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## **SHOULD RELIGION HAVE A PUBLIC ROLE? Theologizing from the Filipino Context**

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Should religion have a public role? Should it be engaged in the public arena? Or should religion be kept a private affair? Addressing this question, this article is developed in three parts: first, the meaning of religion; second, the debate on the public role of religion; and third, theologizing from the Filipino context. This question is pursued in the face of the growing secularization in the world which marginalizes religion, and decimates its value as a social reality. Those who argue against the public role of religion privatizes it, or reduces its reach of influence only to its adherents. This article presents the varied positions in the debate on the public role of religion, and validates religion as a force of change and transformation in the Filipino context.

### **Meaning of Religion**

Religion is a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, if one views it only from the socio-anthropological perspective, one can miss its core. On the other hand, if one views it only from a philosophical-theological perspective, one can neglect its social-contextual constructions. Social anthropology studies religion as a social phenomenon, particularly its impact on society; theology and

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philosophy inquire into the substance and ground of religion, and probe into its transcendental source and origin. Social anthropology describes what is observable about religion as a human and superhuman phenomenon. It describes but it does not ponder on the supernatural source and origin of religion. While religion is a social phenomenon embedded in social relations and expressions, it is first of all the experience of the divine: the prior a priori love of God at the core of finite existence. Social anthropology observes the effects of the divine experience, but it is an outsider to that experience. It is beyond its competence to study and understand it.

Clifford Geertz, a foremost anthropologist of religion, whose works have laid the mediating link in the dialogue between social anthropology and theology, makes no claim of competency to speak about the basis of belief. He writes:

The existence of bafflement, pain, and moral paradox—of The Problem of Meaning—is one of the things that drive men [and women] toward the belief in gods, devils, totemic principles, or the spiritual efficacy of cannibalism...but it is not the basis upon which those beliefs rest, but rather their most important field of application.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, a common thread through the socio-anthropological, philosophical, and theological perspectives: the ultimate meaning about which all religions are concerned. This may be termed the human quest for meaning in the face of pointless existence (Geertz);<sup>2</sup> not just any meaning but the ultimate meaning that demands total surrender (Tillich);<sup>3</sup> a quest for meaning that reaches its peak fulfilment by being in love with God (Lonergan);<sup>4</sup> and within that love, the human person as the event of God's self-communication (Rahner).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, 109.

<sup>2</sup>Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 45-46.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper & Row, 1958, 1.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972, 105-6. The gift of God's love is an experience of the holy. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, London: Oxford, 1923. This experience is what Paul Tillich named as being grasped by Ultimate Concern. (See *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, New York: Harper & Row, 1965). The experience corresponds to St. Ignatius Loyola's "consolation without a cause." On this see Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, Montreal: Palm, 1964, 131 ff. where he takes "consolation without a cause" to mean "consolation with a content but without an object."

<sup>5</sup>Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V. Dych, New York: Crossroad, 1995, 127. Rahner defines mysticism as an "ultimate and absolutely

Clifford Geertz suggests that in religion we seek our answers to the problem of meaning in the face of pointless existence. Chaos threatens to break in on us at the limits of our analytic capacities, moral insight, and powers of endurance. In the face of bafflement, suffering, and intractable ethical paradox, people turn to religion to find meaning.<sup>6</sup> This quest or drive for meaning, Geertz writes, is an imperative in human experience.<sup>7</sup> Geertz is not consciously engaging in theological discourse, but trying to understand and interpret human behaviour. He sees the dynamic of human meaning as operative in both culture and religion. For him, culture is a complex interplay of symbols expressing meaning, and religion as a cultural system is the expression of the human search for meaning. His work provides a singularly provocative interface between theology and anthropology.<sup>8</sup>

In defining religion as the dimension of depth in all reality, Paul Tillich adopted the term *ultimate concern*. Religion or faith, he writes, is the "state of being ultimately concerned."<sup>9</sup> His philosophy of religion as philosophy of meaning in relation to the Unconditional

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radical experience of transcendence in the mystery of God." See also Michael Stoeber, "Mysticism and the Spiritual Life: Reflections on Karl Rahner's View of Mysticism," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 17 (2001) 263-75; and Andrew Tallon, "The Heart in Rahner's Philosophy of Mysticism," *Theological Studies* 53 (1992) 700-728.

<sup>6</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed., Michael Banton, London: Tavistock, 1966, 14. Other relevant works of Geertz include *Myth, Symbol, and Culture*, New York: Norton, 1974; "Impact of the Concept of Culture in the Concept of Man," *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic, 1973, 33-54; "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of the Mind," in *Theories of the Mind*, ed., Jordan M. Scher, New York: Free Press, 1966.

<sup>7</sup>Clifford Geertz writes: "To make sense out of experience, to give it form and order is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs" (*Interpretation of Cultures*, 140). Similarly Peter Berger writes: "men [and women] are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality" (*The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Anchor, 1969, 22). In another place, he writes: "One fundamental human trait which is of crucial importance in understanding man's religious enterprise is his propensity for order" (*A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and Rediscovery of the Sacred*, New York: Anchor, 1970, 66).

<sup>8</sup>See the collection of commentaries of Geertz's writings: John H. Morgan, ed., *Understanding Religion and Culture: Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*, Washington: University Press of America, 1979.

<sup>9</sup>Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 1.

finds resonance in other voices.<sup>10</sup> "The concept of the Unconditional is paradoxical"; it is related to all things, and yet is beyond all things; it is not bound to anything, as it stands over and against all things; it is the dynamic reality inherent in all, yet transcending all.<sup>11</sup> Religion as the ultimate and deepest meaning that "shakes the foundations of all things"<sup>12</sup> holds an ecstatic attraction and fascination, for in it the finite finds its rest and fulfilment.<sup>13</sup>

Loneragan speaks of the religious experience of being loved by and being in love with God as the highest level of the human intentional consciousness, the peak of the soul, the *apex animae*.<sup>14</sup> "Being in God with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being with in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as restricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of that capacity."<sup>15</sup> At the apex of religion is the response to the divine initiative of love, which is never ceasing, always giving and loving, deepening and broadening, boundless, unrestricted, unconditioned. In all our human questioning is the question of God, and being in love with God is the ultimate fulfilment of the human capacity for self-transcendence.

Rahner conceives religion similarly. For him, the origin of religion is the disclosure of Godself as a gracious God gracing the human person. Religion is the prior word God speaks. As hearers of the word, we have an "ear" within us for God's revelation.<sup>16</sup> Our entire

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<sup>10</sup>Abraham Heschel writes: "Human being is never sheer being; it is always involved in meaning. The dimension of meaning is as indigenous to his being human as the dimension of space is to stars and stones... Human being is either coming into meaning or betraying it" (*Who is Man*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1958, 50-51). Robley Edward Whitson also writes that meaning is not only the core of religion, it constitutes the essential experience of community of people out of which religion is generated (*The Coming Convergence of World Religions*, New York: New Press, 1971, 10).

<sup>11</sup>James Luther Adams, introduction to Paul Tillich, *What is Religion?* New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 15.

<sup>12</sup>Tillich, *What is Religion?*, 163.

<sup>13</sup>Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 15.

<sup>14</sup>Loneragan, *Method in Theology*, 107.

<sup>15</sup>Loneragan, *Method in Theology*, 105-6.

<sup>16</sup>See Richard J. Beauchesne, "The Spiritual Existential as Desire: Karl Rahner and Emmanuel Levinas, *Église et théologie* 23 (1992) 221-39, at 224. "Rahner's supernatural

being is ordered toward God, with a radical openness (*potential obedientialis*) to God's self disclosure.<sup>17</sup> To be human is to stand in free love before God, to listen to God's word or to God's silence.<sup>18</sup> This a priori state has its origin in God and is sustained by God: "Everyone, really and radically every person, must be understood as the event of a supernatural self-communication of God."<sup>19</sup>

However deep and intimate the religious experience is, it is not solitary. Religion is communal. Lonergan describes the religious experience as radically personal at the outset, but it seeks community in the end. By its word, religion enters the world and endows it with its deepest meaning and highest value. It sets itself in a particular context, where it relates with other meanings and values, and there comes to understand itself, but always drawing forth from the power of ultimate concern in the midst of proximate concerns.<sup>20</sup>

Rahner speaks of the historical and categorical objectifications of religion. In his theology, religions as social/communal institutions are the a posteriori historicizations of God's transcendent revelation within the framework of the "supernatural existential." They are the historical categorical objectifications of the transcendent supernatural revelation of God. The supernatural existential, therefore, is the root and origin of institutional religions, insofar as they arose from the originating faith response to the antecedent supernatural revelation of God.<sup>21</sup>

Lonergan speaks of the historical conditionings of the outward word:

The word, then, is personal. *Cor ad cor loquitur*: love speaks to love, and its speech is powerful. The religious leader, the prophet, the Christ, the apostle, the priest, the preacher announces in signs and symbols what is congruent with the gift of love that God works within us. The word, too, is social: it brings into a single fold the scattered sheep that belong together because at the depth of their hearts they respond to the same mystery of love and awe. The word, finally, is

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existential—an alert toward Being considered as Desire—expresses in their nakedness both the absolute otherness of God as well as the absolute gratuity of our openness toward God of that which enables us to hear the call from the gracious and gracing mystery, which is God" (at 238).

<sup>17</sup>See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 126-31.

<sup>18</sup>Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Joseph Donceel, ed., Andrew Tallon, New York: Continuum, 1994, 92.

<sup>19</sup>Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 127.

<sup>20</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 118.

<sup>21</sup>See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 138-61.

historical. It is meaning outwardly expressed. It has to borrow and adapt a language that more easily speaks of this world than of transcendence. But such languages and contexts vary with time and place to give words changing meanings and statements changing implications.<sup>22</sup>

Before it enters into the world mediated by meaning, religion is the prior word of God. This word belongs to the world of immediacy. The a posteriori word is historically conditioned by the human contexts in which it is uttered, and such contexts vary from place to place, from generation to generation, as religion seeks new words, new expressions, new language.<sup>23</sup> Theology and socio-anthropology have a common ground for dialogue in the social and contextual expressions of religion. Religion exists because those who believe in it claim to have encountered the divine, in their experience of transcendence and ultimacy. Religion is not the product of social construction, but is mediated through social and cultural constructs.<sup>24</sup> While it is a social phenomenon embedded in social relations and expressions, it is first of all the experience of the divine: the a priori word of God at the core of finite existence, encountered in different and varying human contexts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 113-14.

<sup>23</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 112.

<sup>24</sup>French sociologist Émile Durkheim, from the framework of social anthropology, takes a contrary view. For the atheist Durkheim, the sacred is simply society's projection of itself in human consciousness. Religion is the symbol that provides a total world interpretation, the myth that relates people to the ultimate conditions of their existence. The very origin of religion as such is society; religion is the social construction of society. Durkheim used the concept of totemism to explain the sacred in terms of the holy objects that function as symbols in signifying the identity of a tribe. He saw embodied in these revered objects a power that was charged by the very identity of the group itself. He called this force or power the "totemic principle," which is derived from the collective identity and traditions of a tribe. Durkheim holds that sacredness, as a universal feature of all religious phenomena, is a creation of society. See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain, New York: Free Press, 1965, 235 ff.

<sup>25</sup>Paul Knitter speaks of a "frightening and fascinating" journey that a religion, in a world of religious pluralism, has to take with other religions toward the fullness of truth. "A true religion will no longer be founded on the absolutely certain, final and unchangeable possession of Divine Truth but on an authentic experience of the Divine which gives one a secure place to stand and from which to carry on the frightening and fascinating journey, *with other religions*, into the inexhaustible fullness of Divine Truth" ("Christianity as a Religion: True and Absolute? A Roman Catholic Perspective," in *What is Religion? An Enquiry for Christian Theology*, ed., Mircea Eliade

Religion, therefore, is a complex, multivalent phenomenon. A basic definition that synthesizes its essential elements is this: Religion is a social and communal phenomenon, grounded in the a priori experience of the divine in varying intensities and depths, at different levels, and in different modes. In and through all these facets, religion is being grasped by ultimate concern.

### **Debate on the Public Role of Religion**

The place of religion in public life has been a topic of vigorous discussion and debate. And this debate has been most intense when it touches on urgent practical issues. David Hollenbach, however, states that it is best to step back and situate the debate on practical issues within the theoretical context within which to consider these issues. He emphasizes the value of exploring the theoretical grounding of the public role of religion in a democratic and pluralistic society.<sup>26</sup>

The general positions in the debate shows conflicting views of religion: one position holds religion as privatized having no place in the public discourse and the other position which argues that religion is interconnected with all of human life as the bearer of humanity's deepest convictions about the human good. If reduced to a private role, common life will be impoverished of the liberating power and depth of religion.<sup>27</sup> Martha Nussbaum holds that we need a vision of the good life, arising from myths and stories which engage our collective imagination beyond our private enclaves. And to the degree that this engagement is present in civil society, it will have political impact.<sup>28</sup> Though Nussbaum's writing makes no particular commitment on religious truth claims, Hollenbach, who holds that religion should be given a greater public space, concurs with her in that religious and metaphysical beliefs can make important contributions to a social understanding of the genuine human good.<sup>29</sup>

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and David Tracy, *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties* 136, New York: Seabury, 1980, 19).

<sup>26</sup>*What is Religion?* ed., Mircea Eliade and David Tracy, 99.

<sup>27</sup>See David Hollenbach, "Religion and Political Life," *Theological Studies* 57 (1991) 87-106.

<sup>28</sup>Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed., Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara and Henry S. Richardson, New York & London: Routledge, 1990, 203-52, at 217.

<sup>29</sup>Hollenbach, "Religion and Political Life," 106.

Hollenbach's position is in line with the position of Michael Perry and Robin Levin, which is opposed to the liberal democratic stance with secularist implications, one held by Richard Rorty which pushes it to a radical edge and another by John Rawls who takes a more moderate position.<sup>30</sup> Rorty's radical historicism rejects any transcultural norms of morality as embodied in religious traditions. He maintains that "notions such as transcendent human dignity and human rights cannot be invoked to stand in judgment of particular historical traditions from outside of these traditions."<sup>31</sup> His radical historicism leads directly to the privatization of religious and philosophical matters.<sup>32</sup> Rawls does not reject religion and how it shapes people's conceptions of good life, but he holds that in a pluralistic democratic society, such religious conceptions influencing one's political views must be argued in the public arena in a way that they are at least reasonable for others to accept.<sup>33</sup> Both John Courtney Murray and Vatican II would support Rawls's position which was a later revision of his earlier position which seemed to suggest that because a religiously pluralistic society does not have a consensus about religious convictions, such convictions cannot be engaged in a public discourse which shape communal life.<sup>34</sup>

Kent Greenawalt addresses the tension between the principle that government and law have secular purposes and the principle that citizens are free to influence public policies with their freely held convictions even when these are religious. He maintains that citizens who rely on religious convictions on social issues should not appeal to these convictions in the public forum, in a pluralist context. They are not prohibited to stand by their religious convictions which they can engaged in with those who share their faith, but all religious talk should be kept out of public square.<sup>35</sup> In the end, "Greenawalt's argument is not a case for the public relevance of religious reasons, but for the public acceptance of individual choices that rest on religious reasons."<sup>36</sup> Religion, therefore, remains a privatized affair. Greenawalt continues to uphold the central tenet of the liberal theory.

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<sup>30</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 100.

<sup>31</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 108.

<sup>34</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 108-9.

<sup>35</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 111-12.

<sup>36</sup> Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 113.

The positions of Perry and Lovin, which Hollenbach aligns with fundamentally opposes the privatization of religion and its marginalization in the public discourse on social issues that affect all. Perry, a Roman Catholic, and who is deeply rooted in the alliance of faith and reason, holds that “Questions of human good — in particular deep questions of what it means to be authentically human — are too fundamental, and the answers to them too determinative of one’s politics, to be marginalized and privatized.”<sup>37</sup> When public political discourse is cut off from religion, it is cut off from some of the richest resources for thinking about the human: “the resources of the great religious traditions.”<sup>38</sup> Lovin pursues the same line of argument as Perry while deepening it with a theological content and language. Identifying the three reasons why people bring the language of faith to bear on public choices as “proclamation,” “conversion,” and articulation,<sup>39</sup> he shows how religion challenges secular discourse with an alternative vision; transforms the terms of this discourse with the premises of faith, and enriches and enlarges the vision of good from a secularist perspective. Hollenbach’s assertion for a public role for religion is eloquently articulated in the following:

Religious convictions are potentially explosive when confined to small spaces. And rightly so. They are, after all, about God. And beliefs about God entail convictions about the whole of human life, not simply a small compartment of it. Whether one professes the *shema* of Israel (“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one God”), the Christian *credo* (“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth), or the Muslim *shahadah* (“There is no God but God), private religion is theologically self-contradictory. Because religion is about the ultimate good of the whole of human life, it will be untrue to itself if it accepts the private niche to which liberal theory would assign it.<sup>40</sup>

### Theologizing from the Filipino Context

We theologize from the Filipino context particularly in the public role of religion in the Filipino revolution of 1986 — a thoroughly non-violent revolution without one shot of a gun which liberated the

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<sup>37</sup>Michael J. Perry, *Morality, Politics, and Law: A Bicentennial Essay*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 182.

<sup>38</sup>Michael J. Perry, *Morality, Politics, and Law*, 183.

<sup>39</sup>See Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 115-16.

<sup>40</sup>See Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, 118

Filipino people from the tyranny of the Marcos regime. According to reports, prior to the revolution a group of sociologists and political strategists had prepared five possible scenarios, given the crescendo of political tension and conflict. None of the scenarios became a reality. What happened in the Filipino revolution was beyond all calculation and projection. It came as a complete surprise. The speculators had missed an essential element: the Filipino soul and the vibrant religious faith intrinsic to the Filipino culture. The politburo of the Communist party of the Philippines has also prepared a series of scenarios, none of which became a reality either. The authors left out of the equation of liberation the people's religion, which discounted it as nothing more than a force of alienation and oppression. They failed to see that there can be no liberation apart from the beliefs and values of a people, the deepest of which is their religion.<sup>41</sup>

Religion was at the base of the Filipino non-violent revolution, which was for many an experience of the divine, so astonishing that they called it a miracle. At the heart of the revolution, the Filipinos were a Eucharistic people at the barricades, a people in love with Mary—*pueblo amante de Maria*—and a people bearing witness as a church. Although Filipinos are deeply divided by social class, ideology, and politics, they came together as one Eucharistic people. The Eucharist at the barricades gathered the multitudes together in one solemn communal act of prayer at a time of great crisis and danger, pulling together all that was human, the fears, the sorrows, and the hopes. The people were one when they sang and prayed together, one in a way that they had never been and perhaps could never have been, to the point of dying with their arms locked together.

The Catholic Church was at the centre of the revolution, with Cardinal Sin at the frontline. Pastor, patriot, and prophet, he stood as the people's beacon of faith and courage. As the custodian of the moral values and of the religious symbols, the Catholic Church was the moral centre to which Filipinos gravitated when the nation was in crisis. In their Statement, the bishops declared the Marcos government morally illegitimate and its power without moral basis, and they virtually urged the people to rise in protest and revolt

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<sup>41</sup>See Pedro S. de Achútegui, "Presentation" in "The 'Miracle' of the Philippine Revolution: Interdisciplinary Reflections," a symposium organized by the Loyola School of Theology, ed. Pedro S. Achútegui, *Loyola Papers* 15 (1986) ix-xiii, at x.

against this government, until it was finally removed.<sup>42</sup> In the estimate of many, the Bishops' Statement was the pivotal turn in the rapid succession of events, as its prophetic witness gave the revolution a light for all to follow and empowered the people with an invincible moral courage and faith. Under the moral leadership of the Catholic Church, the revolution took a radical turn and a clear direction. The lines of the revolution were drawn and the Church was with the people, for the Church was the people, there at every street, behind every barricade, in front of the tanks—the Church as the people of God praying and singing—a vision of communal joy in the face of impending doom.

The dominant role that the Catholic Church played in the revolution mediated the liberating power of religion for all. When religion's vision of the good is identified with the common good, it holds a power to unify all.<sup>43</sup> At the time of the revolution, the Church was so uniquely positioned that it became the decisive arbiter of the common good. When religion contributes to the pursuit of the common good and builds solidarity in freedom, it becomes an agent of liberation.<sup>44</sup> As David Hollenbach writes: "Religious beliefs and loyalties are among the factors that energize communities and institutions of civil society, for they give people communal resources, affective motivations, and cognitive reasons for active participation in active public life."<sup>45</sup>

Filipino men and women of different persuasions and affiliations, both believers and nonbelievers, were involved in the struggle and appropriated Catholic/Christian symbols without necessarily internalizing their content in a formal and explicit way. At the risk of their own lives, they heeded Cardinal Sin's call to take to the streets

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<sup>42</sup>See Bishop Francisco F. Claver, "Philippine Church and People Power," *Month* 19 (May 1986) 149-54.

<sup>43</sup>David Hollenbach writes that "we are not faced with choosing the alternatives of divisive religion on the one hand and the privatization of religion on the other. There is a third option: religious traditions, interpreted properly, have the capacity to contribute to the common good of public life in a way that is compatible with pluralism and freedom." *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, New York: Cambridge University, 2002, 99.

<sup>44</sup>"Churches and other religions are uniquely positioned to make contributions to sustaining a vision of common good and to empower their members to participate in the pursuit of the common good." David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 108.

<sup>45</sup>Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 111.

and face the guns and tanks. Religion, in the pursuit of the common good, was a force of unity. People power is church power when church is truly people, trying to be and to act in living fidelity to the gospel. This is religion in action at the barricades, as it should also be at the marketplace, at the railway stations, in the ghettos, where people live and die, as they struggle for meaning and purpose as individuals and as a people.

### **Concluding Statement**

The public role of religion was validated in the thoroughly non-violent Filipino revolution of 1986. Religion was at the base of the victory of a people in their struggle against oppression and injustice — “a victory without hatred, without the spilling of blood of brothers, without the tears over countless sons and daughters fallen in the battle at the crossfire — but a victory nonetheless.”<sup>46</sup> Religion, when it inspires the common good, is a force of social change and transformation. Bearing an inherent power through people’s communal faith and hope, religion sets free and liberates from the tyranny of oppression. The struggle against injustice and oppression must be united with a people’s consciousness of their communal rootedness, at the heart of which is their religion.

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<sup>46</sup>These words of Cardinal Sin were cited in Patricia R. Mamot, *Profile of Filipino Heroism*, Quezon City: New Day, 1986, 41.