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# **CHURCH LEADERS**

## **Theologians and Teachers**

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“What would you like to be doing for the next twenty years or so?” This was one of the questions asked by the Regional Advisory Committee during our interview. Of all the questions posed to me, this was the one that left a mark in my memory. Judging by the context where it was given, it was not meant to be a peculiar or special question. Just after that question was asked, I immediately and without hesitation responded with something like this: “I hope to see leaders who are trained for ministry. I want to have a part in that ministry.”

It sounds trite. In fact, it is to some. But when I said those words, they were pregnant with meaning.

The theme and thrust of this address this morning is an amplification of my response that day. I do not know if it was understood the way I meant it to be. Experts in cross-cultural studies say that human beings always commit blunders in communication. What did I mean when I referred to leaders as trained for ministry? What did I mean when I said that I wanted to have a share in this noble project of building up leaders?

## **I. Leaders for the Twenty-first Century Church in Asia and the Pacific**

When I say “leaders,” I have in mind the following images. These images are conventional but defy obsolescence. My agendum is to describe them as they touch upon the twenty-first century Asian and Pacific ministry contexts.

### **A. Servant-Leaders**

Let me begin with the most commonly used description of leaders that is moored in the truth of biblical revelation. It is an image which was modeled by no less than the Incarnate Christ Himself, “who, being, in a very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8).

The church leaders I envision for my sphere of ministry are those who deliberately take the posture of a servant-leader. They are those whose authority or greatness is found in their ability to empower others. In Asia and the Pacific, servant-leaders are always in demand. Let me give you some of the characteristics of a servant-leader in the twenty-first century Asia-Pacific contexts.

Servant-leaders are those who show tolerance of people of other cultures, religions and backgrounds. The differences are humbling realities, things which we cannot change at all. Tolerance is like an overcoat—a lifestyle seen by others, and is motivated by love and respect which are, in themselves, the most powerful tools for witnessing on this side of the world. We hardly win others to the side of Christ by argumentation and debate.

Also, servant-leaders for Asia-Pacific contexts in the twenty-first century are those who keep a sense of mission even when their faith is an unpopular minority. Asia Pacific consists of about 66 percent of the total population of the world, yet barely 3 percent is Christian. There are factors that contribute to the continued unpopularity of the gospel of Christ on this side of the world. One is the sense of *nationalism* among peoples in Asia. In countries like Myanmar, Thailand, and India, where the politics and economics are hitched with the dominant non-Christian religion, Christianity and its leaders have to contend with entrenched traditional religions. In some other areas where modernization is unprecedented, the Christian religion has to contend with the *lovers of money and prestige* or those who venerate and idolize *technology*. Servant-leaders should recognize that their religion, although only a minority, has power to transform lives and communities; that this power has been evident in the lives of millions of professing believers all over the world; and that the concept that others may know and experience this power is their incessant and ardent desire. They should be those who are fully convinced that the gospel is the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).

Further, servant-leaders in Asia and the Pacific are those who see their education not as a qualifying factor for position in the organizational structure of the church, but as enablement for nurturing God’s grace in the lives of many others for ministry. “Educatedness” should not be mistaken for “giftedness”; education should not be a substitute for spirituality. It is always tempting to Asian and Pacific leaders to regard “educatedness” as power in itself, and thus supplanting the truth that “salvation, and glory and power belong to our God” (Rev 19:1).

## **B. Transformed and Transformational Leaders**

Another image of leaders for the twenty-first century church of Asia and the Pacific is those who are transformed and transformational (in their mind-set and conduct). With the Apostle Paul, these people

can witness to the grace of God and say, “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of His power. Although I am less than the least of all of God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches in Christ” (Eph 3:7-8).

Here are some characteristics of transformed and transformational leaders.

They are witnesses to the movement of the Spirit of God in Asia and the Pacific. Spirituality to a leader in Asia means rightness and righteousness. It is the experience of the radical change of loving God and loving other people as well. Education on or exposure to the varying cultural dispositions of Asia Pacific does not guarantee the spirit of relational understanding. It takes a radical transformation of the heart by the baptism of the Spirit. The disciples were prepared to do cross-cultural and trans-cultural ministry only after the Spirit came upon them and enabled them to cross and crumble down the walls of hostilities among people.

Transformed and transformational leaders in Asia-Pacific contexts are also those who are certain of their calling and have confidence in the gifts God has committed to them. With the limited resources of evangelism, there should be wisdom relative to the maximization of the utilization of personal gifts. Gifts for ministry are given in contexts where they fit. Years ago, I watched a stage play by one internationally renowned master of theatrical plays from Benguet, Philippines. He directed a play with a scant touch of (Western) technology using basically the indigenous materials available. After the play, in his lecture he said something like this: “If you are in the third-world, by all means use whatever resources are available. Indigenous materials are less expensive but more meaningful than ones that are foreign.”

A transformed and transforming church is one which is empowered and empowering. As Joel Ortiz puts it, “Transforming leaders are empowered individuals who seek to empower a given

people.”<sup>1</sup> His thesis is that leadership is orientated to the followers, that is, to the led. His concept of transformational leadership is hitched to servanthood and heroic leadership. That is, a leader is one who inspires “followership.” Based on social research, Ortiz further enumerated the following characteristics of an empowering leader: charismatic and persevering, eloquent and persuasive, compassionate, humble, sincere, approachable and sociable, practical-minded, aggressive, shrewd, authoritarian but paternalistic if need be, a good planner, and a dynamic organizer.<sup>2</sup>

### **C. The Leader as a Theologian and Teacher**

We now turn to the more formal and professional images of church leaders.

#### 1. Church Leaders as Theologians

In introducing the booklet of Helmut Thielicke, Martin Marty says that Thielicke firmly believed that “every minister of Jesus Christ must be both a disciplined theologian and practicing churchman.”<sup>3</sup> This is not at variance with the practice of ministers in the New Testament. After dealing with the doctrines of last things and creation, Paul admonished Timothy with these words: “If you point these things out to the brother, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith, and the good teaching that you have

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<sup>1</sup>Joel Ortiz, “Transformational Leadership: The Need of Our Time,” in Lee Wanak, ed., *Directions in Theological Education* (Manila: OMF Literature, Inc., 1994), 31.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>3</sup>Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), xii.

followed” (1 Tim 4:6). A little later in the same chapter, he writes, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. . . . Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save, both yourself and your hearers” (4:13, 16).

Furthermore, in his second letter, Paul enjoined Timothy with these words: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). In all these, Timothy was enjoined to live a life in accordance with what he believed to be God’s truth. Was it Martin Luther who once said, “True theology is always practical”?

According to Roger Hahn, in a conference paper given at Breckenridge, “The role of theology was to instruct, shape, and shepherd believers until the theology was formed in them.” He asserts that theology combines orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathos.<sup>4</sup>

What kind of leader-theologians do we need in our contexts?

First, they must be a “glocal” people. This is a combination of the words “global” and “local.” These people are those who preserve the trans-cultural element of the final revelation of God by living it. As Wilson Chow asserted, “The task of theology is to bring the gospel of universal relevance and application ‘down to earth’ to the needs of a given context.”<sup>5</sup> Or as Saphir Athyal puts it, “If the Christian gospel

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<sup>4</sup>Roger Hahn, “Theological Education’s Responsibility to the Church for Clergy Preparation,” a paper presented at the Consultation on Clergy Preparation for the Church of the Nazarene in the twenty-first Century, held on June 20-24, 1990, at Breckenridge, Colorado, 10.

<sup>5</sup>Wilson Chow, “Biblical Foundations for Evangelical Theology in the Third World,” in Ken Gnanakan, ed., *Biblical Theology in Asia* (Bangalore: Theological

is the answer, one should know what are the real questions and this is the task of indigenous theology.”<sup>6</sup> These individuals should not be loners. They are, as Helmut Thielicke describes, those who think “within the community of God’s people and for that community, and in the name of that community.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, our theology should always have cultural foundations to be relevant, but it should not be bound by these foundations.

Second, the leader-theologians we need should be both pastoral and prophetic. They must maintain a theological norm which views the love of God as dispatched with holiness. The holy-love principle should be maintained if people are to understand what it means to be saved and transformed. God should be seen as kind and gentle, but also as wrathful, as one who has a settled reaction against sin and sinfulness. Leader-theologians should both proclaim the encompassing love of God and His overpowering judgment. If Jesus is to be understood as the way, the truth, and the life, the leader-theologian should serve as a modern prophet but also as a tolerant shepherd. While Christ may be found in all religions and in some ways in most cultures, He is the only way to the Father.

Leader-theologians should also take the mantle of a priest. A priest is one who mediates between God and mankind. These people bring to their people the very message of God. In some ways, priests bring to God the very struggles, aspirations, and pains of their people. But what is clear here is that as priests, leader-theologians come from among those to whom they minister. They are one with them. They identify with their own people. The Japanese theologian Kosuke

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Book Trust, 1995), 111.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Thielicke, 4-5.

Koyama said that theology must begin with an interest in people. Theologies which originated during the Enlightenment and patterned after them are born with the desire to discover knowledge. The interest was somewhat vitiated by human desire to discover knowledge for its own glory. The ministry of priesthood by leader-theologians always brings them to their knees while writing, agonizing, and reflecting on behalf of their people.

I think that no one is more prepared to write theology and clarify the revelation of God for a group of people than the theologian who comes from the same cultural perspective.

## 2. Leaders as Teachers

The Bible sets qualification of church leaders as those who are “apt to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). In the Pentateuch, God appointed leaders to instruct people regarding personal and corporate righteousness. Moses and Joshua are examples. Also, in the later part of the Old Testament, we have Ezra who “devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). Nehemiah, the leader of the building of the walls of Jerusalem, was a leader and teacher as evidenced by his instruction in the later part of his book. King Solomon was the best instructor of all time. The prophets also taught and proclaimed the word of God.

In the New Testament, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was the Good Teacher too. Peter, John, James, and of course Paul were leaders in the New Testament as theologians and teachers. Peter, in his second epistle, “shows himself as both a concerned pastor and champion of theological orthodoxy. He lists the credentials of true teachers to help



his readers become discerning students of God's word (1:12-21)."<sup>8</sup> God calls leaders who not only have certain, established knowledge about God, people who are not only able to take on "followership," but who are also themselves teachers of the way of the Lord.

What are some characteristics of leaders who are equipped equippers for the contexts of Asia and the Pacific?

First, the leaders we need are those who are able to train and nurture ordinary Christians for works of ministry. Nurturing the gifts and the personality of church people requires skills in leadership, counseling, theology, and methods of teaching. We need the help of psychology, sociology and other fields in Christian education to help us prepare equipped equippers. Leaders need personal and professional preparedness. We need men and women who rely more on wisdom than technology. We need men and women who can teach others the ways of the Christian life even without the aid of "Power Point." My hunch tells me that the advanced technology of the Western World has been one of the alluring factors in the West that has been causing a brain drain in the Third World.

Second, equipped equippers are those who are able to generate ministries in their local churches. They are those who do not look at the church as a place to sing, pray, or listen to the explication of the sacred word of old. They are those who see the church as a group of people who are ready to work for Christ. Because of this concept, the equippers are masters of finding ways to generate ministries.

Also, equipped equipping leaders are those who see themselves as reproducers of other leaders, if not like themselves, better than

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<sup>8</sup>Kenneth Gangel, "What Christian Education Is," in Robert Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn Sloat eds., *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 27.

themselves. The equippers' concern is not only for developing their own leadership skills and abilities, but they are very much concerned about the development of more leaders so that the body of Christ may grow as it builds itself up.

Furthermore, equipped equippers do not only need to know *what* to teach as theologians, but also know *how* to teach as educators and educationists at the same time. They are not merely stating what they know, but they are enabling others. Equippers possess knowledge, skill, and abilities, and should master the art and skills of teaching.

Moreover, these types of people are able to teach by modeling and trusting (trusting is empowering). One of the qualities of a good teacher is being like the Lord Jesus who modeled for about three years and then entrusted to the disciples the job which He wanted done before His second coming.

## **II. The Mismatch: The Problem of Theological Education**

I wish that I had a magical formula for creating the human leaders that we need. All I know is that they come out through a processive methodology, a three-year rigorous training in an environment which is designed by fallible human beings.

Speaking of the limitation of theological education programs, some have always been unabashed and unashamed to admit that there has been a perennial problem experienced by students and faculty alike that is entrenched in theological education programs themselves.

Philip Anderson, of Chicago Theological Seminary, tells an anecdote which can illustrate the problem of the disparity between theories and practice in theological schools.

“Shortly after graduation, one year Phil received a frantic phone call from a former student newly established in his first parish. ‘Phil,’ panted his young caller, ‘What do you do at a funeral?’

“‘We covered funeral practices in my spring course on pastoral care,’ answered Phil.

“‘I know we did,’ said the caller, ‘but this guy is really dead.’”<sup>9</sup>

### **A. The Problem of Mismatch Between Theological Education and the Demands of Actual Pastoral Ministry**

Since two years after my graduation from the seminary, I have been pursuing further education in secular universities. In nearly every course I have taken, the problem of the mismatch of university education and the need of the society was touched upon. The Philippine government is not bashful to admit that every year, the list of “mis-educated” and “under-educated” young people is padded. Their mis-education stems from the fact that the education they receive does not prepare them for jobs that are available and are needed by Philippine society. I thought that this was only true in the Philippines until I saw on television that even in some affluent countries, the phenomenon of mismatch is already undeniably remarkable. Even one person from the University of Michigan said that the classroom discussions at his university could not cope with the fast changing society.

This thing should not happen to theological education, so I thought. But Rick Kalal gives the following observation:

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<sup>9</sup>From James S. Hewett, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996), 351.

Many of the larger churches in America question the relevancy and veracity of theological education as it is carried out today. These churches claim that seminaries produce young people with great academic skills but weak relationship skills. Many graduates can exegete a passage of Scripture but cannot run a church meeting; they can stand at the pulpit and preach but cannot stand by one's side and offer comfort. Seminary education is criticized as being more content-driven than character-building. It's not surprising that churches are questioning the relevancy of theological education.<sup>10</sup>

Before this statement, Kalal shared the observation made by pastors from "mega-churches," saying that "while seminary graduates excelled in exegeting Scripture, they lacked the ability to exegete culture."<sup>11</sup>

### 1. The Problem of the Mismatch between Expectations of the Whole Church and the Curriculum

Based on Kalal's observation, the problem of theological education is the apparent lack of partnership between church and seminary. Kalal points out, "When one looks at the situation, it seems the church has abdicated responsibility to train its leaders by sending them to theological schools; and that theological schools are abdicating the responsibility to develop spiritual, emotionally secure, moral men and women of God and sending them back to the church."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Rick Kalal, "We've Got Trouble," *Christian Education Journal* (Spring, 1999): 55.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 64.

## 2. The Mismatch of Two “Natures”

Not many years ago a conference paper in Breckenridge, Colorado, was presented with this sub-title: “Can Professors Prepare Persons to Pastor?” The author’s answer leans toward the negative. One of the reasons for this is that professors and pastors speak different “languages.” He explains, “The realm of the professor’s functions demand that he speak with the precision of prose—words that describe a world that is organized and settled formulae.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, pastors primarily speak in poetry; that is, pastors are poetic, challenge imagination, and purvey fantasy. Pastors tell stories not state facts.

In addition, they function in different time zones. The professor operates on *chronos* time which means that schedules are specified, and predictable. On the other hand, the pastor operates on a *kairos* time which is nicely explained in expressions like, “Till death do us part.”

They also operate with different currency. The medium of exchange in the classroom is knowledge. Mastery of information is expected of every professor. For pastors, the medium of transaction is wisdom which calls for more creativity. While there is wisdom operating within a classroom, students are graded with how much they appropriate knowledge. The author says, “I am saying that GPA is no indicator of wisdom. And I am saying, with emphasis, that *summa cum laude* does not prepare a person for the creative function, of the pastor.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Millard Reed, “The Mysterious Mission Field as Distinct from the Beloved Imperial Realm,” a paper presented at the Consultation on Clergy Preparation for the Church of the Nazarene in the 21st Century on June 20-24, at Breckenridge, Colorado.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

Lastly, they have different political philosophies. Professors model somewhat an elitist posture in which the classroom is an empire.<sup>15</sup> Pastors cannot choose with whom they come in contact or with whom their ideology is compatible. They cannot be selective in their care. Not all can become a reader or an assistant to a professor. But in the church, everybody has a role to play.

With this mismatch, can professors produce pastors? It seems impossible!

### 3. The Mismatch Derived from Polarization through Professionalization

Several years ago when I was in seminary, I observed that there was a wedge between Christian Education, on the one hand, and Theology, on the other. There were not just a few times that I heard students say, "I am pursuing an M.A.R.E. degree, I don't need much theology." Or, "I am pursuing M.Div.; I don't need much Bible and Theology course exposure." This, I think, has a debilitating effect on the training for the Christian ministry. Kalal's observation, I mentioned a while back, might have been derived from the illegitimate professionalization of degrees or concentrations.

## **B. Towards a Well-Rounded Preparation Through Inter-Disciplinarity**

Based on the immediately preceding observations, there is a need to re-discover the important role of Christian Education and Pastoral Ministry courses in the seminary curriculum.

These courses provide the very engine for ministry—the lifeblood for ministry. It is through these courses that action and knowledge are bridged together. A church leader who knows theories and

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

information but does not know how to apply them and communicate them to others will certainly not make a good minister in the real sense of the word. No one minister is qualified unless he or she combines action with reflection.

Christian education and pastoral ministry courses provide orientation on education and leadership based on time-tested and empirically proven theories and methods in human relational transactions. These courses make learning touch with home base. They make the otherwise abstract concrete. That is why they are called “practics.” They enable ministers to understand from a human vantage point why people behave as they do.

Christian education and pastoral ministry provide the needed opportunity to hone skills of communicating the gospel in ways that others understand.

### **III. Towards Developing a Method of Ministerial Education in Asia and the Pacific**

Given the perennial problem of mismatch in any kind of education, and our insistent desire to produce ministerial leaders in Asia who possess the characteristics we just outlined, I humbly endorse a framework of understanding and the developing of a method of education that fits our context. I am aware that I am speaking to both faculty and administrators, as well as students. You who came with the intention to “receive” education and be conferred degrees will someday go out and discharge your duties in the real world. When that time comes, you will struggle to understand how you may effectively educate others for ministry.

There is no other way to grow the church except by nurturing believers. In nurturing others, personal and professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes in teaching are necessities. Not only that, I believe that you can in fact participate in defining and developing an

education that is relevant to your particular context. This is the assumption of this proposed approach.

The proposed approach to developing a method of education has the following components.

### **A. The Component of Contextuality**

As touched on a little earlier, ministers should not only be people who can analytically exegete the Bible or the text, they should also be able to exegete their very own culture and sphere of ministry to which the gospel should speak. Contextualization is the method of defining and identifying within a given sphere some educational materials, means, methods, and models which can be used to facilitate communication aimed at transformation. However, I would like just to talk about some areas in which we can create themes that have bearings in ministerial preparation in Asia and the Pacific.

#### 1. Religious Pluralism and the Religion of Christ

The most traditional and yet most missionary of religions are found in Asia. Themes in theology and theological education should point out that among these diverse religions there is uniqueness found in the religion of Christ. The uniqueness of the religion of Christ was clearly delineated by the Joint Consultation Sponsored by Asia Theological Association and the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship in Manila in 1992. This group affirmed the uniqueness of Christ as the only way that leads to the Father (God), and that “all salvation in the biblical sense of eternal life, life in the Kingdom, reconciliation with God, and forgiveness of sins comes solely from the person and work of Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> Also, “Christ is the hope and judge in relation to other religions,” and that He is the

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<sup>16</sup>Joint Consultation Sponsored by Asia Theological Association and the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, Manila, 1992, *The Unique Christ*, in Gnanakan, *Biblical Theology*, 306.



“center, ground, norm, and goal of all religious insight and knowledge.”<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Secularity and Spirituality

Modernization is the root cause of secularity. There is a new wave of values that brings in secularization as its “leaven.” Secularity is both a by-product of the increase of technology and, at the same time, a factor for secularism. Secularity supplants spirituality. Tano observes that although modernization has brought a “great measure of economic and social and physical well-being” it has disrupted “Asian traditional values of harmony which preserve human dignity and solidarity. It has encouraged an acquisitive attitude and secular outlook which eliminate the importance of the concept of the transcendent”<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Joint Consultation identified the harm brought about by modernity in these words:

The concern for the individual’s dignity and worth has degenerated into a rampant individualism that focuses on one’s own rights at the expense of one’s duties, on meeting one’s own needs at the expense of one’s neighbor, on orienting the world around one’s own gratification at the expense of service, and the pursuit of one’s own happiness at the expense of the health of the larger community. . . . The same secular cultures of modernity that often allow the preservation of free thought and intellectual exploration have also made it impossible to control pornography, sexual deviance, moral relativism, official graft, exploitation, and nihilism that destroy families, communities and nations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 311-12.

<sup>18</sup>Rodrigo Tano, “Towards an Evangelical Asian Theology,” in Ken Gnanakan, ed., *Biblical Theology in Asia*, 62.

<sup>19</sup>Joint Consultation, in Gnanakan, 313-14.

Spiritual values are beginning to dissipate in the emergence of humanistic tendencies as brought about by modernity. Such humanistic tendencies pave the way for relativism, the denial of objective truth.

Such an alarming situation should challenge theological education proffered in seminaries to magnify Christ as the answer to the problem of secularity. We should affirm that “the presence of God in Jesus Christ reveals the banality, triviality, and hollowness of modern materialistic societies which have lost the capacity to sense the presence of God”<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Impoverishment and Empowerment

Unjust political structures, inequality of economic opportunities, and neo-colonialism breed impoverishment of the people of Asia. The need for an education that focuses upon people empowerment is needed. If transformation of the society is to be made possible, a rife support for liberating the people from the bondage of powerlessness is to be done by the most peaceful, non-violent, and loving means. Empowerment should be seen in partnership with salvation.

The Asian Report on Socio-economic and Political Realities to the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) among others underscored the following:

(1) There is the continuing reality of the scandalous and pervasive poverty and misery in which masses of people live in each country alongside the abominable luxury and opulence which a relatively small number of people enjoy.

(2) There are countries in which economic growth has been quite slow with overly large poverty-stricken portions of their population.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 315.

In both the Philippines and Bangladesh, for example, rough estimates show 80 percent of the people living below the poverty level.

(3) There is the continuing control of the economies of Asian countries by imperialistic powers, e.g. the United States, principally through the operation of transnational capital and the intensified incursion of multinational corporations.<sup>21</sup>

Samuel Rayan commented that there are three modes of awareness and interpretation of poverty which also have correspond-ing responses:

(1) Poverty is natural, assigned by fate, or willed by God. The response is that it cannot be abolished. All that is needed to be done is to alleviate the sufferings of others by giving aid or alms. This is called *the spirituality of relief*.

(2) Poverty is a product of failing to bring about revolutions in thought, philosophy, technology, and social organization. The response to this grips upon modernization by following the West, like accumulating capital, and moving towards industrialization. This is called *the spirituality of reform*.

(3) Poverty is brought about by the work of nature, fate, and providence. The response here is to respond via changing the system, dismantling the structures of exploitation, decolonizing our minds, and redefining life's ways and goals. This is called *the spirituality of liberation*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>K. C. Abraham, ed., *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 4.

<sup>22</sup>Samuel Rayan, "The Search for an Asian Spirituality of Liberation," in Virginia Fabella, Peter Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh, *Asian Christian Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 27-28.

For Rayan, the spirituality of liberation should be the best option for Christians. In his words, “The spirituality of liberation works for radical change in the setup of human existence and relationships. The criterion for change is the promise that change carries, finer humanity, and new earth.”<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Governments and God’s Sovereignty

In the context where the political situations are unstable, where strikes, violent demonstrations, and armed conflict frequently occur, themes and issues that revolve around relationship between government and the Christian become meaningful. Generally, government should be seen as God’s vehicle of “rule over the affairs of men.” However, once government does not do its basic functions, like (1) preserving order and stability, (2) restraining and punishing of evil, (3) rewarding good, and (4) promoting social justice and welfare and, therefore, becomes corrupt, cruel and unjust, one is then faced with the issue of giving a Christian response. What then should the Christians (or church leaders) do? Should they resist and work to change their world? When governments become violators of the justice of God, should Christians participate in changing them? If ever church leaders or ministers participate, how and to what extent?

Tano observes that not all “revolution and radical violent change in political order” may result in justice. It may in fact bring worse forms of bondage and tyranny. It could trigger a series of counter-revolutionary actions and reactions. The Christian response should be to “join all men of good will in exposing exploitation, in support of just legislation, in opposing ideologies that encourage the wrong use of power.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

## **B. The Component of Conscientization**

I have been drawn to an educational philosophy of a Brazilian educator who just died a couple of years ago. He is author of the book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Dr. Paulo Freire had a doctorate in education and quite a number of honorary doctorates given by renowned universities both in the First and the Third Worlds. In education, he popularized the term “conscientization,” which means “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”<sup>25</sup> Its equivalent term in Christian Education and Theology courses is the word “praxis.” Praxis is composed of two distinct elements: action and reflection. For Freire, action and reflection are not dichotomized. This means that education, for him, aims at raising consciousness by critical analysis of the sphere of existence and the forging of resolute action toward transforming that same reality.

As a method, conscientization unveils the reality by problem-posing. Students are posed with problems found in their sphere of existence, the daily problems they encounter. Then a critical reflection follows. In this stage, the students struggle, agonize over, and define the answers. This is followed by the formulation of committed action.

In his article, “A Social Theory of Religious Education,” Allen Moore categorizes one method of education as “lifestyle education.” Building upon Freire's statement on conscientization, Moore says that “Lifestyle education serves to bring persons to an awareness of the value statement they make by their way of life . . . the goal is to transform cultural contradiction in order that a synthesis between what people believe and do may take place.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1997), Preface.

<sup>26</sup>Allen Moore, ed., *Religious Education as Social Transformation* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1989), 25.

A conscientizing Christian education orients learners to their world, encourages them to have visions not only for themselves, but for their society as well. This education as lifestyle education creates an opportunity where personality and religious transformation are united with social transformation, and personal morality with social ethics.<sup>27</sup> Is this not the vision of Wesleyan social holiness? Is this not the doctrine of loving God and loving our fellow humans? Wesley even defined sanctification in one of his journals as “a continued course of good work.”<sup>28</sup> Marquadt comments, “Wesley accomplished a dual end: he prompted others to recognize social problems as early as possible and to investigate them all the way to their underlying causes, while he made it clear that analyses alone do not signify a solution until the necessary practical consequences are drawn from them.”<sup>29</sup>

Robert Pazmino gave the following commendations, among others, on Freire’s method of education based on conscientization: (1) it emphasizes a service-oriented salvation and education; and (2) it takes seriously the need to demonstrate an incarnational theology, one that is lived out. It seeks to relate faith to life.<sup>30</sup>

### **C. The Component of Constructive Collaboration**

In a multi-cultural context, there is a need for collaborative learning which is constructive. What usually comes to mind when confronted by the concept, “collaborative method,” is the small group

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>28</sup>Manfred Marquadt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 98.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>30</sup>Robert Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988).

method of partnering students and allowing a learning partnership, exchanging of notes and ideas through journaling, or saying something to somebody with a call for response. But what is meant here is expressed by Paulo Freire's word, "co-intentional learning." This is a situation where the student and the teacher join together in a mutual inquiry. This is a dialogical, educational process where

the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but the one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.<sup>31</sup>

That is almost shocking to hear from a man who has had broad experience in education, and writing about his experience with the illiterate poor farmers and urban poor illiterates in a third-world country. What do educators learn from those who are several steps down the line. The teacher stops being a depositor and parent and starts to become a dialoguer. In non-dialogical education, the teacher talks and the students listen meekly; the teacher chooses and enforces his or her choice, and the students comply; the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.<sup>32</sup>

Collaborative education puts emphasis on the students' responsibility to cultivate a culture of active participation in the process of their education. In a multi-cultural setting like ours, the teacher and even the class may have difficulty defining the real world of the students. It may take years of serious study about and within the culture of the students. But this could be done if the students bring the

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<sup>31</sup>Freire, 60.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

world into the class and discuss how that world may be transformed through the grace of God.

### **Conclusion**

We have something to do at APNTS. We are helping in the training of men and women who will become church leaders, theologians, and teachers. They are the very key to the evangelization of the remaining 97 percent of the 66 percent of the world's population. If they are educated enough, they can have a part in that noble task. These men and women may include you, your classmate, or your professor.