

REGIONAL WORKSHOP

Singapore Workshop Report

/C.S. Song

February 11, 2005

The Asia Task Force for *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological Education in Asia, Pacific and North America met for two days from the 28th to the 29th of January, 2005, at Trinity Theological College, Singapore.

The Task Force asked Dr. Tan Kim Huat, Dean of Studies of Trinity Theological College to moderate the meeting and Dr. Tessa Rosana, Chair of Theology Department of Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines, to be the “rapporteur.” What follows is my report to the GTU Steering Committee. I highlighted some issues that seemed to me important in the discussion and some suggestions and decisions made by the participants of the Task Force meeting.

Sharing and Reflection in the First Session

The members of the Task Force shared their reflections on the following five questions:

1. How is theological education practiced in your church and theological school?
2. What are some of the difficulties you have experienced?
3. Have you or your colleagues tried to bring some changes and innovations to theological learning and teaching?
4. What are these changes and innovations?
5. What are the obstacles and difficulties you have encountered as you try to implement these changes and innovations?

As we engaged each other in discussion of these questions and in sharing our experiences, we also kept in mind the issues such as:

1. Contextualization of Theological Learning and Teaching in a Globalized World
2. Relations between Church and Theological Education
3. Sharing and Exchange of Resources – Faculty, Students, Library, etc.
4. Developing Asian-Pacific Theological Orientations and Directions
5. Christian Theology’s Contribution to Intellectual History of Asia
6. Relation between Theological Formation and Spiritual Formation
7. Story Approach to Learning and Teaching Theology

The sharing and discussion were so lively and active that we spent almost the entire first morning engaging each other in conversation. It was said time and time again that the traditional theological education was very much West-oriented, that we should find ways to be weaned from the theological learning and teaching of the missionary past and to develop Asian-Pacific ways of doing Christian theology in very different cultural and

religious contexts. The question is how. The timeliness of *Partnerships* and its main thrusts are thus once again underscored.

Asia-Pacific *Partnerships* Steering Committee

It is obvious that any question or doubt about GTU/North America intending to dominate *Partnerships* had to be dispelled and it was dispelled after discussing its purpose, goals and implementation. Everyone in the Task Force understood that it was “partnership” on equal basis that underlies what is developed in the position paper.

Since it is partnership on equal basis, it was decided to develop *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological Education in Asia and the Pacific as an equal partner in *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological, Education in Asia, Pacific and North America. To me this is a right move. This shows how the participants of the Task Force are really serious about this exciting theological venture and how they want to contribute to *Partnerships* as equal partners with GTU. Consequently, it was proposed and decided to set up the Asia-Pacific *Partnerships* Steering Committee to coordinate the plans and programs of *Partnerships* in Asia and the Pacific and to interact with GTU/North America.

The following participants agreed to serve on the Asia-Pacific Steering Committee:

Dr. Margaretha Hendriks (Indonesia) e-mail: Teologiukim2003@yahoo.com

Dr. Richard Siwu (Indonesia) e-mail: radsiwu@yahoo.com

Rev. May Tan (Singapore) e-mail: mtan@ttc.edu.sg

Bishop Yap Kim How (Singapore)

Dr. Tessa Rosana (Philippines) e-mail: amyteess2003@yahoo.com

Dr. Cheng Yang En (Taiwan) e-mail : giongun.tin@msa.hinet.net

Dr. Dae Sung Lee (Korea) e-mail: drlee@yonsei.ac.kr

Dr. Faustino “Tito” Cruz (Berkeley) e-mail : tcruz@fst.edu

Dr. C. S. Song (Berkeley) e-mail: cssong@psr.edu

A person from the Pacific will be invited to join the Steering Committee. Dr. Ngoei, Principal of Trinity Theological College, Singapore, is expected to ask one of his faculty members who attended the Task Force meeting to serve on the Steering Committee.

Dr. Tessa Rosana (GTU alumna) was elected to be the coordinator of the Steering Committee.

With the formation of the Asia-Pacific Steering Committee, the structure of *Partnerships* emerged more clearly. I would like, therefore, to propose that under *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological Education in Asia, Pacific and North America, there be two Steering Committees, namely *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological Education in North America (GTU) and *Partnerships* in Transforming Theological Education in Asia

and the Pacific. In this way, the two steering committees can relate to each and interact with each other on equal terms.

Workshops

After considerable discussion, it was agreed to hold national workshops in 2005/6 on the dates (tentative) suggested as follows:

Korea: April 22-23, 2005

Taiwan: mid-June, 2005

Philippines: June, 2005 or 2006

Singapore: dates to be decided

Indonesia: July 22-23, 2005

The national workshops will focus on issues and themes such as:

- reflections on theological education, past and present
- envisioning theological education for tomorrow
- what is theological education for?
- specific space, location, life situations (contexts) for theology
- theological conscientization
- how to make theological sense of realities we face in Asia-Pacific?
- reality of poverty in Asia and the Pacific
- theological understanding of cultural-religious pluralism
- alternative theological approaches
- theological education and spiritual formation

Collaborative Degree Programs

There was a general agreement about needs for more efficient and in-depth degree programs directed to Asia-Pacific issues and realities. How to form a joint faculty to develop curricula and requirements will be a question for discussion in the future Steering Committee meeting.

Partnerships Bulletin

It was proposed that an occasional *Partnerships* bulletin be published. It should be different from theological journals that contain “heavy” theological articles. It should be accessible to a wider audience in language and contents. It would serve as a vehicle to;

- disseminate information about *Partnerships*
- carry reports on the Steering Committees and workshops
- indicate theological orientations and directions of *Partnerships*
- network with participating theological schools
- reflect on a particular issue in a variety of theological contexts

The two Steering Committees could take turns working on the bulletins. The first two to three bulletins may have to be planned by GTU Steering Committee.

It was also suggested that a *Partnerships* Web site be set up. The GTU Steering Committee may look into it and discuss how to go about it.

Funding

An annual budget of US \$60,000 was proposed to provide funding for

- workshops (national & regional)
- publication
- theological assembly
- meetings of the Steering Committee
- secretarial assistance

Partnerships operates on a three-year cycle. The total budget for the first three years will be US \$180,000. It was proposed and agreed that the proposal be sent to CWM (Council for World Mission) to request funding.

Concluding Remarks

The Task Force meeting held in Singapore, January 28-29, 2005, is a good start for the vision and practice of *Partnerships*. Both GTU/North America and Asia-Pacific should now be able to work towards transforming theological education as equal partners with mutual inspiration, encouragement, and sharing of resources. We have now a structure in place, although it is still provisional and needs to be improved through trial and error. It is evident that our good will and sincerity to work together with our colleagues in Asia-Pacific have been well received. We all are aware that the theological tide has changed. Many of our colleagues in Asia and the Pacific are also acutely conscious of the change. We, on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, are actively looking for ways in which we can translate this change of theological tide into our theological learning and teaching. Theological schools and churches in Asia-Pacific have a great deal to contribute to the West to transform its theological education and renewal of churches. At the Task Force meeting in Singapore a small step was taken, but it is an important step. We should keep expanding and deepening our vision, now that we have begun the first leg of our theological journey with our colleagues in Asia-Pacific. Bon voyage!