

The Interwoven Relationship of Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Secular Knowledge*

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I. Introduction

The relationship between religion or theology with secular knowledge has already been resolved several centuries ago by many great religious thinkers, especially those who belong to liberal Protestantism, reformed evangelical Protestant tradition like Harry Emerson Fosdick, Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, Brunner, Barth and even those who belong to Roman Catholicism such as Aquinas, Teilhard Pierre de Chardin, Hans Kung, etc. However, for many of both religious and secular minded people, the relationship between religion and theology with secular knowledge has not yet been resolved. This is also the concrete fact in evangelical Protestant colleges and universities in the Philippines. We can observe that there are still some students and teachers who think that religion must constantly conflict with science. The example is the disagreement between creation story in the Bible and Charles Darwin's theory of human evolution or the tension between creationism and evolutionism. Few years back, some of our Filipino politicians opposed the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) hierarchy's attack on divorce bill because the bill itself is a legal concern while the church concern must only focus on spiritual matters. Also, some of our congressmen asserted that the RCC hierarchy should not interfere in the passing of divorce bill because there is a constitutional separation between church and state. The congressmen's criticism on Church hierarchy implies that spirituality has nothing to do with legal or political matters. On the other hand, spirituality in a common sense is being expected or used only to legitimize – but not to criticize – the social order.

In the BBC World's "Doha Debate" last January 24, 2009, the invited Islamic scholars and some reacting participants belonging to the audience had confusedly mixed up the following terms or phrases related to the question of the relationship between politics and religion addressing the issue whether Islam is a threat to the West: political Islam, Islamism (or Islamist politics), Islamic pluralist, pluralist Islam, political Islam and Islamic politics in harmony,

Islamic democracy, democratic Islam, Islamic monarchy, monarchial Islam, patriarchal Islam, Islamic patriarchy, feminist Islam, and Islamic feminism, etc. The said debate shows that mixing politics and religion is not only a problem in Christian circles; it is also a problem in other religious circles, especially among Muslims.

Humanity's failure to distinguish and integrate entities within a metaphysics and ontology is one of the tremendous factors of the absence of peace in mundane endeavors. Therefore, this article systematically explains from a Christian theological perspective how religion, theology, and ethics should relate each other with philosophy and sciences in attaining and maintaining mundane peace and harmony.

II. Factors Fragmenting the Relationship between Religious and Secular Societies

The historical and moral lessons from Thirty Years' War are one of the factors why the church separates from the state in many pre-dominantly Christian countries. In the Thirty Years' War both Roman Catholic and Protestant adherents used political power to destroy each other. Also, the belief of many Christians that politics is evil causes some churches to dissociate from political affairs.

Furthermore, the cause why the spiritual has been divorced from the material, the religious from the secular, and theology from different sciences might also be attributed to the extreme interpretation of the metaphysical view we have imported from Plato's dualistic philosophy. The misinterpretation of Plato's dualistic philosophy dichotomizes and fragments our thinking, consciousness, and being. But philosophy, which provides us tools of perceiving reality, does not only confine itself within dualism. The ancient Greek Stoicism popularizes another philosophy, which is monism, which views reality as one.

III. Philosophy and Integral Dimensions and Aspects of Spiritual Life

A. Philosophy and Dimensions of Spirituality

Tillich defines philosophy as the “*reality as such or reality as a whole is not the whole of reality.*”¹ The reality we perceive, e.g., the architectural design of a building, is not yet the architecture itself. It also involves its architect and his/her mind, intellect, creativity and imagination, and also engineers, masons, materials, etc. The architectural design cannot be realized fully without involving all of above-mentioned factors. In this sense, there is the spirit within, beyond, and behind tangible things. Matter and spirit only distinguish from each other, but they cannot be separated from each other. Spirituality pertains to both visible and invisible beings, entities, powers, authorities, motivations, and influences. It functionally creates, moves, gives, shapes, directs, and determines human life, thinking, consciousness, existence, and destiny. That’s why Tillich discerns the spiritual entity as having three dimensions with their distinct and corresponding functions.² The first is morality. This pertains to “*the constitution of the bearer of the spirit, the centered person.*” Morality describes human essence and existence as normative of living a happy, harmonious, orderly, and fruitful life related to nature and human community. For Christian ethics, Christ’s thoughts, words, and actions are the only normative model for Christian living. But this requires us to have thorough understanding and reflections on sacred texts and other classical writings of Christian thinkers throughout centuries and decades. The achievement of this condition partially depends on processes of the second spiritual dimension which is no other than culture.

The function of culture for Tillich “*points to the creativity of the spirit and also to the totality of its creations.*” Culture is derived from the Latin word, *cultura*, i.e., “*growth, cultivation, education, improvement; refinement, perfection of the mind and taste; veneration and worship.*”³ This etymology of culture implies constant and diligent research how to achieve

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1, 18.

² Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (NY: Harper and Row, 1963), 17-18.

³ John Hutchison, *Faith, Reason, and Existence: An Introduction to the Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1956), 203-231.

the ideal descriptions of the human person. But with regards to the aim of existence, culture depends on the information it receives from the third spiritual dimension, i.e., religion.

Religion functions as the “*self-transcendence of the spirit toward what is ultimate and unconditioned in being and meaning.*”⁴ It is derived from the Latin word *religere*, i.e., “*to bind together.*” In the other Latin context religion has been defined as “*to be careful.*” In a common sense, we can understand the above-mentioned function and definitions of religion as having the following implications.

The first is consciousness and sensitivity to our immediate milieu. Though many religions derive their inspirations from power beyond this world, but the world itself awakens and challenges religions per se what must be their basic relevance and function in and for the world.

Closely related to the first, the second implication of the function and definitions of religion is the discernment of order. In explaining the content of the wisdom literature in the bible, Walter Brueggeman asserts that to become wise one must have the discernment of order. One must know the basic laws of life affecting his/her destiny. Christ himself warns his disciples to become cautious or wise as a serpent and humble or gentle or harmless as a dove (Matthew 10:16). A serpent cannot hear, but its vibration is very sensitive in sensing the movement of objects. This motivates the honestly religious person to harness his/her spiritual organs to sense forces holding or threatening his/her survival and destiny such as the gift of intuition.

The third is our being thorough in decision and action in order to preserve some entities acknowledged as sacred. However, religions have their own notions of what is sacred. Some of them fuse or identify sacredness with holiness. Some only select specific entities as sacred or holy. And some just derive the sacredness of certain entities from the holiness of a greater reality acknowledged as holy. Earthly life and its quality are sacred for Christianity. The sacredness of earthly life is derived only from God’s holiness. The sacredness of one’s earthly life, therefore, depends on the closeness of his/her relationship with God. This does not depend on how he/she attaches him/herself with earthly life. For monotheistic Christianity, one’s closeness with the

⁴ Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 17-18.

Holy God means protecting the quality of earthly life and its governing theological, philosophical, and ethical principles, especially faith, hope, love, truth, justice, etc. as sacred. But protecting a certain state of life or some entities of earthly life does not always mean closeness with the Holy God because this might imply pantheism or polytheism perceived to be both idolatrous and superstitious by Christianity.

The fourth is the elevation of one's self from trivial and imperfect to a perfect or an ideal state of existence. In humanism religion means the highest aspiration of the human being. The thing that one aspires most serves as his/her vision of an ideal state of existence. It serves one's impetus to depart from his/her trivial and imperfect world. However, religions differ in terms of their descriptions and norms of what is an ideal world. Christianity's ideal world is the Kingdom of God which is the criterion in shaping and forming churchly and non-churchly communities. St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei* is one of Christianity's classics in describing the criterion of establishing a society. In philosophical categorization, it falls under vertical idealism. This attains an ideal society that is grounded on or rooted in our direct relationship with God. St. Augustine categorizes love into two: the Divine love (*agape* or *caritas*) and self-love. Self-love is identical with Pauline list of vices (Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 5:19-21). *Civitas Dei* radically distinguishes God's kingdom and human kingdom or society though God's kingdom must pervade any predominantly Christian society. It cannot even be identified with Christendom. It functionally criticizes and transforms any social order. It asserts that individuals and societies attain their harmony and perfection in their absolute trust in Divine love, grace, and providence. St. Augustine's thought constantly reminds Protestants on their principle of *sola gratia* (grace alone) as a way to salvation.

The fifth is the exploration of the unknown, the unexplorable and the ultimate. Fosdick writes, "*Theology means thinking about the central problem of existence, what is ultimately and eternally real in this universe.*" Though understandably religion also suppresses facts and truths, its reason of being from Christian perspective is to search the deepest mystery behind truths, facts, and phenomena. This can be attained only if religions must not presume that the relative truth it professes is absolute. Our acknowledgment of a mundane reality as relative

brings us to the ultimate reality. The making of the relative reality into becoming absolute stops the one to continuously search the ultimate.

The sixth is non-conformity to ordinary routines. Religion is a story of either internal or external protests of religions against religions. Both protesting and protested religions tend to conform to their own and broader state when they feel comforted with and have selfishly benefited from them. Related to the transcendental nature of the human being, non-conformity comes out from the conformist and traditionist religions. In biblical times, the non-conformist prophets questioned the priests conserving the corrupted social order. Christ himself, a devout Judaist, was one of the non-conformist biblical prophets questioning the dehumanizing version of Judaism. In other religious setting, both Buddhism and Jainism questioned the relevance of their own mother Hindu religion, especially the caste system. Protestantism questioned the corruption of its own mother Church. But it later became a story of protests of Protestants against fellow Protestants. These different religious milieus just portray that religion functions to awaken its adherents about the very purpose, aim, and meaning of existence and ask them whether their condition reflects or deviates from the ultimate or from their very being.

However, Martin Luther King, Jr. insightfully warns believers to be cautious with non-conformity by categorizing it into non-transformed and transformed.

Nonconformity in itself, however, may not necessarily be good and may at times possess neither transforming nor redemptive power. Nonconformity per se contains no saving value, and may represent in some circumstances little more than a form of exhibitionism...Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit. The transformed non-conformist, moreover, never yields to the passive sort of patience which is an excuse to do nothing. And this very transformation saves him from speaking irresponsible words which estrange without reconciling and from making hasty judgments which are blind to the necessity of social progress. He recognizes that social change will not come overnight, yet he works as though it is an imminent possibility.⁵

The seventh is the unveiling and acknowledgement of the mystery of being, i.e., the one's self and Supreme Being. Hutchison identifies and leaves to us the following traits of self-awareness from which the fundamental religious questions arise: What is my life all about? What is the meaning of my existence? Why am I here? The questions transcend the human being's environmental and biological factors. The human being's gift of consciousness leads to

⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 23.

the question of the mystery of his/her existence. The question of the one about his/her mystery of being implies religion.

And the eighth is the awareness one's limitations and imperfections. It is common sense logic that there's no imperfection without perfection. And the only perfect being is God from whom we derive our effort for perfection. St. Augustine said, "*Man's awareness of his imperfection implies his perfection.*" It is through one's humble acceptance of limitations that one opens himself/herself for corrections and more improvement. This is the basic step in attaining one's perfection. However, the Divine view of perfection differs from humans.' The former humanizes the human being in love while the latter either humanizes or alienates. The human notion of perfection alienates and condemns humans when it deviates from the Divine. That's why a saying goes on, "*To err is human; to forgive is divine.*" In the Christian milieu, one's perfection roots in Divine love expressed in grace and forgiveness giving the human being a chance to start anew in striving for fulfilled existence. In parallelism with the wisdom "*Constant practice makes perfect,*" Christ says, "*You must be perfect – just as your Father in heaven is perfect* (Matthew 5:48, TEV). Thus, Tillich asserts,

[the functions of three spiritual dimensions] mean pointing to the dynamic unity of body and mind, of vitality and rationality, of the conscious and the unconscious, of the emotional and in the intellectual...In every function of the human spirit the whole person is involved, and not only one part or one element.⁶

This implies that whatever will be our way of life or culture and its effects to our social, material, and natural milieus, it reflects the state of our religious and moral consciousness.

B. Aspects of Spiritual Life

Furthermore, Tillich classifies spiritual life into two aspects.⁷ The first is the theoretical aspect composed of science, art, and metaphysics. The second is the practical aspect composed of economic, political, social, and ethical concerns. The theoretical spirituality pertains to our observations about the dynamics of natural, physical, and material world. The practical spirituality means living up, testing and proving concretely our observations, theories, and views

⁶ Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 17-18.

⁷ Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co./Meridian Books, 1967), 53.

of physical and material entities. The theoretical spirituality foundationally guides and should be perceived and treated as sacred by practical spirituality. The way we relate with any being or thing in our day-to-day endeavor reflects our observations, theories, and views of the reality of the world. For example, pantheism, which is a kind of metaphysics, corresponds to practically treating things in the world as sacred or divine. It hollows, conserves, and reveres things especially the living.

C. Dynamic Relationship between Religion and Culture

Likewise, Tillich sharply distinguishes religion from culture by saying,

Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion.⁸

T.S. Eliot's distinction between religion and culture sounds similar with Tillich's by saying,

...[Culture] is the incarnation of religion, [a] lived religion. [Culture and religion are] of the inextricable relation between belief and behavior.⁹

Technically, culture has so many definitions and descriptions. Its definitions and descriptions depend on the perspective and context where it is used. For example, the secular anthropology views culture as the “*complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man.*”¹⁰ It views spirituality as just part of culture. The social theology of Tillich perceives culture as just part of spirituality as a whole. Besides, culture and religion for theology are two sides of the same coin.

D. Categories of Power Manifesting Spirituality

As mentioned above, spirituality pertains to visible and invisible beings, entities, power, authorities, and influences. The same entity creates, motivates, moves, gives, shapes, directs, and determines human life, thinking, consciousness, existence, and destiny. This definition of spirituality can be derived from nature, social dynamism, and power beyond natural and social forces such as supernatural force. In this sense, power, authority, and influence cause and drive us to do anything that is either creatively productive or creatively destructive. The terms power,

⁸ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (NY: A Galaxy book, Oxford University Press, 1964), 42.

⁹ Hutchison, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 203-231.

authority, and influence interchange in social sciences. In political science, there is a phrase “*power clothed with authority.*” In sociology there is a phrase “*authority without power and influence.*”

Donal Dorr identifies four types of power in socio-political dynamism.¹¹ The first type of power is personal.

[This] enables us to believe in ourselves and to hold our ground in our relationship with others, by standing up for our own beliefs and values.

The second type of power is domination and coercion. This is “*the power to control others*”, through the following: physical force, threat of force or punishment, psychological domination and intimidation, indoctrination, etc. exercised over individuals, groups, classes, nations, or even whole races of people.

The third is the enabling or facilitating power.

[This pertains to] the ability to help others to understand their situation better, to take responsibility by making their own free choices, to plan and implement ways of making their choices effective, etc.

And the fourth is the power of the Cross.

[This] is the mysterious reality, quite different from each of the other three kinds of power. [It nourishes one’s] personal inner power and using it respectfully, relinquishing the power to dominate others, enabling and facilitating others to act with full responsibility.

The power of the Cross manifests God’s providence, love, grace, resurrection in Christ, etc. that renew and revitalize our hopes and faiths.¹²

Going back to the power of domination and coercion, the same power relates to the perversion of power itself, which, according to Carter Heyward, destroys individuals, churches, and society. The perversion of power, according to Heyward, manifests in two forms.¹³ The first is the hero worship by any person, which diminishes the humanness of the human being because, in this sense, he/she relinquishes his/her participation and cooperation with others in bringing

¹¹ Donal Dorr, *Integral Spirituality: Resources for community, Peace, Justice and the Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 104-112.

¹² See the further elaboration of concepts of power, authority, and influence in outlines IV. C and IV. H of this article, especially the relationship between religion/theology/ethics and sociology and political science and law.

¹³ Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation* (NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1984), 119-122.

power to life, his/her very essence as human, his/her birth right to do something, and his/her empowered and empowering creativity.

The second perversion of power is narcissism, which motivates one's self and certain communities and institutions to be just inward looking in addressing people's needs. This limits individuals and groups of people in extending help to the needy, especially those who need to be empowered in order to attain self-actualization and self-realization. Narcissism concerns only for one's own or group's own prestige rather than striving to elevate others' status.

However, Heyward somehow fails to explain that the two extreme perversions of power also converge in any person in different contexts of exercising power. A narcissistic person, such as the arrogant, conceited, egoistic, etc., can also project an image to himself/herself that he/she can erect his/her own personality cult in his/her heroism, which makes his/her admirers or fans dependent on him/her in determining their decisions and destinies. Only the absolute dependence of the one on virtuous and impersonal values, such as reason, truth, courage, self-affirmation, etc., liberates him/her from hero worship and narcissism. Virtuous values in a person make others heroes and heroines and exalt their importance in any noble endeavor.

IV. The Secular Knowledge within Spiritual Dimensions

Since morality, culture, and religion interlock each other, what an honest learner must do is to properly distinguish the nature of different areas of knowledge related to religion of revelation especially Judeo-Christianity. The distinction of different areas of knowledge harmonises the state of our being. It prevents the overlapping of functions of different areas of knowledge without destroying their interconnectedness.

Charles Kammer III invents the term "*moralscape*." The "*moralscape*" has five sections, namely, worldviews, loyalties, norms and values, experiential and empirical elements, and the mode of decision-making.¹⁴ The experiential and empirical elements directly cover the integration of different areas of secular knowledge.

¹⁴ Charles Kammer III, *Ethics and Liberation: An Introduction* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 16-34.

[They] focus more directly upon the external world, relationships, and circumstances that provide the context within which we build our personhood and the society in which we act.¹⁵

[They provide] experiences that develop, test, challenge our worldview, loyalties, norms, and values and moral situations to which we must respond and with moral problems we must solve.¹⁶

The simplest example of experiential and empirical elements is the critical, factual, and scientific questioning of some of our religious beliefs, e.g., the perception that natural disasters such as Pinatubo eruption, Ormoc, Camiguin, Ginsaugon, “Typhoon Ondoy” tragedies, etc. are divine punishments inflicted upon the sinning people. Another question is the relevance of the natural method of family planning such as the question which is more sinful between siring unwanted children through ineffective natural method of family planning and controlling the production of children through the artificial birth control method of family planning.

The question of what natural method of family planning is grounded on the traditional belief that anything that is against nature or unnatural is evil. But the question of what is natural remains ambiguous. For example, it is natural for the human being to become inventive. The synthetic method of birth control is a human invention. Therefore, it can also be perceived as natural.

The secular areas of knowledge, which fall under experiential and empirical elements, are the following with their articulation.

A. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Philosophy

As the rational component of the revelatory religion, theology relates with philosophy. This is because both theology and philosophy use reason (*logos*) to search for and arrive at the certain truth or conclusion. Theology is the Wisdom (*Logos*) of God acquired through God’s revelations that guide human affairs. Philosophy, which is the friend or love of wisdom, pertains to the sheer human wisdom in relation to the human being’s practical earthly endeavor. The reason of philosophy is derived directly from its encounter with the material world. Theology’s reason is derived directly from divine revelations and insightful reflections on the same.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Reason (*Logos*) is the helpful tool of theology to test and defend the rationality of the claim of theology itself. Reason composes philosophy; it is philosophy itself. Or, making both theology and philosophy to be functionally sound in their thoughts, words, and actions, they must be confined within reason. In other words, reason, which is the *logos* (or *Logos*) itself, is both within and it transcends philosophy. Reason is present within theology and it could also be a theology itself. It cannot be confined within the rules of logic. Similar to wisdom, which the *Logos* also composes, reason belongs to the sphere of *Mystery*. But theology trivially engages in both divine and human reason whereas philosophy engages purely in human reason.

As a dimension of reason, theology needs philosophy. Conversely, philosophy must need theology. David Elton Trueblood writes on reason which is the common ground between theology and philosophy,

Revelation (as a theological source) must be tested by reason (philosophy) for the simple reason that there are false claims to revelation. We know, in advance, that many alleged revelations are false, because there are absolutely contradictory claims. It cannot be true that there is only one way by which men may be saved and that there are many ways by which men may be saved.¹⁷

Ferre summarizes the functions of reason as follows,

Reason's role in religion is no isolated, academic function in terms of which religion is judged true and good or false and evil. The test of reason must rather be lively identification of what religion is, the discrimination of it from all else, the evaluation of it for life, the ordering of it within the context of life, and the use of it in the directing of life. The life of reason and the life of religion must be studied together if both are essential elements of life as a living whole.¹⁸

Furthermore, theology purifies the motive of human reasoning (ontological reason). Philosophy organizes orderly the reasoning of theology (technical reason). Kant describes the reasonable person as having the qualities of free will, duty, and good will, which interlock each other. Both theology and philosophy concern about the following.

1. The quest for and love of truth.¹⁹ The truth of philosophy and sciences concentrates directly within the human intellect whereas the truth of theology concentrates directly on morality.

¹⁷ David Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* (NY: Harpers and Brothers, 1957), 24-32.

¹⁸ Nels F.S. Ferre, *Reason and Religion* (London: and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson Printer's Ltd., 1963), 15.

¹⁹ See the outline IV. K.

2. The acceptance of concrete facts about life's realities. Both philosophy and science provide us objective data about the whole of life's realities. Religion, theology, and ethics give us courage, strength, and endurance to face and to either conform to or transform realities.
3. The value of knowledge. As a prerequisite to wisdom, theology values knowledge. But to value knowledge in the context of philosophy and science does not necessarily mean giving value to wisdom even though philosophy means "*love/lover of wisdom.*" Knowledge concerns directly about the information on any thing we explore, encounter, and receive. But how we live up or relate us with what we explore, encounter, and receive directly concern about wisdom. The love of wisdom absolutely explores knowledge. The exploration of knowledge does not always mean love of wisdom.

As a cultural component, philosophy provides views as media to convey and make understandable the word and revelations of God. For example, the biblical concept of humanity, which is composed of mind, body, and spirit, originates from the ancient Greek perspective of philosophical psychology.

Furthermore, Hegel perceived religion in his time as just a primitive form of philosophy. During the first three hundred years of Christianity, many Christians perceived different Greek philosophical schools (e.g., Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, etc.) as competing religions of Christianity. But some Christians, who were influenced by Greek philosophies, thought of Christianity as a new form of philosophy such as Justin Martyr. Hence, Hutchison writes,

All philosophies have religious foundations and all religions have philosophic implications...Religion can contribute vision and imagination to philosophy as well as themes and problems for philosophic analysis. Conversely philosophy can contribute to religion a sense of rational and critical responsibility...Philosophy is an inquiry; whereas religion is that of devotion, faith, and worship.²⁰

²⁰ Hutchison, 27-29.

If religion divorces from philosophy, “it runs the danger of falling into arbitrary and irrational dogmatism.”²¹ If philosophy divorces from religion “it becomes increasingly empty analysis without substance or relevance to common human concerns.”²²

The question of the relationship between philosophy and religion is the main focus of concern of philosophy of religion which is one special branch of philosophy. From one perspective, which explains the relationship between philosophy and religion, the types of philosophy of religion are the following.²³ The first is the assessment of the rationality of religious beliefs, with attention to their coherence and to the cogency of arguments for their justification. And the second is the descriptive analysis and elucidation of religious language, belief, and practice with particular attention to the rules by which they are governed and to their context in the religious life.

Tillich also presents another perspective with regards to types of philosophy of religion.²⁴ The first is the ontological type, which is the way of overcoming estrangement. The second is the cosmological type, which is the way of meeting the stranger. The stranger could be a figure perceived to be a divine being.

Therefore, the said types show the following: that the ontological method is basic for every philosophy of religion; that the cosmological method without the ontological as its basis leads to a destructive cleavage between philosophy and religion; and that on the basis of the ontological approach and with a dependent use of the cosmological way, philosophy of religion contributes to the reconciliation between religion and secular culture.²⁵

Philosophy of religion has four general areas.²⁶ The first pertains to the relation of religion to the methods and results of the special sciences: physical, social, psychological, and historical. The second is the relations of religious traditions to one another, e.g., Buddhism and Christianity. The third is the relation of religion and theology to philosophy itself, i.e., to

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Wayne Proudfoot, “*Philosophy of Religion*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion in 16 Vols.*, ed. Mircea Eliade et al, (N.Y., NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), Vol. 11, 305-311.

²⁴ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 10-11.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Langdon Gilkey, *Society and Sacred: Toward and Theology of Culture in Decline* (N.Y., NY: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1981), 15.

linguistic, logical, epistemological, and metaphysical issues. And the fourth is the relation of religion to other areas of cultural life, to morals, to politics, the arts – the theology of culture and society.

Furthermore, Hutchison outlines the methods of religious philosophy, which help us test and maintain the soundness of our religious and theological ethics.²⁷ The methods of religious philosophy in this sense pertain to the “*means of testing or evaluating philosophic statements*” or “*testing of religious and theological statements.*” The first is the method of authority. This “*holds that a religious or philosophical statement may be accepted or rejected according to its conformity to some authority presumed to be the standard of truth.*” There are two categories of authority. The first is provisional that looks at certain or presumed truths as questionable or temporary. The second is final, which pertains to any idea or statement perceived to be beyond question. The problem, however, is each religious adherent has his/her own internal and external motivations shaping his/her perception of authority.²⁸ The question remains within the Christian circles, which must be given more importance such as the Bible or tradition and faith or good works. Within the issue of tradition, Christians must consciously ask which must be given the paramount concern between Apostolic Tradition and cultural traditions. Besides, they must identify and sharply distinguish which is Apostolic Tradition and cultural traditions, especially their nature and functions in social ordering.

The RCC claims and limits her apostolicity through the apostolic succession. This acknowledges St. Peter, who was the first Bishop of Rome, as the first Pope. Anyone who does not legally assume the papacy, which automatically assumes the bishopric of Rome, does not follow the line of apostolic succession. The RCC’s apostolic claim is monarchical episcopacy in nature. This makes the Pope as the most politically powerful and influential within the RCC.

The Eastern Orthodox Church (EOC) claims to be the genuine apostolic church because most of Christian churches founded by Christ’s apostles, aside from St. Peter, belong to her. All bishops of EOC are co-equal though traditionally EOC looks at the Bishop (Patriarch) of

²⁷ Hutchison, 29-32.

²⁸ See the other notions of authority, especially IV.C, i.e., Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Sociology.

Constantinople as the most superior or respected. The power of Constantine the Great's name associates with the Patriarch and his seat of authority, which is no other than Constantinople. This is because the city was named after Constantine the Great who legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire. Besides, Constantinople survived, preserved, and promoted Christianity after the Barbarians sacked Rome. Also, Constantinople functioned as the "Second Rome" right after Rome fell into the hands of Barbarians.

Scholarly, the EOC's claim of apostolicity is stronger than the RCC's in terms of historical and anthropological (artifacts) grounding. The RCC's is supported by biblical passage (Matthew 16:18), which remains exegetically questionable, without the back up of external evidences. In terms of external evidences, what is sure is that Sts. Peter, James, and John became the pillars of Jerusalem Church.

The Protestant churches' claim of Apostolic Tradition is transcendental and dynamic. Together with their faith in Christ, Protestant churches start from the acknowledgement and acceptance of the apostolic teachings attested in the Bible. However, do all who claim to be Protestant have a coherent and dynamic biblical scholarship, interpretations, and applications? Which is the real Word, Christ or the Bible? The questions prevent the Protestants to commit "bibliolatry" which is a sort of idolatry of knowledge or making the Bible as the final authority or absolute in judging all pursuits of life.

The second method of religious philosophy is intuition. This "*consists of referring statements to be tested to some experience which is assumed to be, or to communicate, direct or intuitive truth. Intuition means some form of immediate awareness or knowledge,*" especially the Spiritual Presence. In this sense, faith is *a priori*. It is a natural gift of humanity to believe and look for the object of faith and religiosity. Faith itself expounds the meaning and nature of its object, i.e., God. This parallels with what St. Anselm says, "*I believe that I may understand.*"

The third method of religious philosophy is rationalism. This "*consists in applying the test of coherence of a group of statements.*" In this sense, believers must be basically acquainted on and guided by all kinds of logic to prevent inconsistencies of their religious claims. However, God transcends logic. The biblical prophets proclaim God's Word in different channels such as through poems, myths, legends, metaphors, idioms, etc. which should not be understood literally.

The fourth is the empirical method. This *“seeks to test all propositions by their conformity either to a sense data, strictly defined or to the data of open and public experience defined in some exclusive but more ambiguous way.”* This relates with hearing and validating believers’ testimonies of experiencing healing miracles, the natural events that cannot be explained scientifically.

And the fifth is existential method. This is *“a way of testing propositions by their conformity to facts encountered by human selves in active existence.”* For example, have we been transformed radically after experiencing miracles which aim to improve life? Does our claim of having been saved by and reconciled to God have concrete manifestations through the way we think, talk, act, and behave? St. Paul gives us objective examples of being possessed by God through the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control).

B. Religion, theology, and Ethics with Psychology

As related to revelations which unveil the mystery of God and our own being, theology makes the human being humbly aware of the latter’s creatureliness before the Creator. Theology’s task concerns on the human depth such as the sinful pretension of the human being before the Creator and fellow human beings.

Psychology also concerns about the depth of the human situation such as Freud’s psychoanalysis of the human being and the human being’s power of the subconscious. Psychology helps theology in the process of making a resolution for human existence in analyzing its depth. This is exemplified in the discovery and discernment of different defense mechanisms as the work of the subconscious.

In ethics, psychology objectively explains why a person behaves or does not behave well like analyzing his/her social conditions that shape his/her outlook, attitude, behavior, habit, values, etc. Theology prescribes a human behavior with the help of psychology in the process such as pastoral counseling, psychiatric process, etc.

Abraham Marlow’s psychology of the hierarchy of needs remains a challenge to the church how the latter becomes effective in her witness to God’s mighty act of redemption. The discovery of the human being’s hierarchy of needs gives us insights how the church becomes

effective in transforming the human situation. The example is the sensitivity of the church in measuring what level of hierarchy of needs that people have already achieved in a particular condition where the Gospel is proclaimed. The following are the simplified explanations of Maslow's psychology of the hierarchy of needs: ²⁹

- i. Biological and physiological needs: air, water, food, and shelter, sleep;
- ii. Safety and Security needs: protection from disease and fear;
- iii. Love and Belongingness: affection with and acceptance by others;
- iv. Esteem: feeling of competence, gaining approval and recognition;
- v. Cognitive: knowledge, meaning, understanding, and exploring;
- vi. Aesthetics: beauty, balance, form, symmetry, and order;
- vii. And Self-realisation: "becoming everything you can be," finding fulfillment and realizing one's potential.

However, this discernment, especially the number vii level, seems to have overlooked the problem of the human being's discontentment as expression of his/her self-transcendence and hidden insecurity. Fulfillment and self-actualization, therefore, can be felt only if one becomes contented with what he/she has in his/her abundance.

C. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Sociology

The Word primarily addresses the society (earthly bound sermon). The society does not address God (heavenly bound sermon). Through the Word, theology concerns on what kind of society to be erected, such as applying The Decalogue, Jubilee, etc.; whereas sociology informs theology whether the society conforms to the design of the Word for the world. The examples are economic and political egalitarianism and justice that empower all. Sociology helps theology to objectively unveil the effects of the mechanism running the society such as Marx's unveiling of the secret of oppressive capitalism. It explains to theology how the people interact each other under the sub-structural (masses), structural (laws determining social relationship), and super-structural (religion, theology, philosophy, arts, etc.) mechanisms running the society. Likewise, it assists theology in identifying and analyzing social entities perceived by people to be

²⁹ Berma Klein Goldewijk and Bas de Gaay Fortman, *Where Needs Meet Rights: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a New Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 45-54.

authoritative and influential in shaping and determining public opinions and decisions. The example is the conflict of loyalties between authorities discerned by Weber, especially bureaucratic/legal/formal, traditional, and charismatic authorities and religious theories.³⁰

The notions of the fathers of modern sociology, especially Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, agree that religion greatly contributes in shaping the social order. Durkheim is famous with his phrase “*Religion is the cement of society.*” Marx is famous with his sayings “*Religion is the opiate of the masses*” and “*Religious criticism is the beginning of all criticisms.*” And Weber is popular with his classic “*Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*” The classic proves the impact of three virtues inculcated by Calvin, especially industry, frugality, and asceticism accompanied by scientific discoveries and inventions, to some societies. It agitated or reinforced industrial and capitalist revolutions that made later the predominantly or traditionally Protestant countries very economically affluent or politically powerful such as USA, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

Religion, theology, ethics and sociology unite in addressing and resolving social problems. In this sense, religion, theology, and ethics need to be informed by sociology about theories of social problems, especially when talking about their causes, e.g., functionalist, conflict, and interactionist theories.³¹

The functionalist theory stresses that if any of social entities does not function according to its nature, such as the church that shapes social conscience and responsibility, it dysfunctionalizes other social entities. The malfunctioning of all social entities, especially the state, church, and family, causes social disorganization. In political science, the social disorganization is just synonymous with anarchy or lawlessness. The effects of social entities’ dysfunctionalization parallel with what St. Paul says,

If one part of the body (church) suffers, all the other parts also suffer.
(Corinthians 12:26, TEV)

³⁰ Freund, 229-234.

³¹ Cf. Manuel Garcia, *Introductory Sociology: A Unified Approach* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: National Book Store, 1994), 168-169.

Aside from personal and social, the other area of ethics is the church (or religious institution) that basically functions to inculcate virtuous values to members of community and society. In other words, moral evils in society can be attributed to the failure of any religious institution to produce virtuous citizens.

The conflict theory emphasizes that constant conflict in society is due to the struggle who must control the means of economic production, distribution, and consumption (Marxism). Poverty, prostitution, etc. manifest the unjust social structure. Those who control and dominate the economy perpetuate alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. to divert social deviants from seeing the scourge of their poverty, deprivation, etc. (Marxism). Also, the conflict theory stresses that contradictions exist in the society due to differences who must be revered as our authority figure to control or influence us in social affairs (Weber).

The interactionist theory implements either the functionalist or the conflict theory in the grassroots level. Whatever the theory we dominantly encounter in the grassroots level most probably influence our outlook or perception about society. Our social outlook or perception translates itself into an ideology or social movement which is either legitimate or it operates in the underworld.

Setting aside the interactionist theory, the following are basic differences between functionalist and conflict theories with my own brief personal comments.³² First, for the functionalist, the society is integrated and interdependent. The conflict theory looks at the society as established by a group conflict. Second, for the functionalist, the individual and the group actions stem from values or norms. The conflict theory stresses that the individual or group action stems from perceived interest. Third, the functionalist theorizes that balanced equilibrium and shared power are normative in social relationship. The conflict theory stresses that conflict is inherent in social relationship. Fourth, for the functionalist balance in the society is ubiquitous. The conflict theory looks at the conflict in the society as ubiquitous. Fifth, the functionalist looks at the social change as usually quite slow and most often results from shifts and imperfections in the socialization process. The conflict theorists look at social change as constant and it results

³² Ibid.

from specific and inherent conflicts in the social structure. And sixth, the functionalists look at social control as the result of members' voluntary adherence to social norms and values. The conflict theorists look at social control as the result of force.

From the criticism of religion, theology, and ethics, the functionalist's social control theory is only valid if the power structure in society assures justice for all social entities. All social entities integrate and depend with each other if people know the basic nature and function of any social entity. Knowing the nature and function of any social entity prevents the creation of laws that overlaps and fragments the function of every social entity.

Contrary to the conflict theory, religion, theology, and ethics stress that contradictions in society are attributable to injustices. Conflict does not inhere in society. In other words, we always expect violent revolutions to flare up while injustices remain widespread in society. But any revolution that is not governed by reason only results in anarchy.

Religion, theology, and ethics concentrate directly on social responsibility under the principle of stewardship of power, authority, and influence. Sociology concerns directly on social analyses. Proper and well-informed social diagnoses make religious, theological, and ethical reflections relevant to actual trends in society.

D. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Anthropology.

While theology deals with society in particular, its central problem of existence is humanity in general. While anthropology concerns about the objective data of the evolution of the human being in relation to his/her cultural and natural milieu, theology questions the human essence and existence related to divine and fellow humans. This does not matter what stage of evolution and civilization that the human being is bound. Theology concerns more in humanizing the human being rather than civilizing him/her though civilization is the product of being a human person. Besides, theology stresses that "*the question of God and the question of the human being are identical.*" (Calvin)

The secular anthropology informs theology to be critically sensitive with cultural relativity. Cultural sensitivity avoids theology to commit corrosive cultural imperialism which is legitimized by the religion of culture rather than by the religion of revelation. The secular anthropology informs theology that there is no superior race and culture. Culture came into being

out of the human being's specific circumstances that shape human consciousness. Anthropology informs theology that we are all victims of our own respective and unique circumstances. Therefore, each person or cultural community deserves to be understood. An Amerindian wisdom says, *"You can only understand a person if you put on his shoes."* Also, Einstein says, *"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding."*

Likewise, with the mediation of the secular anthropology, theology informs us that the universal reign of peace is possible amidst our cultural, racial, and religious divergences. As a matter of fact, Prophet Micah's vision of peace (Micah 4:1-5) does not necessarily mean that all races must have only one unified and uniformed religion. After describing God's standard of peace, the book of Prophet Micah says,

Each nation worships and obeys its own god, but we will worship and obey the Lord our God forever and ever. (4:5, Good News, TEV)

This vision of Prophet Micah parallels with this vision of Jose Rizal, our Philippine national hero:

Within a few centuries, when humanity has become redeemed and enlightened; when there are no races; when all people are free; when there are neither tyrants nor slaves; colonies nor mother countries; when justice rules and man is a citizen of the world: the pursuit of science alone will remain. The word patriotism will be equivalent to fanaticism and he who prides himself with patriotic ideas will doubtless be isolated as a dangerous disease, as a menace to the social order.

The anthropology of religion, in consultation with anthropological linguistics, helps religious believers to objectively explain the profound meaning of some literary types in the Bible, especially the creation stories in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 classified as mythical. Myth or mythology in biblical scholarship and anthropology of religion means the following (Rainer Neu).

- A. Myth is derived from the Greek word *mythos*, which means, *"word,"* which presents an extraordinary event without justifying it. It is a religious phenomenon, which cannot be explained by the non-religious.
- B. Myth has the following elements:
 - 1. It is a story that involves gods or other supernatural actors.
 - 2. It is a story that attempts to explain the origin of things without the use of modern historical and scientific investigation.

3. A myth may depict some aspects of the human experience in the form of a story about the past.
4. A myth may be a story, which is presented in terms of some symbolism and thus is capable of reinterpretation in the light of fresh experiences. Genesis chapters 1-11 belong to this type of literature.

Also,

the term myth in biblical studies refers to a special form or type of literature in which a story is constructed or reconstructed in order to convey a truth which is too profound to be expressed in ordinary language.³³

Likewise, myth refers to stories through which believers, especially Christians, identify the basic truths about their origins and destinies.³⁴

E. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with History

Bultmann said, “*Man (or the human being) is nothing but history...To live in action is the very essence of man, ...and this makes him historical.*”

Also, Teilhard Pierre de Chardin said, “*Man is a phenomenon, a very special phenomenon.*”

Furthermore, Martin Heidegger said, “*Man is the being of the past, present, and future.*”

Besides, Jean-Paul Sartre asserts that to be historical the human being must be aware that his/her life is always incompletely formed.³⁵ This means the willingness to change both future plans and the past of one’s life. In changing both future plans and the past the human being must be both free and responsible to his actions that make him/her historical. His/her freedom and responsibility liberate him/her from the constraints falsely imposed on him/her by authoritative appeals to “human nature” or “God’s will.” Contrary to the conventional understanding of Divine providence, one’s historical success or failure should not be attributed to God. It must be attributed to how the individual interacts with the group in relation to the manner of exercising

³³ Melanio L. Aoanan, *God’s Liberating Acts* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1988), 37.

³⁴ Dennis Duling and Norman Perin, *The New Testament: Proclamation and Parenesis, Myth and History*, 3rd ed. (U.S.A.: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994), i.

³⁵ Robert C. Solomon and Jennifer K. Greene, *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics through Classical Resources* (U.S.A: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), 407-423.

freedom and responsibility. To be human and historical means breaking any religious or non-religious norm that reduces the human being into nothingness or just a thing.

In relation to Sartre's philosophy of history, Friedrich Nietzsche discerns that there are motivating values why the human being studies or engages in history. The first is monumental. The human being wants to create memories in future generations such as by engaging in different forms of heroic acts or achievements. This is by being pro or anti status quo. The second is antiquarian such as having sentimental values of past events or antique artifacts that preserve the identity of certain individuals and communities. And the third is critical function of history. This divulges the imperfection, corruption, and hypocrisy of the first and the second motivations of studying and engaging history. This attempts to correct and improve the historical lapses of any person or group of people. This parallels with biblical prophets' judgment on the old history and vision for a new world to come.

We commonly define history as the study of human or societal events in the past, which were either trivial or more memorable happenings. Usually we easily forget trivial events and classify memorable events as turning point or historic.

History relates with theology because the latter affirms that God reveals Himself in and is even the Lord of history. Besides, God concerns on the salvation of humanity that takes place in history (salvation history). If theology divorces from history, the exodus event and the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ can just be considered as mythical in a common but not in a technical sense.

Studying history depends on the level of consciousness of its learners and participants. It starts from oral traditions. When culture grows, e.g., the birth of civilization, its oral traditions transform into written form. When human consciousness grows, the understanding of history, which later creates traditions, deepens and broadens. This gives birth to philosophy and theology of history. Both philosophy and theology of history leaves to us the following questions: A. what is really meant by history? B. How does history move forward? C. What is the direction of history? These questions usually belong to secular or merely human knowledge.

Due to our limited grasping of all dimensions of history, we just selectively study and write history itself. For example, is it social, political, economic, cultural, religious (or church history)? Is it tribal, local, national, and world? Is it a history of thoughts or philosophy?

Aside from the question of interest, being selective in studying history implies biases. The writer of history selects documents which serve a particular purpose (e.g., preserving the identity of certain social groups). Biases do not mean history includes lying. Being historical depends on artifacts and documented events.

Criticizing history, not only its facts but also its movement, belongs to philosophy and theology of history. Philosophy explains to theology the objective data of historical processes. Theology directs and judges historical processes explained by philosophy.

Philosophy either pessimistically or optimistically views history. The example of the pessimistic view of history is this perception of Nietzsche:

History is just a futile cycle of birth and decay, that civilizations, like the individuals, appear only to die and be buried, that there is in fact no future for the world saved a tragic repetition of what has already been.

The optimistic view of history is like this observation of Marx:

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.³⁶

Human history has following characteristics.³⁷ The first pertains to intention and purpose. “*The presence of action and purpose makes an event historical*” (Tillich). The second is human freedom, which transcends the given situation and leaves the real for the sake of the possible. The third is the production of the new in terms of meaning, i.e., every concrete event is unique and its totality is incomparable. And the fourth is the significant uniqueness of universal, particular, and teleological sense of historical events.

The distinct feature of Judeo-Christianity directs the ambiguity of history through the Judeo-Christian doctrines of history, namely, creation, incarnation, and eschaton. In the doctrine of creation history begins with creation itself. Besides, creation is an ongoing process. The belief in the Divine providence falls under the doctrine of creation. The doctrine of the Divine

³⁶ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (London: SCM Press, 1988), 123.

³⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 300-305.

providence has three fundamental meanings, namely, the directing creativity of God, the power to preserve the structure from the point of view of continuation, and directing towards a *telos* or aim.³⁸

Providence is the continuous directing creativity of the creative ground of being here and now in past and future. The symbol of providence should not be confused with a deterministic description of the process of being. And certainly, the divine activity within and through this process should not be described as a pre-established divine mechanism with which God sometimes interferes...Providence creates and directs through human freedom as it creates through the spontaneity of all living beings and the centered structures of everything that is.³⁹

The doctrine of Incarnation stresses that from the very beginning of creation God participates in history through the presence of intermediaries, prophets, and sages and finally through the humanity of Jesus. God, through the *Logos* that became flesh, works to transform politics, economics, culture, and religion which express history. Incarnation tells us that history for Judeo-Christianity in general is one despite its complexities in its particularities. The goal of history searches for a greater sense of humanity.

The doctrine of eschaton pertains to the last things or what ultimately happens in the future. It envisions for the renewal, liberation, reintegration, and restoration of Gods corrupted, alienated, and fragmented creation.

Based on these historical principles, Judeo-Christianity looks at history as linear rather than cyclical or "*history repeats itself*." The Christian doctrines of history serve as a critique to the following philosophies of history: world-cycles, historical idealism (Hegel), historical materialism (Marx), and protest against the corrupting influence of civilization (Jean Jacques Rousseau).

Related to the Christian doctrine of history, we need to familiarize the modes of time to redirect history itself. For one of the ancient Greek perspectives, which later became a classical Christian theology and philosophy of history articulated by Tillich, time has been classified into two.⁴⁰ The first is *chronos*, which refers to watch time, clock time, and measurable time that run

³⁸ Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue with Students*, ed. Mackenzie Brown (Great Britain: SCM Press-William Glows and Sons Ltd., 1965), 125-138, 149-153.

³⁹ Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, ed. and intro. J. Mark Thomas (GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 157-158.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, 125-138, 149-153.

according to the movement of stars. The second is *kairos*, which can be applied socially and individually. For our common sense terms, *kairos* pertains to “timing” or “turning point.”

Besides, *kairos* means the following:

[it is] a right moment, not only moment, but the particular moment of God’s choosing when time and history are fulfilled. [For the individual life, this is] the outstanding moment in a person that is something new, unexpected, transforming break into his/her life...It is something that happens to us which has to do with ultimate meaning of our life.⁴¹

The Judeo-Christianity’s ultimate goal of history liberates societies and the whole of God’s creation through having the greater sense of humanity, community, and justice. However, the following factors hinder this historical project. The first is the uniqueness of history itself. This means, within one national or world history there are also micro-histories, which differ in terms of purpose, goal, etc. Usually the dominant historical force prevails. The second is the tension which must be the authority to be followed in historical processes. The examples are religion versus ideology, capitalism versus communism, antiquity versus modernity, clash among or between different personalities in epoch making, scientism versus superstition, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, etc. The third is the difference of levels of consciousness and cultural development among all people. This implies conflict of loyalties such as the following: Belief or philosophy? Scientism or primitive technology? The fourth pertains to the different levels of intensity in moving history forward such as either static or dynamic, either cyclical or linear, either evolutionary or revolutionary, and either reformation or transformation. And the fifth pertains to different priorities in moving history forward such as either civilization or humanization and either liberation or development.

With the above-mentioned ambiguous challenges, we can conclude that history is a continuous tension, a tug of war, between the collision and consolidation of forces of different movements.

In attaining liberation, humanity must have this attitude towards history:⁴²

History is not mere facts. History is not mere chronology. It is not the past and nothing more, the past that cannot do anything about. History has life. It is alive with meanings

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Choan Seng Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 20-21.

that defy the past, transcend the present, and envision the future. History is not to be memorized but to be interpreted. It is not just to be remembered but to be understood. It is not finished at any point in time but it is created and re-created. History is the movement of life – life emerging from the dark past, struggling to live the present, and striving for fulfillment...A theologian, must then, be an interpreter of history.

For Martin Buber, any historical condition depends on what philosophical anthropology that motivates any person or community. This implies ethics that determine human relationship. Buber discerns that there are two dimensions of human relationship, namely, the “I-Thou” and the “I-It” relationships.⁴³ The “I-Thou” affirms the dignity of every person. It reflects the honest relationship of a person with God. It looks at any person as sacred regardless of his/her religious, political, social, economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. It does not qualify and objectify any person. This results in a dialogical, interpersonal, and communal relationship between and among different people. The “I-Thou” relationship puts an end to the different dimensions of contradiction in human history.

The “I-It” relationship contrasts the characteristics of the “I-Thou” relationship. The former qualifies and objectifies any person. In this sense, a person regards other persons as things or commodities, which results in the fragmentation and disintegration of history.

Albert Camus parallels the practical consequences of Buber’s philosophy of history that roots in philosophical anthropology. He asserts that the historical goal of authentic humanity is the love of life alone.⁴⁴ This gives life meaning and it is its meaning. The love of life leads the human being to stubbornly insist on living to the fullest. Being stubborn to insist on living to the fullest, the human being must rebel or revolt against mundane standards, whether pro or anti status quo, that make human existence absurd and meaningless. To acknowledge that life is meaningless and unacceptable means that one must make it meaningful by using reason amidst the world’s indifference to reason itself.

The historical condition depends on the stage of life achieved by humanity. Soren Kierkegaard discerns that life’s road has three stages.⁴⁵ The first is aesthetic. It is a life in natural

⁴³ <http://www.rjgeib.com/barich/papers/martin-buber.html>

⁴⁴ Solomon and Greene, 395-406.

⁴⁵ Harold Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy: An Introductory Textbook*, 3rd ed. (NY: American Book Company, 1959), 296.

and biological levels which concern only on sensuous enjoyment. The life of immediacy, senses, and emotions dominate the stage. The second is ethics, which preserves aesthetic beauty and the rational and social order. It is the initial stage that humanity becomes aware of its vocation. The third or the highest stage is religious. In this stage the human being discovers the meaning of his/her existence and sees him/herself as an individual who stands alone before God. Theologically, not all forms of personal convenience and collective consensuses, which are axiological foundations, accord with the Divine will. In all historical movements, the radical contradiction between human values and Divine values exists. Kierkegaard calls it as an “unbridgeable gulf between God and the world, the Creator and the creature, Supernature and nature.”⁴⁶ In this sense, God stands above all social and ethical standards.⁴⁷

History’s importance preserves the identity of any socio-historical entity. It provides us a framework in guiding and shaping our historical objectives. For example, why Reformation or Protestantism came into being? What is meant to be a Protestant in an ever-changing world with its slogan “*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (“a church reformed, always being reformed.”?) Or, Mikhael Gorbachev says, “*Without historical roots there is no nation; a tree without roots withers and dies.*”

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow have the same significance for Judeo-Christianity. The Exodus (liberation) happened in the antiquity. It is being reenacted today for those who have conscience to look at the destiny of the world. The reenacting of the Exodus is being inspired and sustained by past events and envisioned liberation in the future. This is the same with the essence of thought of Heidegger, which says, “*Human being is the being of the past, present, and future.*” We are products of different events in the past. The state of our future depends on the condition of our being in the present. That’s why for Bultmann the “[human being] must live from the future instead from the past” in order to attain liberation. The conflict in Mindanao, for example, can be attributed to our being deeply rooted in the past. The tension continues between sovereignty (government) and history (Bangsa Moro people’s claim of their territory and history).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 295.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 296.

The Lukan account of the Gospel stresses the centeredness of Christ in history. History shapes our being or our being shapes history. That's why St. Paul writes,

If anyone is joined to Christ he is a new being. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (II Cor. 5:17, RSV).

For Tillich, the New Being serves as the criterion in judging our history and destiny. The four characteristics of history cannot be liberating unless the historical agent purifies his motive, thoughts, words, objectives, and actions.

Finally, former Philippine Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani left to us this wisdom:

Watch your thought, it may be your word. Watch your word, it may be your action. Watch your action, it may be your habit. Watch your habit, it may be your lifestyle. Watch your lifestyle, it may be your destiny.

F. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Ecology

Theology upholds the integral wholeness of life, nature, and creation. In the context of ethics, it affirms the sacredness of life (e.g., Matthew 5:23 6:25b). Through ethics, theology informs the human being that he/she is just the steward of God's creation. The theological concept of stewardship criticizes the prevailing economic ideology of the capitalist globalization which cements privatization, liberalization, and deregulation of economy. But primarily, the Judeo-Christian concept of stewardship criticizes the human being's acquisitiveness, his/her extremely insecure craving for more wealth, power, and fame which tremendously threaten the physical environment.

While theology cultures the stewardship of nature, ecology informs theology about the scientific processes in maintaining the beauty, balance, and harmony of the mother earth. Ecology informs theology how to prevent human-made ecological disasters like knowing the following laws of ecosystem: interrelatedness of things, law of transformation, dynamic equilibrium, and balanced pole.

The New Testament mentions three levels of life.⁴⁸ The first is *bios*, which is the root word of biology. In its negative connotation, this is life in the state of corruption, poverty, and decay that needs redemption. *Bios* parallels with the Filipino idiom “*Isang kahig, isang tuka.*” (*One scratch off the ground, one peck [as what a chicken does].*)⁴⁹ The other synonymous negative characteristics of *bios* are the following: choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, pride of life, arrogance about one's own resources and possessions, etc. The neutral definitions of *bios* are the following: whole living, goods of this life, conduct of life, etc.

The second level of life is *psyche*. In its negative description, *psyche* worries and is anxious of social pressures which are mostly hazardous to health and environment (e.g., vices) such as assimilating us to unnecessary luxuries or consumerism. It is described as competitive life that longs for fame, power, and prestige.⁵⁰ Its other negative connotations are the following: self-centered or self-sufficient, etc.

But the will of God is the third level, i.e., *zoe* (“*resurrection-life, “life-giving spirit,” “grace-life,” “life of heaven begun here on earth,” “the essence of what is sometimes called ‘realized eschatology,’ ” “health,” etc.*). This relates with eternal/everlasting, sustainable, and abundant life or life in its fullness or projecting one’s self into a possibility that lies before him/her, etc. This parallels with the ethics of sustainable development, which concerns economically and environmentally. Also, the wisdom of the anonymous Amerindian chieftain says, “*Let us not destroy nature because we have just borrowed it from our children’s children and grandchildren.*”

⁴⁸ Cf. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman, *New Theology [No. 10]* (N.Y., NY: The Macmillan Co., 1973), vii-xxii; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 203-210; O.A. Piper, “*Life*,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia in 4 Vols., Vol. , 126-130*; Arthur Burton Calkins (2006), ‘The Tripartite Biblical Vision of Man: A Key to the Christian Life’ [<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/calkins/biblanth.htm>. Last Update: December 24, 2006]; Geddes MacGregor, *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*, ed. Lucius Garvin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), 192-198.

⁴⁹ This is an idiomatic expression for people living in below poverty line or sub-human condition, esp. a hand to mouth existence.

⁵⁰ However, as one of the Greek root words of spirit and life, most of the connotations of *psyche* are neutral and positive, e.g., “*person,*” “*self,*” “*vitality,*” “*being alive inherent in the human being as a striving, willing, purposing self,*” etc. Cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 203-210.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus uses the salt as a simple metaphor to describe our distinct function as caretakers of God's creation. Our functions, which manifest the aim of our existence, are as follows. First, the salt preserves many things. Therefore, we exist in order to preserve life in nature and its sustainability to future generations. Second, the salt fertilizes some plant species. Thus, we exist to nourish the earth aside from preserving its fertility. Third, the salt functions as a medicine or heals some maladies. Hence, we exist in order to heal the land, society, and the broken world. Fourth, the salt cleanses and purifies. Therefore, we exist to cleanse and purify the polluted and corrupted environment beginning from our polluted thoughts and intentions. And fifth, the salt savors foods. Therefore, we must value aesthetics not only in taste but also in a wider setting, especially in preserving the beauty and harmony of nature.

G. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Economics

Economics concerns about the dynamics of material needs of human beings. Religion, theology, and ethics aim for abundant life for human beings. Besides, religion, theology, and ethics teach justice, righteousness, and mercy which are fundamental ways of life in harmonizing labor, production, distribution, and consumption of earth's resources (e.g., Leviticus 25; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 23:23, etc.). Religion, theology, and ethics must look at and judge the economic and technological development within the context of total liberation of humanity and universe. Thus, Mahatma Mogandas Gandhi says, "*The resources of the earth are enough for human need, not for human greed.*"

H. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Politics and Law

If a person wishes to become a brilliant lawyer in our present Philippine standard, he/she must master three factors: fluency in English, sharpness in memory, and logic. Besides, journalism in the Philippines, which usually uses English, is the nearest course to law in our own Philippine standard. However, while the political philosophy or political science is the nearest discipline to ethics, theology is the most ideal partner of law.

The common ground between politics and religion, theology, and ethics concerns about the decision, ordering, direction, and destiny of the human being and society. Politics distinctively concerns about the allocation and distribution of power. While religion, theology, and ethics acknowledge the ultimate source of power and purify the motive of power. Religion,

theology, and ethics are the conscience of politics and law. They make power responsible and accountable to its ultimate source.

Through the law, politics prove the truth that the accused is guilty of crime through the legal system. Religion, theology, and ethics, through conscience, tell the culprit to confess the truth that he/she is guilty.

Politics and religion are inseparable even though church and state can either be separated or merged as distinct social institutions. This depends on fundamental laws of the state.

The separation of Church and state has two premises in the Philippine Constitution and By-laws. The first prohibits church ministers to run for elective public offices while they are still in active official service in their respective religious institutions. The second prohibits the government institution to donate portions of public funds to any religious institution.

In other countries, however, the church separates from the state. But church ministers are acknowledged and compensated by their governments as civil servants. The church-state separation, in this sense, means non-interference of the state in doctrinal matters of the church, etc.

The Bible is one of authoritative resources of Christian religion and ethics. It focuses on the society that covers politics. It does not only talk about the human being in relation to God alone. It mentions different stories about ancient politics (e.g., shifting from the tribal confederacy or theocracy to monarchy in Judges, I/II Samuel, I/II Kings, etc.). It mentions about wise political advices and exercises (e.g., Proverbs, prophetic books, etc.). It suggests and prescribes qualities of persons, which must rule or lead nations and communities (e.g., Deuteronomy 17:14-21).

The Bible is ambiguous in its stand when talking about the religious institution's relationship with the state. For example, Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:11-17 instruct Christians to obey state authorities whereas Revelation 13 stirs Christians to defy the beast which symbolizes the tyrant Roman emperor (Domitian) demanding Roman citizens to worship him. However, the three books in the New Testament (Romans, I Peter, and Revelation) were written in different contexts. Therefore, the church and state relationship depends on the manner the state govern its citizens. Both Romans 13 and Revelation 13 are not absolute.

In the Philippine context, Romans 13, which urges submissiveness to political authorities, has been abused by fundamentalist adherents who conform to the right wing politics suppressing subversives whereas the left-leaning Christians have the phobia with the same chapter. But before conforming to this biblical passage, one must consider objective theories of Biblical scholars why Romans 13 was written and addressed to Christian groups in the particular historical setting. First, Romans 13 must not be separated from Romans 12. The latter warns Christians to be non-conformist to the world (sp. verse 2). Second, Romans 13 must not be divorced from its own premise that all authority is derived from God (sp. vs. 1b). This sounds subversive for pagan Roman emperors demanding worship from their subjects to unify their empire. Third, the book of Romans was written when Emperor Nero's early reign introduced some social reforms that eased the hardship of poor and underprivileged Roman citizens.⁵¹ In other words, during his early rule, Emperor Nero deserved to be obeyed. But we do not know how St. Paul reacted when Emperor Nero became a paranoid later. Fourth, the essence of the content of the passage is selective, i.e., only the offender of the law deserves to be penalized (sp. vs. 3). And fifth, which is somewhat subjective and dangerous, i.e., St. Paul, who wrote Romans, was just a captive of his positive experience with his being a Roman citizen. This was because he benefited positively from his Roman citizenship. However, his willingness to die in Christ's name subverts this theory. His willingness to die goes beyond our impression about him as benefiting selfishly from his Roman citizenship.

Likewise, the Bible informs us why the state came into being. It teaches us what must be the primary functions of the state through its formal authorities (Proverbs 8:15-20; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5). It tells us that the state functions in order to serve God's justice which assures peace, stability, and prosperity. In this sense, these triplets in politics cannot be separated from each other: peace, power, and justice (Everett Mendoza).

While Plato suggests to us an ideal king by saying, "*Unless the philosopher becomes king or the king becomes philosopher, there is no hope for the state,*" the ideal leadership for

⁵¹ Merrill Tenney C, *New Testament Survey*, rev. Walter M. Dunnet (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 8-9.

Christianity is the politics of Jesus, i.e., the humble servanthood or kenosis [self-emptying] (e.g., Mark 10:42-45; Philippians 2:5-11). Luther parallels this leadership model by saying,

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.⁵²

This corrects the culture of totalitarian individualism and totalitarian collectivism that subjugate the will of individuals. It corrects the mindset that servanthood tramples one's dignity. Aside from freedom, Christian servanthood still upholds Maslow's hierarchy of needs, especially the self-actualization and self-realization. Ability and availability to serve in this sense go together.

Related to social and political authority, Calvin supports Luther's model of servanthood mentioned above through the following concepts and levels of sovereignty: The first is the sovereignty of God in the universe. The second is the sovereignty of Christ in salvation. The third is the sovereignty of the Bible in faith and conduct. And the fourth is the sovereignty of the individual conscience in interpreting and applying faith.

Therefore, religion, especially Christianity, cannot and must not separate from politics. This is because the Bible itself, which is an authority of Christian religion, theology, and ethics, is basically political.

I. Religion, theology, and Ethics with Medicine

Christianity's main theological, ethical, and religious concern is the salvation of the human being in relation to God. Salvation has two spheres. The first is the state of humanity's relationship with God which has the following stages: conversion, justification, sanctification and vocation, consummation, and transformation. The second is the state of social relationship manifested in political, economic, cultural, and religious systems, which determines human and social conditions. The state of human relationship reflects the authenticity and maturity of humanity's relationship with the Divine.

There are so many Biblical descriptions of salvation. One example is the concern for the health of the human being. The name Jesus is derived from Hebrew and Greek root words for

⁵² Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 277.

salvation, i.e., “*delivering people from all forms of physical, spiritual, psychic, demonic, and cosmic bondage to a condition of restored wholeness and soundness.*”⁵³

In the Bible salvation relates with peace (Heb. *Shalom*), i.e., “*wholeness*” or “*well-being.*” In Latin salvation is derived from *salvus*, which means, “*healthy*” or “*whole.*” Another Latin word for salvation is *salus*, which means, “*welfare.*” The example is the old Roman law *Salus populi est suprema lex*, i.e., “*The welfare of the people is the supreme law.*”

God concerns for physical health whereas medicine focuses on how to take care our health or cure our maladies, especially our physical bodies. However, health is also partially a by-product of social and environmental dynamics. This relates directly with the government budget for health program, physical environment, etc. God’s vision for *shalom* focuses not only on the whole physical body of the human being. It embraces the whole creation (e.g., Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-5 and 22:1-3) which includes politics (political liberation), economics (abundance), and culture (cultural regeneration).

The other derivative words of salvation, which embrace the whole of social dynamics, are the following.⁵⁴ The first is the Hebrew *ga'al*, i.e., “*to redeem, recover the properties which fell into alien hands, to purchase back (e.g., fr. slavery).*” The second is the Hebrew *deror*, i.e., “*release*” (e.g., freeing of slaves) or “*liberty*” or “*liberation.*” The third is the Hebrew words *shamath* and *shemittah*, which mean, “*to withdraw one’s hand, to let go, or to liberate.*” The fourth is the Hebrew verb *hoshia* (“*to save*”), which refers to the liberation of people from physical oppression and from conditions of material distress like droughts and famine. The fifth is the Hebrew *hassil* (*saving people from foes, salvation of individual from physical peril*). The spiritual meaning of *hassil* relates with the problem of transgression and atonement of sin (Psalms 39:8; 79:9). The sixth is the Greek *aphieme*, i.e., “*to release from debts, liberation/release from slavery, captivity, oppression, disease, and sin.*” The seventh is the

⁵³ John E. Alsup, “*Salvation,*” in Harper’s Dictionary of the Bible, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier et al, (San Francisco: Harpers and Row, Publishers, 1985), 894-895.

⁵⁴ Allan Richardson, “*Salvation,*” in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia in 4 Vols., Vol. 4, 168-181; Kinsler and Kinsler, 84, 159; John E. Alsup, “*Salvation,*” in Harper’s Dictionary of the Bible, 894-895; *The Jubilee Challenge: Utopia or Possibility?: A Jewish and Christian Insights*, ed. Hans Ucko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 63; Perry Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible’s Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1987), 41-43.

Greek *sozein*, i.e., “save, save alive, rescue from physical peril or death,” etc. And the eighth is the Greek *soteria*, i.e., “saving, deliverance, safety,” etc.

J. Religion, Theology, and Ethics with Education

In conveying the Word, religion, theology, and ethics make a person become a real human being through developing his/her whole potential. Via theology and ethics, Christianity cultivates the sense of humanity, community, and justice. The grand virtues of humanity, community, and justice ground on the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Education concerns about the quest for effective ways of learning processes and gaining insights (e.g., authoritarian, laissez-faire, experimental approaches of education) how to attain the sense of humanity, community, and justice.

Also, religion, theology, and ethics stress on living out consistently with what we have learned and gained from processes of gaining knowledge. Theology and ethics harmonize or reconcile education with character.

It was Plato who popularizes the philosophy that the aim of education is to let the human being attain self-realization and self-actualization to the fullest.

Brueggemann suggests mode, attitude, habit, and process of intellectual and educational enterprise in articulating and summarizing the contents of wisdom literature in the Old Testament.⁵⁵ First, to discern order is the basic criterion of possessing wisdom. Second, the construction and maintenance of the human community is a human task. This implies that the level of wisdom we have attained, which goes together with our knowledge and education, shapes the kind of social order we live in. Third, the doing that the human person must do is premised on good knowing. We must not be passive recipients of knowledge. Rather, we must be generators of the new knowledge not known before. Fourth, the new knowledge we generate must be stated dialectically. It must be challenged and tested again by questions raised by the new trends of life. And fifth, the dialectic must be stated repeatedly in the light of fresh experiences of life.

⁵⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 67-90.

Christ, the greatest wisdom teacher, corrects his prejudicial, competing, and presumptuous disciples that they must have child-like (but not childish) character which is a prerequisite to enter God's Kingdom. We can describe the innocent child to have following characteristics which are analogous of enlightenment. First, the innocent child fully trusts a person whom he/she perceives to be an authority figure. Our sole authority, whom we put our total trust and swear our allegiance, is no other than God and His laws.

Second, the innocent child possesses a mind which is like an empty sheet of paper. This implies, therefore, that we must be open and ready to empty again and again our minds despite our advanced knowledge. This opens and allows new rooms and spaces for new insights from fresh experiences of life. In this sense, presumptuous attitude and fixated minds have no room for growth.

Third, the innocent child inquisitively, exploratively, and wondrously raises new and honest questions out of old topics. This means that our old concern in life, such as pursuing knowledge and wisdom, must be tested and challenged repeatedly on its relevance in the ever-changing time.

Fourth, the innocent child transgresses his/her boundaries of relationship with his/her fellow innocent children such as by having no class distinction in dealing with playmates. This implies that we must transgress some norms or principles, such traditionalistic culture, in order to give way to more possibilities which improve life.

Fifth, the innocent child enjoys with simple things and condition of life. He/she does something out of his/her very ordinary condition of life. This implies that inventiveness, with the purity of intention, must be our primary concern. The vastness of our natural resources is only a secondary concern to attain economic stability and prosperity which describe the coming of God's Kingdom. The question of our creativity and inventiveness in relation to natural resources and the Divine must be our paramount concern.

And sixth, the innocent child is vulnerable in his/her being explorative and inquisitive. In other words, we are also limited and not exempted from risky faults and errors in our quest for knowledge and wisdom to improve life. Thus, the wisdom goes on, "*We can learn from our mistakes, but we must not commit mistakes in order to learn.*"

It was Heraclitus who left to us the saying “*The only thing that endures in the world is change.*” Through education, the goal of Christian theology, philosophy, and ethics ultimately transforms God’s creation beginning from within each human person. The term transformation is just part of the broader human phenomenon, i.e., *change*. However, it is not the only condition that is confined within the human phenomenon of or for change. The other phenomena of change are reform, reformation, renewal, etc.

Transformation pertains to the conversion of the purpose of any entity, e.g., changing the agricultural tract of land into an industrial estate or making the commercial land to become a church lot. Reformation or reform does not change the purpose of things but it changes some of the processes of doing and improving things. The term renewal reclaims, recaptures, and continues to do insight received from the past which shapes the meaning of one’s existence. For example, the reformed evangelical Protestant churches, especially the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), traditionally celebrate the Reformation Sunday every last Sunday of October. But the Reformation Sunday is now called Church Renewal Sunday grounded on the tradition the Protestant evangelical churches have received and inherited from religious reformers, especially Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc. This change subtly caters the new message of the Reformation, especially ecumenism, which corrects the dark side of denominationalism.

Change differs in its levels of intensity such as being radical, drastic, and revolutionary or just being gradual and evolutionary. The intensity of change depends on our reading and analysis of a given reality which needs to be changed such as education, churches, and communities. Radical, drastic, and revolutionary changes usually take place in extremely urgent situations which threaten our very survival. Gradual and evolutionary changes take place based on our analysis and discernment on what must be the consequences of our radical actions. All levels of intensity for change have either dangerous or positive implications. Radical, drastic, and revolutionary changes are dangerous if they are driven by emotion and fanaticism rather than reason. Socrates said, “*Do not let your heart overrule your mind.*” Gradual and evolutionary change tends to be indecisive and late in a situation and awareness which demand urgent actions. The different levels of intensity for change never divorce from the use of our knowledge.

Change, therefore, either improves or worsens life though it remains the only thing that endures in the world. Our intention, means, consequences, and circumstances shape the improvement or worsening of life. Also, the improvement or worsening of life depends on how we discern things, which test the validity of many of our presumptions. Transformation enters the scene of this question or issue.

In its principles, transformation raises two questions on anything. First, how do we look at the nature and function of any thing? For example, is it true that taking up theology is really an act of dedication to God and to the church? Is it true that disciplines outside theology don't belong to God? Does it mean that once we take up theology we unconditionally dedicate ourselves to God and we are holier than those who have non-theological courses? Does it mean that once a church minister changes his career from religious to secular, he/she is no longer holy and committed to God? These are questions of redefining our perception of what is holy, sacred, and profane.

But even Jesus Christ himself was brought by the devil to the most holy place, the temple of Jerusalem. This implies that even the entity perceived to be purposively divine could also be used for evil purpose (Matt. 4:5-6). *“The history of religion is full of human attempts to participate in divine power and to use it for human purposes.”* (Tillich)

If we think that God is the *Ground of Being*, all areas of knowledge belong to the holy. Meaning, all branches of knowledge must be harnessed for the glory of God.

The second proposition of transformation stresses the purpose of any form of life. Transformation changes the purpose of things. In this context of faith, all things must be used for God's purpose. All human purposes of things must be pleasing to God. In this sense, the sacred and the profane no longer divide realities. All things belong to God's holiness. That's why St. Paul writes,

We know that in all things God is working for good with those who love him, those whom He has called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, Good News, TEV)

This implies that the question of our very purpose, aim, and depth of our being, which serves as the point of departure of our religious question, effectively corresponds to entities related to our being. The entities related to our being are human communities and ecology. In other words,

theology can also be used and abused to cater human wants like any other branches of knowledge.

Transformation moves and takes place in both education and communities. Education transforms communities or communities transform education. Transforming education depends on contents of education itself shaped by social values. It depends on the essence of being of any community. This implies looking at education itself in proper perspective and context.

The conversion of communities through education or conversion of education by communities means molding, shaping, and determining both education and communities by the divine rather than sheer human purpose. This is the meaning of being holy which is the foundation of transformation.

Transformation, therefore, integrates or reintegrates different entities which preserve the holy interconnectedness of things in nature or creation. It was John Locke who writes, “*The laws of nature are identical with the laws of God.*” Transformation interconnects and acknowledges the significant roles of all areas of knowledge in promoting and preserving the *zoe*.

Transformation realizes itself by cultivating sense of humanity, sense of community, and sense of justice eternally grounded on faith, hope, and love. As summarized by Mark K. Smith, Paulo Freire leaves to us several values and steps in attaining transformation and liberation via education.⁵⁶ The first is the emphasis of dialogue especially in the context of popular and informal education. Educators and students or pupils work each other in gaining insights. Educators and students or pupils are both learners. This is enriched by the virtue of respect especially on the part of the educatees by educators or educators by the educatees. The second concerns on praxis. This is an informed action that is linked to certain values such as making difference in the world. This enhances community and builds social capital. This leads people to attain justice and flourish humanhood. The third is the conscientization of educatees, which develops their consciousness that has the power to transform reality. The fourth is situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants in the learning process. And the fifth is the unlearn-relearn process on the part of both educators and educatees. Education condemns

⁵⁶ M.K. Smith (1997, 2002), ‘Paulo Freire and Informal Education’, *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. [www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm. Last update: December 28, 2007].

or unlearns the old and obsolete knowledge and relearns new knowledge that provides significant and liberating insights to the new trend of life or to the ever-changing condition of humanity.

This means, education always seeks relevance that corresponds to human liberation.

There are two propositions that inspire the virtue of the sense of humanity in this treatise.

The first originates from Karl Rahner (Roman Catholic), which says,

To be a Christian is to be 'explicitly human' and that to be truly human is to be an 'anonymous Christian.'⁵⁷

Christianity aims to make a person become truly human. Also, Christianity must acknowledge the challenge of non-Christians and atheists who act humanely or better than Christians in some way or another. In other words, Christianity came into being like the burning Bush experience of Moses. An anonymous thinker says, "*Religion is, because life is thwarted and denied.*"

The second proposition, which originates from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Protestant), says, "*Man must not be religious but he must be truly human.*" This relates with Bonhoeffer's "*Religionless Christianity.*" Religion in this sense is not synonymous with our common sense understanding of it. This stresses that Christianity aims to make human being free. Christianity unties the human being from the religious institution's practices that threaten human growth for total liberation. Being truly human means being religious, but being religious does not necessarily mean being truly human. Therefore, religionless Christianity concerns for the whole person. It makes a person whole. This corroborates Manfred Halpern and Oscar Suarez's "*Theology of Wholeness*" which concerns for the following: personal, political, historical and sacred.⁵⁸

The sense of humanity characterizes itself through the following. The first pertains to these *Twelve Things to Remember* authored anonymously:

1. The Value of Time
2. The Success of Perseverance

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Theology Today* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1988), 67-78.

⁵⁸ Oscar Suarez, *Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics: The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1999), xxxi-xlii.

3. The Pleasure of Working
4. The Dignity of Simplicity
5. The Worth of Character
6. The Power of Kindness
7. The Influence of Example
8. The Obligation of Duty
9. The Wisdom of Economy
10. The Virtue of Patience
11. The Improvement of Talent
12. The Joy of Contentment

The contents of *Twelve Things to Remember* derive their inspiration from this wisdom of St. Paul that connotes social philosophy and ethics:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4: 8-9, RSV)

The other spirits of the sense of humanity are courage, industry, diligence, inventiveness, quest for excellence, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, self-control, humility, gentleness, reason, liberating freedom, stewardship, self-transcendence, decency, sense of identity, sense of gratitude, sense of mystery, sense of sacredness, etc.

The second is the sense of community expressed through the following virtues: broader community cooperation and participation, unity, respect, helpfulness, law abiding as long as laws are just and reasonable, tolerance to cultures, religions, different ideas, and ethnics through which God graciously works as long as they don't threaten life and harmony, citizenship, etc.

And the third is the sense of justice that expresses itself through the following: truth, vigilance, conscience, honesty, mercy and compassion, human rights and human responsibility and accountability, people empowerment, check and balance between institutions and social groups, balance of power between institutions and social groups, clear system of responsibility and accountability, citizens' broad and limitless possibilities and opportunities, and freedom.

Genuine democracy implies justice or justice breeds democracy. That's why Reinhold Niebuhr writes,

Man's capacity to do justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to do injustice makes democracy necessary.

The grand virtues of humanity, community, and justice interlock each other. Each one manifests the other. Christian theology, philosophy, and ethics uphold the individuality of humans and their community dimension. They oppose the totalitarian individualism of capitalism and totalitarian collectivism of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism or communism.

To borrow Tillich's term, the three grand virtues are under the principle of *theonomy*, i.e., "*human autonomy informed by religious substance.*"

Christian personal and social ethics manifest Christian theology and philosophy. Christian theology and philosophy must reflect the core of Christian personal and social ethics that truly transform life, i.e., the New Being in Christ.

The New Being in Christ just culminates the Judeo-Christianity's quest for a new humanity. The Biblical stories of atonement, reconciliation, salvation, redemption, liberation, and the like manifest the quest for a new humanity which corresponds the new community and new state of Divine and human creations.

The New Being in Christ works within and transcends religion, laws, and social systems. It belongs to the religion of revelation rather than the religion of culture.

For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters. Rather, what matters is being a new creation. (Galatians 6:15, ISV)

K. Nature, Function, and Ways of Truth

Truth is the common ground between religious and secular knowledge. However, it remains abstract in usual experiences. It is difficult to be defined and described though it is and must be the criterion to explore knowledge, wisdom, ideas, and even in our daily conduct. In the context of ethics, it is one of the elements of justice. In our common sense we usually equate it with realities or facts of life. But there are also realities and facts which are full of lies and falsehood. Telling the reality or fact that you or I have lied is a form of truth. But covering up the truth that you or I have lied is a form of falsehood.

Truth has dual effects in ethics. It is either violent or it harmonizes our living. To tell the truth that some political leaders are guilty of “*juetengate scandal*”⁵⁹ or ZTE-NBN scandal⁶⁰ distrusts, outrages, and destabilizes society. The scandal loses the confidence of scrupulous and militantly vigilant citizens. Our truthfulness to our promises and relationship, such as through honesty, preserves trust, confidence, and stability. Besides, truth is very dangerous if it is transmitted to irresponsible people especially gossipers and spreaders of intrigues.

Aside from its dual effects, truth has both objective and subjective characteristics. In terms of objectivity, there must be formal criteria to judge whether there is truth that a person violates the morality of society. This could be embodied in our legal systems, code of ethics, and other areas of knowledge depending on the context of our quest for truth. For the materialist philosophy, the truth about presumed existing objects means “*to see is to believe.*”

The subjective character of truth informs us that formal criteria in searching for truth are limited. The subjective side of truth informs us that telling about a certain truth corresponds to our honesty or hidden intention. Hidden motives cannot be determined by formal criteria. Formal criteria can be exploited and abused by hidden intentions to serve one’s selfish end, e.g., the habit of unscrupulous lawyers to circumnavigate the law. In other words, there are literal statements which seem to be sound that cannot be measured by the standard of speculative logic.

Truth can be described through the following. First, in the context of philosophy and theology, it must have no inner contradictions in its ideas, no inconsistencies on the part of its adherents or advocates. With matters of religion, worship in this sense is not divorced from one’s lifestyle and occupation. This notion relates with the three ways of testing the truth, which are as follows.⁶¹ The first is the test of coherence, i.e., there must be no inner contradictions in our speculative and presumptuous ideas. The second is the test of correspondence, e.g., our claims or statements fit to the actual condition. Our actions reflect our fundamental beliefs. And the third is

⁵⁹ This is an idiom for plunder committed by the former Philippine President Joseph E. Estrada related to the sort of gambling called “jueteng.” The term “juetengate” is somehow likened to the late U.S. Pres. Richard Nixon’s “Watergate Scandal.”

⁶⁰ This is an alleged anomalous business transaction between the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with the Chinese government related to the Philippine government’s transportation and communication system project.

⁶¹ Titus, 63-72.

the test of utility, e.g., our ideas are true only if they produce positive results in their areas of application.

Second, truth is relative in terms of its historical stages, i.e., the truth yesterday might no longer be the truth for today and tomorrow. The Protestant foreparents, such as Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc., exposed sincerely the truth about anomalies in the Christian Church. But their courage to expose church grievances does not guarantee us today that those who adhere to their fundamental principles are really sincere and honest Protestants. This implies that truth searches for relevance. That's why in the context of theology truth is classified traditionally into eternal and temporal.

Furthermore, truth is relative in its context of application. This means, every area of knowledge has its own purpose. It presents a truth that corresponds to its functions. The truth of science differs from the truth of theology, religion, and ethics. But the truths of both science and theology or religion or ethics are just the same truth of God expressed in different realms. Thus, Henry Margenau distinguishes science and religion through the following explanation:⁶²

The scientist starts with an observation. This observation is then interpreted in terms of the concepts that are associated with it. These concepts allow him to reason, and he finally emerges with a prediction which says that if the original observation was true, then something else must also be true on the perception.

Religion is the experience of the feeling of gratitude that springs up in the human heart on a joyous day, the monitoring awareness of a conscience that regulates the lives of most of us, the feeling of awe in the face of overwhelming beauty, the guiltful contrition that follows a sinful experience, the sentiments of misery and abandon at the insufficiency of human power before fate, the longing for grace and for redemption.

The depth and mystery of truth can be explored and reached only by constant questioning in all directions on matters relating to our survival and freedom. All angles of knowledge (unified approach) and all areas of knowledge (integral approach) must be tested in their presumptions aside from affirming their interconnectedness.

Truth enlightens, through old and new information, those who are hungry of knowledge and liberation. As a matter of fact, Buddhism equates enlightenment with salvation which is synonymous with liberation.

⁶² *Science Ponders Religion*, ed. Harlow Shapley (NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), 108, 114-116.

Theology classifies truth into two, the *revealed* and *discoverable* truths. The revealed truth pertains to the Word of God which questions our own natural theology. It deals primarily with the problems of human existence in relation to God, the self, fellow humans, and nature.

There are many ways that God allows Himself to be understood by humans. The Bible is one primary source of the ways to understand God. Luther, however, leaves to us the wisdom which says, “*Jesus Christ is the bible within the bible, the most important key to the whole biblical message...Apart from the Holy Spirit the scripture is empty.*” This pertains to the final revealed truth that deals with how Jesus Christ lives up his humanity related to living a right relationship with God, with fellow humans, with self, and with nature. Christ lives up his humanity according to the expectation of God rather than according to the wishes of humans through their established standard usually patterned on the laws of nature.

The discoverable truth pertains to human wisdom and knowledge which focus on dynamics of nature and society. Philosophy and different divisions and branches of science fall under the discoverable truth.

Both revealed and discoverable truths are present in the Bible. This implies that the human being lives in two orders, i.e., “*the human and the divine.*” (Tillich)

The revealed truth, which belongs to the sphere of religion, reminds and guides the discoverable truth how to use our worldly knowledge, skills, and wisdom. The discoverable truth, which belongs to the secular sphere, informs the revealed truth on dynamics and laws of nature.

The revealed truth has ethical dimension. It guides and inspires the discoverable truth to improve more the latter and become excellent in its service to humanity. The discoverable truth is neutral in its never-ending quest for knowledge and skills. But it becomes disastrous if ethics does not govern it in relation to the question of life’s purpose, meaning, and aim of existence. Loving the truth, therefore, puts things in proper perspective and context in order to avoid disastrous overlapping of functions of different disciplines. This prevents religion to become superstitious and fanatical. Truth informs science that the latter cannot explore and penetrate the

dimension of mystery. Thus, Ferre helps us distinguish religion from the secular knowledge through the illustration which is as follows:⁶³

The field of science pertains to fact and function. The field of philosophy pertains to meaning. And the field of religion is salvation.

In terms of realm, science operates in the material world; philosophy operates in the mental world; and religion operates in the spiritual world.

Also, Georgia Harkness sharply distinguishes the characteristics of philosophy, science and theology through the following comparison:⁶⁴

Philosophy is the study of the structure of reality as a whole and of the categories of relationship between parts which give meaning to the whole. Science pertains to the empirical inquiry aimed at the discovery of facts in any area of observable reality; particular sciences are specialized investigations and compilations of related data within chosen field. Theology is the systematized correlation of what is believed to be true in the field of particular historic religion; Christian theology is systematized belief within the area of Christian religion.

Furthermore, King made the following distinction between and science and religion:

Their [science and religion] respective worlds are different and their methods are dissimilar. Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge which is power; religion gives man wisdom which is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals. They are complementary. Science keeps religion from sinking into the valley of crippling irrationalism and paralyzing obscurantism. Religion prevents science from falling into the marsh of obsolete materialism and moral nihilism.⁶⁵

Besides, Tillich argues,

Science is the cognitive approach to the whole of finite objects, their interrelations and their processes. Religion is the total approach to that which gives meaning to our life and, therefore, concerns us unconditionally and ultimately. Dimensions cross each other, but they do not conflict each other. All conflicts occur if the difference between the dimensions is denied and the two functions of man's spiritual life are seen on one and the same level. And this happens under two conditions, the one, if science confuses its religious and metaphysical matrix with its methodologically gained results. Wherever this happens the scientist becomes a theologian, and in some respect, every scientist is a theologian, however hidden and absurd his theology may be. But if he expresses his theology as an implication of his scientific method and as a result of his research, he confuses the dimensions; and people with another theology necessarily conflict with him.⁶⁶

The complementary and dialectical relationship of spirituality or spirit with philosophy and sciences has been viewed by Nicolas Berdyaev as part of an Integral

⁶³ Ferre, 106.

⁶⁴ Georgia Harkness, *Foundations of Christian Knowledge* (NY: Abingdon Press), 28.

⁶⁵ King, 11-12.

⁶⁶ Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, 155.

Truth that truly liberates and assures humanity of peace and justice. God for Berdyaev is the Integral Truth.⁶⁷

Phillips discerns that there are several ways of knowing the truth from the viewpoint and in the context of Christian faith.⁶⁸ The first is authority. This is not to be equated with authoritarianism that can no longer be questioned in its relative truth presumed as absolute. It is not official, external, and legal. Rather,

it is the authority of experience as it comes to us through worship, the bible, and the lives of men who have tasted and seen how gracious the Lord is, and whose experiences remain as guideposts on our way.

The second is reason, which distinguishes clearly what is reasonable from being rationalistic. Being reasonable acknowledges that both the intellect and emotion – both ethics and logic or sciences – must go together in the pursuit of truth. In other words, humanity should not believe in and must not make it as authoritative that truth is a monopoly of intellectual rationalism or rationalistic intellectualism. To be reasonable means that truth should not only be perceived from one context and perspective.

The third is intuition or insight. This conveys that a certain truth is already built in or given in any reality which just needs to be discovered and discerned and become the source and channel of life's insight. Discovering, discerning, and fully grasping the same must involve one's whole being.

The knowledge of truth that comes by intuition is that of the whole personality – mind, heart, and imagination – responding to total situation, and gaining some immediate impression.

In the context of religion, those who can attain it are only those who are prepared to accept it regardless of their level of knowledge and skills especially those who are humble enough and have “*singleness of heart and purpose.*”

The fourth is experiment. This is not experiment in a common sense that makes any entity as just an object or a thing. This is learning by doing such as being intellectually curious

⁶⁷ Cf. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie (NY: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1952).

⁶⁸ Harold Cook Phillips, *In Bearing Witness to the Truth* (Nashville, Tennessee: Pantheon Press, MCMXLIX), 90-105.

and, at the same time, morally serious. In this sense, obedience is the criterion of truth. Phillips writes,

Christian truth is made known not in abstract thinking about life, but in being deeply involved in the living of life.

And the fifth is revelation.

[This] suggests a type of knowledge that can be obtained in no other way except it pleases God to disclose it...Our faith in revelation rests upon two assumptions:...finite man cannot of himself discover the ultimate truth and the truth is by its very nature communicative.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

Finally, Christ, the finality of God's revealed truth, teaches us to be both religious and secular in dealing with life.

If you continue with my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free (John 8:31-32, TEV).

All that is true, by whomsoever it has been said has its origin in the Spirit (Aquinas).⁶⁹

Through God's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection in Christ, God has overcome the cleavage between spiritual and material, between religious or sacred and secular. But one must bear in mind this thought of Brueggemann:

The mystery belongs only to God, who has not turned it over to a human person – not to the king or scientist [or the philosopher] or the theologian (Gen. 40:8).⁷⁰

Einstein says, "*Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind.*" Both religion and secular areas of knowledge concern about and for truth. Religion or theology starts with faith. Its doubt operates in the context of faith. Jovito Salonga says, "*You may doubt your faith but never have faith in your doubt.*" Secular knowledge, especially science, starts with doubt to attain the truth. Theology pertains to faith. Science pertains to facts. Our use of scientific discoveries depends on the power of our faith. A theologian loses his/her credibility when he/she becomes pretentious in taking over the role of a scientist except perhaps if he/she is also a scientist like Chardin of RCC. The same also with the scientist, he/she becomes an instrument of falsehood if he/she takes over the role of a theologian except perhaps if he/she is

⁶⁹ <http://www.aquinas.emory.edu>

⁷⁰ Brueggemann, 82.

also a theologian like Jonathan Edwards of Protestantism. Or, the scientist might create another religion, a quasi-religion labeled by Tillich, which is just functionally synonymous with religion or cult of scientism.

The message today to both extreme biblical literalists and extreme secularists is that we can be both religious and secular. We can be religious in our secular government even by not mentioning God so long as we constantly purify our intention in social involvement. Besides, the secular government does not mean anti-religious. It means neutral in any minor religious differences, e.g., doctrinal issues. But based on its inherent powers, specifically police power (public order, safety, security, morality, welfare, education, regulation, etc.) in maintaining comprehensive peace and order, the state is not neutral. This is because the elements of police power are major and ultimate concerns of religion. *“The secular and the religious are within each other.”* (Tillich)

Religious life is not only a private concern. It maintains the holy interconnectedness and sacredness of all areas of knowledge and concern that bear a certain truth which frees humanity and God’s creation from the absence of peace derived from the fragmentation and disintegration of humanity’s being.

The sacred (religious) does not lie beside the secular, but it is its depths. The sacred is the creative ground and at the same time a critical judgment of the secular. But the religious can be this only if it is at the same time a judgment on itself, a judgment which must use the secular as a tool of one’s own religious self-criticism...Religion must use the secular as a critical tool against itself. (Tillich)⁷¹

⁷¹ Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jeral Brauer (NY: Harper and Row Publisher, 1966), 80-94.

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