

THE CONVERGENCE OF MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

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In the struggle for Philippine democracy, two sectors have played a vital role: Christians and Marxists. During the Marcos dictatorship, the Communists led an armed opposition against the dictatorship with the objective of establishing a national democratic (ND) society. Progressive Christians opposed Marcos' authoritarian regime because of grave human rights violations and demanded the restoration of democracy.¹ Eventually, the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship led the two to converge. In their struggle for democracy and social liberation in the Philippines, Filipino Marxists and Christians started building alliances. A number of theologians began to reflect on these alliances between Marxism and Christianity.

In 1982, the "theology of struggle" was the name embraced by a group of Christian activists in the Philippines, who committed themselves to social transformation of Church and Philippine society. It has appropriated Marxist critique of Philippine society, an ideology perceived as antithetical to Christian beliefs. Marxism has transformed the way theologians understand the nature of the Church, State, politics, and democracy.

This paper will examine the relationship of theology and social theory that exists between the Theology of Struggle (TOS) and Marxism. The two main research questions of this paper are: 1) what are the convergence and divergence between the two perspectives?; and 2)

what are the implications for Philippine democracy? To answer these questions, the paper will discuss the following: 1) Marx's theory of religion and politics; 2) the contribution of Marxism to the Theology of Struggle (TOS); and 3) a proposal as to how the convergence of the two perspectives in ToS could enrich Philippine democracy.

MARXIST CRITICISMS OF RELIGION

The Marxist criticism of religion is based on a materialist philosophy which is opposed to idealist philosophy. Marx's materialism is called "historical materialism" or the "materialist conception of history." The fundamental thesis of historical materialism can be summed up in a sentence: "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness."² It emphasizes the existence of the material world independent of the ideas and perceptions and other ideas or ideal or spiritual entities which may be imagined to exist. It, therefore, does not accept the existence of God or supernatural beings.

Hence religion is a human construction, a human enterprise, a creation or invention of human beings. Marx said,

Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has already lost himself again. But, man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man-state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.³

Marx's criticism of religion belongs to the projectionist school. In other words, it is human being who creates God, projecting into this Divine Being human qualities and experiences such as intelligence, kindness, knowledge, sensibility, love and suffering. The God, whom humans worship, to whom they attribute infinite qualities, is nothing but humankind itself. Religion as an alienation is a mental construct projected away from human being and gains objective form over man; forgetting that human being is its creator, human being allows it to act back and control his life. Religion as a human product dehumanizes human beings.

The second criticism of religion is that it is an ideology - a tool in the hands of economic and political elites to cover up irrationalities of the system of production. In his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx noted:

Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people.⁴

In the above quotation, Marx is saying that religion's purpose is to create illusory fantasies for the poor. Opium is a drug that kills pain, distorts reality, and an artificial source of solace to which some poor souls can become addicted; so also is religion. Religion is "the opium of the people" because it masked the real sources of human sufferings in social life.

Religion hides the truth about suffering which is caused by economic exploitation and political repression. It tells the oppressed that this social order is OK because they will find true happiness in the next life. In truth, religion does not fix the underlying causes of people's pain and suffering; instead, it helps them forget why they are suffering and causes them to look forward to an imaginary future when the pain will cease instead of working to change circumstances.

But religion could also be "a protest against real suffering." There have been many progressive, radical and even revolutionary movements that have either taken a religious form, had a religious inspiration or been led by people of religious faith. Engels contributed a number of interesting articles about the Early Christianity and the

radical reformation.⁵ All of these religiously inspired movements failed to solve the problem of oppression, exploitation, and dehumanization.

Moreover, Marx noted that under capitalism, in class societies, the ruling class use religion to maintain their privilege and the oppressed classes to find solace in their miserable lives, hoping for miracles or rewards in the afterlife, which leads them to an alienated life. Marx saw religion as promoting submissiveness, capitulation to predestination, and resignation to fate; therefore, it is detrimental to social progress. Marx even exposed in one article the ideological function of the social principles of Christianity. He wrote:

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages, and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable...⁶

Thus, religion per se is not the problem but a symptom of the problem. So long as there is socio-economic exploitation, religion will continue to function as ideology to reinforce and legitimize the ruling class. Criticism of religion cannot be solved by theology. Marxist criticisms of religion have to go beyond religion, beyond theology.

MARXIST POLITICS

For Marx, the criticism of religion, although essentially completed, is not an end in itself, but rather a means.⁷ Marx's concern is the criticism of the social world, one rooted in the "the categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned, and despised."⁸ The goal of criticism of religion is social criticism. Criticism of religion should move away from a/theology and decisively makes it a political and economic problem. He wrote "the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."⁹ These passages make it clear that there was no need for religion. Religion was not the root of

humanity's alienation — but it was an integral aspect of it. Religions needed to be understood but not justified or rationalised. The critique of religion is subordinated to the political struggle. This is consistent with Marxist historical materialism that the process of humanity's social development is tied directly with the development of production and technology. This material condition determines how people think about the world. The only way to change society is by engaging in revolutionary struggle, and eventually in building a new society, people's ideas will definitely change.

To appreciate Marxist criticism of religion, it is important to understand Marxist politics. Marxists have asserted that the abolition of religion can only take place when the world, which sustains human beings, allows them to exist as free human beings, emancipated from alienation and exploitation.¹⁰ The goal of all criticisms is not just to interpret the world but to transform it.¹¹

To transform society, Marxists believe that the oppressed must seize control of the means of production, as well as political institutions, to create a truly democratic and equal society. Marxist famous slogan: "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!"¹² The oppressed must overthrow the old society in its entirety, transforming not only its own conditions of life, but those of other classes as well.

Hence, the struggle for social transformation is a struggle for democracy. It is neither religious nor theological, but political. All democratic struggles must be supported. Marx and Engels even acknowledged bourgeois democracy as a progressive force against the feudal system. "The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations."¹³

Also, Marx supported the struggle to end the discrimination and oppression of Jews in Germany. He upheld the principle from the French Revolution of "the right to practice any religion one chooses." He wrote:

Religion for us no longer has the force of a basis for secular deficiencies but only that of a phenomenon. Therefore we explain the religious prejudice of free citizens by their secular prejudice. We do not insist that

they must abolish their religious limitation in order to abolish secular limitations. We insist that they abolish their religious limitations as soon as they abolish their secular limitations....

The political emancipation of the Jew, the Christian, and religious man in general implies the emancipation of the state from Judaism, Christianity, and religion in general. The state as state emancipates itself from religion in the manner peculiar to its own nature by emancipating itself from the state religion, i.e. by not recognizing, as a state, any religion, by affirming itself simply as a state.¹⁴

Marx was opposed to any form of oppression and discrimination. He showed a consistently democratic position against all forms of oppression, including religious persecution. Marx with his friend Engels consistently supported the democratic struggles. In the same article, Marx made it clear that he preferred a secular state. He wrote:

Man emancipates himself politically from religion by banishing it from the field of public law and making it a private right. ... Indeed, it is not the so-called Christian state, that one that recognizes Christianity as its basis, as the state religion, and thus adopts an exclusive attitude to other religions, that is the perfected Christian state, but rather the atheist state, the democratic state, the state that downgrades religion to the other elements of civil society.¹⁵

Hence, Marxist politics can only be both democratic and radical. It is democratic because it affirms that political power should be in the hands of the working class, the majority in the Capitalist society; and radical because the goal is a classless and stateless society. Marxist radical democracy took a specific form of struggle which is class struggles. Engels wrote in the *Preface to 1883 German Edition of the Communist Manifesto*,

... all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer

emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles...¹⁶

Radical democracy is when the majority class which is the working class rules. Marxist radical democracy is the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹⁷ It is the “rule of the proletariat,” the “conquest of political power” by the working class, the establishment of a workers’ state. The proletariat would assume state power aiming to eliminate the old relations of production. It would replace these relations with a class dictatorship which would both place the productive forces under proletarian control and pave the way for the abolition of class distinctions culminating in a classless society. The dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean tyranny or absolutism or rule by a single individual, a minority, or even a single party but political rule exercised by the majority of the population. It is full democratization of society.¹⁸

It was not surprising why Marx believed bourgeois or capitalist democracy was a sham democracy because it was the rule of a minority capitalist class against the majority working class. In the capitalist mode of production, democracy becomes the form of capitalist rule. Since the state is a product of capitalist social relations, it becomes the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. As such, Marxists should work for a society in which the working class should take power and exercise control over the means of production. Genuine democracy can only be realized when the oppressed and exploited proletariat are liberated from capitalist exploitation and have full control of the state machinery.

For the Marxists, the alternative society to capitalism is communism (scientific socialism).¹⁹ Only under communism can there be true democracy. Communism is a future society, a classless society based on a free and egalitarian association of people in which there will be a common ownership of the means of production.

THE THEOLOGY OF STRUGGLE AND MARXISM

In spite of Marx’s dislike towards religion, he did not make it the primary enemy of his work and thoughts; had he regarded religion as

a more serious enemy, he would have devoted more time on it. Still, it's a challenge to those who espouse the theology of struggle (ToS) how to respond to Marx's notion of religion as opium, ideology, and a bulwark of reaction, obscurantism and conservatism. Can the theology of struggle provide a theoretical bridge between Marxism and Christianity? What are the implications for Philippine democracy?

This section presents selected themes found in the theology of struggle which indicate Marxist influence. There is no attempt to show direct or conscious borrowing from Marxism. Rarely did the various theologians acknowledge Marxist influence.

The Theology of Struggle reflected on the real and concrete struggles of people who are oppressed and exploited as a starting point.²⁰ It stressed on obtaining an authentic and sympathetic understanding of the people's life situation through actual lived experience with them. It affirmed the trustworthiness and reliability of grassroots people's insights about life and about the Christian Faith. Their experiences—pain, aspirations, and struggles—as well as faith and witness, are the very stuff that constitutes a genuine Filipino theology.

Fr. Louie Hechanova, CSsR, the person who originally proposed the name “theology of struggle” and who was deeply involved in the struggle of the most oppressed peasant labour force, the *sacadas* (transient workers) of Negros Oriental, said that the people's experience was a “struggle towards liberation” and so he proposed that the emerging Filipino theology be named “theology of struggle.”²¹

Karl Gaspar, a CSsR Brother, wrote in 1988:

If you want to know about the theology of struggle (ToS), the indigenous theology emerging in the Philippines, do not look for a book. There isn't one, and none may be written soon.... Fortunately, this new theology has been communicated in another language, a language no different from that used by the Israelites before the Bible was written. Then, as now, ToS uses literary forms – songs, poems, stories, letters, plays; as well as murals, paintings, illustrations, mime, body movements, dance and symbols. This is perhaps why one

must look at culture and liturgy if he or she is to understand ToS.²²

Former Catholic priest Fr. Edicio de la Torre who was an early practitioner and articulator of the theology of struggle said: “The emerging theology of struggle takes the form of testimonies, as martyrs speak to us after their death in their testaments of faith. We also keep them alive through songs and poems in the midst of our tears and struggle.”²³ ToS does not start from metaphysical or philosophical issues. It does not prioritize doctrinal concerns.

Similar with Marxist historical materialism, theologians of struggle began with the material condition of human beings which is the concrete, historical, economic, political, and social conditions of people who are struggling against exploitation, alienation and oppression. Dr. Levi Oracion, a professor of theology and former President at Union Theological Seminary Philippines, acknowledges this convergence between Marxism and the ToS,

There are points of coalescence between the theological witness we are making here with that of historical materialism. These are their sense of outrage at oppression and injustice, their common opposition to human being's alienated consciousness, and the willingness of their bearers to identify themselves with the poor and oppressed and take up their cause. These are very important and huge areas of agreement.²⁴

The theology of struggle and Marxism both consider the poor to be victims of injustice. The theologians of struggle and Marxists share this commitment for the emancipation of the impoverished, exploited, and alienated human beings. This commitment is a vital point of convergence.

For the theology of struggle, atheism or godless communism is neither a problem nor a threat to Philippine democracy. ToS appropriated Marxist criticism of religion as an ideology. In fact ToS criticizes the institutional Churches in the Philippines to have contributed in legitimizing the oppressive social order by giving it a sacred character. The real threat to Philippine democracy is social injustice and the massive poverty. ToS is more concerned about sufferings of the poor and ways of ending oppression.

To understand the situation of the poor, the practitioners of ToS use Marxist social and class analysis. The theology of struggle is critical of the paternalistic and charity-oriented approach to the poor especially of the institutional Churches. They were drawn to accept Marxist social analysis in understanding Philippine society because the various attempts to address the problem of poverty have failed. According to Oracion, the ToS accepted the Marxist method of social analysis for two simple reasons. On the one hand, “it offers a clear analysis of the Philippine conditions.” On the other hand, “it offers a pragmatic and realistic way of going about winning the revolution.”²⁵

Using Marxist social analysis, the theologians of struggle assert that poverty in the Philippines is not natural, but a problem of structural injustice. The root causes of social injustice are colonialism, feudalism, US imperialism including globalization and are reinforced by bureaucrat capitalism. These have generated a socio-economic and political system in which the rich, the powerful, and the landlords dominate and exploit the poor, the women, the workers and ordinary citizens. This system undermines genuine democracy and hinders social liberation. It serves and protects the interest of foreign powers and ruling elites. It suppresses the genuine aspiration and interest of the workers, peasants, and other marginalized sectors.

Marxist class analysis sharpens the Christians’ awareness to the plight of the exploited and oppressed humanity and makes concrete the call to transform Philippine society. This kind of analysis enables Christians to assume a specific class standpoint, i.e., the perspective of the poor. In other words, the class standpoint of ToS is Christian solidarity with the poor in their struggle for self-emancipation. The poor are not objects of charity, dole-out, and other form of humanitarianism but they are the subjects of their own liberation. ToS learned this insight using Marxist analysis. Here is where the connection made with a fundamental Marxist principle - “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves.”²⁶ This change is perhaps the most important contribution of Marxism to the Church's social doctrine.

This solidarity with the poor brought the practitioners of ToS into direct confrontation with political authorities. During the Marcos dictatorship, the practitioners of ToS became the number one critic of

the regime calling for the dismantling of martial law, the end to human rights violations and for the restoration of democracy.²⁷ Today, human rights advocacy is central to ToS.

In addition, the theology of struggle does not just interpret human condition, but commit to change it. The popular call of ToS is transformation of Church and society. Marxist social analysis helped practitioners of ToS understand the situation of oppression and also facilitate their line of response. Elizear Fernandez, the author of the book *Toward a Theology of Struggle*, writes:

... the theology of struggle has accepted the challenge of Marx's eleventh thesis to Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it."²⁸

The urgent concern of the theology of struggle is the transformation of the Philippine social structure, which implies the eradication of poverty and inequality. The goal of the Filipino theology of struggle is to change the existing Philippine social structure and replace it with a new one. This should include the Church.

From the Spanish period to the present, the institutional churches have sided with the rich and elites. No one can deny the domesticating influence of a Christianity that emphasizes the salvation of the soul and the heavenly rewards that await the poor and humble. ToS acknowledged that the Churches have contributed in legitimizing the exploitative social order.²⁹

The massive poverty in Philippine society is just a symptom of the social contradiction. Also, it reveals the inevitable class conflict leading to a revolutionary situation. It requires a revolutionary change of social structure. ToS calls Christians to get involved in the revolution. Dr. Everett Mendoza has written a book justifying Christians' involvement in a revolutionary struggle. In *Radical and Evangelical*, Dr. Mendoza claims that Christians are thrown into a revolutionary situation. In the context of contemporary Philippine reality, Christians "in one way or another, face and deal with the question of revolution."³⁰ This means that the Christian who is concerned with justice cannot shy away from conflict. Justice

demands that one enter the fray, that one enter into conflict and choose sides for some and against others.

According to the ToS, the struggle to transform Philippine society takes the form a class struggle. Dr. Mendoza explains it this way,

The class character of the nationalist struggle points to the double-edged thrust of the struggle for justice. In the first place, justice is something to be struggled for precisely because in actual fact it is denied and violated. Secondly, its positive content-for justice—is complemented with its negative component—*against* actual injustice. Victims of injustice cannot enjoy the fruits of justice unless the perpetrators of injustice are fought against. Injustice cannot bear forth justice or turn into justice. Justice will reign only over the rubble of injustice. And since behind every instance of injustice as well as each act of resistance to it are flesh-and-blood warm bodies of persons, at the concrete level, the struggle against injustice actually becomes the struggle of some people against other people, of one group of classes against another: a class struggle.³¹

The revolution being waged in the Philippines is a struggle for justice and against injustice. The struggle for justice is characterized by class struggle; It is the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressor.

ToS argues that the struggle of the poor may use violent or non-violent means, legal or illegal tactics.³² Although the theologians of struggle are open to both violence and non-violence, Christians however have always been ambivalent with the use of violence.³³ Perhaps the first thing that bothers most Christians about joining a revolution is its employment of violence, particularly killing, to achieve its political aim.³⁴

And what is the aim of the struggle of the poor? Since ToS is not a political theory, it does not have political programs. It is not the task of ToS to propose detailed political plans and policies. ToS has a vision of an alternative social system for the Philippines. Some practitioners of ToS have described this alternative society as socialism.³⁵ Others

adopt a national democratic agenda.³⁶ But one thing is certain, ToS envisions a Philippine society that is just, peaceful, prosperous, genuinely democratic and egalitarian. Marxism, on the other hands, also has a similar vision which is communism.

Even so, theologically speaking, ToS affirms that no political ideology or system should be divinized or absolutized by Christians.³⁷ Every political program, including every socialist one, is open to critique and revision in the light of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. ToS can provide prophetic vigilance towards political groups including left-leaning organizations. The challenge is to discover what mode of production would enable humanity to such a goal, overcoming the alienation and exploitation which are not accidental to but inherent in capitalism.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

The theology of struggle successfully converged Marxism and Christianity. The practitioners of ToS influence only a minority of the Philippine Churches, most of which rather tend to be conservative or moderate. Because of the Church's influence in society, ToS has significant implications for Philippine democracy. Three points could be mentioned.

Both share the same concern for the poor, the exploited and the oppressed. The concern for the poor is an ancient tradition of the Church, going back to the Prophetic-Jesus tradition of Christianity.³⁸ The theologians of ToS identify with this tradition, which serves as a constant reminder and source of inspiration. Marxism shares the same humanistic tradition. This common concern for the poor brought the two perspectives together. ToS borrowed Marxist analysis to understand poverty, oppression and exploitation and came to a similar conclusion that the poor are victims of structural injustice. Hence, Philippine society needs a revolutionary transformation to eradicate oppression and exploitation.

This is the challenge to Philippine democracy. Why has democracy in the Philippines not eliminated poverty completely? How could it be an effective instrument to rid the nation of poverty? Philippine democracy should be pro-poor. This implies a program of redistribution of resources and wealth to the poor. Take for example

the issue of rural poverty. Direct government intervention has to take place to liberate the peasants and landless rural workers from degrading and inhuman conditions. To uplift the rural poor, the most fundamental state intervention is agrarian reform.³⁹ The government must redistribute land to make ownership more equitable. It must be said, however, that agrarian reform alone will not solve poverty. Nonetheless, poverty alleviation must begin with the distribution of land. For democracy to address the problem of poverty it requires democratization of wealth and resources.

Another point is that both espouse that the transformation of society can only be achieved by the oppressed themselves. There is real democracy when people are working for their self-emancipation. In the Philippine situation there is an urgent need to distribute political power. This can be done through grassroots participation in planning and decision-making. The State is to serve human beings, and not human being serving the state. There is an imperative for the State to provide a public space for people to effectively exercise their power through all kinds of people's assemblies, councils, associations, and citizen's bodies. Furthermore, the formation of these various community and people's organizations can safeguard the State from groups or individuals attempting to monopolize its power and use it for their own selfish interests. The care of the State is too important to be left completely in the hands of those who actually govern. People's participation is integral to justice and democracy.

A democratic State, therefore, empowers the poor and other exploited sectors to challenge the dominant elites in influencing and charting the social policies of the government. In a democracy, the poor can exercise their strength in numbers (majority) and push the government's economic policy towards their interests in two ways: political mobilization and/or voting. The formation various farmer and peasant organizations, labor unions, women organizations, community organizations, and non-government organizations can serve as power blocks or countervailing centers in Philippine politics. In other words, given the realities of injustice and oppression in Philippine society, the struggle for social and political liberation necessitates organizing the poor for power.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Christians must work with movements and groups involved in genuine land reformed, peace and human rights advocacy, environmental protections, free-education, independent foreign policy and national industrialization. This implies their being aligned with peasant movements, labor unions, urban poor organizations and other sectoral groups struggling for social justice and genuine democracy. It also challenges the members of institutional Churches especially the Roman Catholic Church (and other authoritarian-hierarchical religious institutions) to make them more participatory and democratic. This could be the reason why the institutional churches are critical of ToS and similar theologies.⁴¹ While Protestant Churches appear to be more receptive to ToS, but reactionary elements consider ToS as a threat to their religious and class interest. To quote from an important document of ToS

The transformation of unjust structures of the church and of its authoritarian and hierarchical pattern of relationship is not only a legitimate demand of Christians and an imperative of the Gospel. It is also necessary because existing structures impede the full participation of Christians in the struggle of the poor for a new and just society. As the struggle for a new and just social order persists, and as the Christian participates in it, it becomes also imperative to reshape the church so that it will be truly liberated and truly liberative, and so that it may truly be a people's church.⁴²

The last point of convergence is that both perspectives envision a society of justice and freedom, peace and equality among all humankind. Marxist alternative society is socialism while ToS tends to be more nationalistic or national democratic (ND). Marxism as a political theory has developed varied political programs. Even in the Philippines there are various Leftist parties espousing their respective goals and programs.⁴³ This is why Philippine democracy needs a vision. The Bible says "a people without a vision shall perish." Politicians have tried to galvanize people with their own "vision," Cory Aquino "people power", Fidel Ramos "Philippine 2000", Joseph Estrada "para sa Mahirap," Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo "Strong Republic" and P-noy Aquino "Daan Matuwid." Are these visions of

democracy? The theologians of struggle and Marxists claim that the evidence seems otherwise.

But these are visions of the ruling class and not of the poor, oppressed and exploited class. What Philippine democracy requires is a vision of an alternative society formulated by the oppressed themselves. It is a vision that truly expresses the sentiments and hopes of the oppressed. It is a vision that moves people to action. It is a vision that points to the direction where the nation is going. Hope must be basic. A mere rejection of the present dispensation is not enough. Denunciations of oppression, imperialism, globalization, corruption and other structural evils are necessary but annunciation is also called for. Denunciation of a system is all very well, but of little value without some suggestion as to what might replace it. If no credible alternative vision is set forth, people specifically the poor may think that the socio-political status quo is somehow eternal and irreplaceable.

The convergence of Marxism and Christianity in ToS can provide a new vision which could advance Philippine democracy. The specific task is to clarify what can be done to promote, fulfill and realize democracy in Philippine society. Churches have a vital role to fulfill, not only for their own members, but also for the poor. With their available resources they can gather the much needed information and share the information to guide the general public specifically the poor in crafting a political vision that is truly by the poor, of the poor and for poor. To realize this vision it will require democratic openness among all people struggling for change. In solidarity with the poor, Christians, Marxists, socialists, nationalists, liberals, people of other faith-traditions and those who are struggling for genuine democracy and social justice must come together to build a peaceful, egalitarian, just and democratic Philippines.

CONCLUSION

The ToS has bridged Marxism and Christianity in the Philippines. It embraces Marxism as a perspective and method of social transformation. Practitioners of ToS have courageously led the way in ensuring that Christianity will no longer act as an opiate to the poor or an ideology in favor of the rich. Arising from the context of a revolutionary situation, the goal of the theology of struggle is to

transform the existing Philippine social structure. The ToS expresses the cry of the poor for revolutionary change, calling the church to be part of the desired transformation of the Philippine social structure. A new social structure that is genuinely free, democratic, just and egalitarian. Although ToS is a minority perspective within the Churches, it created a profound influence in the struggle to restore and advance democracy in the Philippines. The implications are quite significant. And these are: 1) ToS challenges Philippine democracy to address the problem of the poor from the perspective of the poor; 2) It urges the Philippine state to distribute political power through grassroots participation in decision-making and to encourage the poor to organize so that they can exercise their strength in numbers (majority) and push the government's economic policy towards their interests; and 3) ToS can offer a vision that can mobilize the poor which constitute the majority to build a peaceful, egalitarian, just and democratic Philippines.

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ENDNOTES

¹ These are Catholics, Protestants, and Aglipayans clergy and lay who were social activists.

² Karl Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 425.

³ Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 71-72.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Frederick Engels, "On the History of Early Christianity," in *Marx and Engels. On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); Frederick Engels, "The Peasant War in Germany (Chapter 2)," in *Marx and Engels. On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

⁶ Karl Marx, "The Communism of the Paper Rheinischer Beobachter," in *Marx and Engels. On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 82-83.

⁷ Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction."

⁸ Ibid., 77.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Marx believes that religion is a transitory phase in human psyche. In the document, "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith (9 June 1847)", Engels wrote: "Question 22. Do Communists reject existing religions? Answer: All religions which have existed hitherto were expressions of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples. But communism is that stage of historical development which makes all existing religions superfluous and supersedes them." in Frederick Engels, "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", Progress Publishers <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/06/09.htm>. 21 April 2012.