sin away and the Death that atones had to be a particular kind.

Jesus had to shed blood and die as a substitutionary Sacrifice in order to secure Salvation. Both the "Moral Influence Theory" and the "Ransom Theory" of the Cross [see the article below] are very appealing and are combined and dramatically illustrated by the case of Oscar Romero. Was his death the same as Jesus?

*Last month was the 30th anniversary of the assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero, a pivotal moment in the modern history of Central America. Gunned down while saying Mass on March 24, 1980, Romero died because of his outspoken condemnation of militarism and injustice. Romero watched the Salvadoran security forces resort to torture, extra-judicial killings and disappearances to silence and intimidate the liberation movement, including young clergy assigned to Romero's archdiocese. Each night, mutilated bodies were dumped along the streets.*

*In the face of this cruelty, Romero ... began a courageous three-year ministry openly opposing the Salvadoran military, the wealthy elites and his compromised Catholic Church hierarchy, which had long sided with the rich and powerful. His path to martyrdom was set, and he knew it.*

*Romero became a Christ-like figure, who followed Jesus's example of unflinching anticipation of martyrdom. Romero also adopted the methods of Jesus, a strategy of active nonviolent resistance. He repeatedly called on the security forces to stop the repression. He pleaded directly to the soldiers, ... to refuse orders to shoot their countrymen.."*

*Romero knew his days were numbered, but that knowledge didn't stop him from speaking out for human rights, on behalf of the poor and helpless. In one of his last interviews, Romero said:*

*"If God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my death be for the freedom of my people ... A bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish. If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people." On March 24, 1980, after ending his final homily, Romero turned to the congregation to consecrate the Eucharist. He said: "May this Body immolated and this Blood sacrificed for Mankind nourish us also, that we may give our body and our blood over to suffering and pain, like Christ -- not for Self, but to give harvests of peace and justice to our People.*

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*Then, the assassin's bullet pierced his heart.*

<http://consortiumnews.com/Print/2010/031810b.html> [emphasis added]

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For Jesus' death to be a Sacrifice for sin, he had to be a sinless, innocent Man sentenced to death and killed by the Leaders of Israel. Apart from that scenerio, just to bleed and die was not enough. Of course, Romero was a sinner, not a Perfect Human Being. He was not the Son of God and Messiah. God accepted Jesus' death, but not Romero's, as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Nevertheless, Jesus had to intentionally "go up against the Establishment" and was knowingly doing what would lead to his murder, as was Romero. In this they were similar. In regards to Jesus, all he went through was part of a Plan foreordained by God to save Israel and the "World". [It could be argued that Romero's death was a part of God's Plan to save El Salvador.]

*Act 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know. 23 Though He was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him. 32 "God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. 33 Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!" 37 When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Brothers, what must we do?" 38 "Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*Acts 3:12 When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked to have a murderer given to you. 15 And you killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in His name, His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Him has given him this perfect health in front of all of you. 17 "And now, brothers, I know that you did it in ignorance, just as your leaders also did. 18 But what God predicted through the mouth of all the prophets-that His Messiah would suffer-He has fulfilled in this way. 19 Therefore repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and He may send Jesus, who has been appointed Messiah for you.*

*Acts 4:10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead-by Him this man is standing here before you healthy. 11 This [Jesus] is The stone despised by you builders, who has become the cornerstone. 12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."*

*27 "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.*

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Stephen's speech in Acts 7 rehearses the whole Story. Israel had repeatedly rebelled against God and the Prophets. God finally sent His Son, the Messiah; but Israel rejected and killed Him. This was terrible, but it also made it possible for Jesus to become the atoning Sacrifice for Israel and for the rest of us.

Archbishop Romero's story and martyrdom is inspiring and there are similarities with Jesus. But the stories of the two men are also very different and their deaths had different outcomes. Jesus' death was far more than a Model for social action. God accepted Jesus's death and it alone as the penal, substitutionary or vicarious atonement for the sins of Humanity and the full satisfaction of His Justice. None of that is true of Oscar Romero's terrible murder.