The role of critical theological reflection

in training lay leaders

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a qualification at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

The thesis arose from a need of an effective leadership training programme in the local church. Although there are many programmes available, their effectiveness has been questioned because of the perceived ineffectiveness of the church in general which is attributed partly to the ineffectiveness of its leadership and thus its leadership training programmes. An examination of the philosophy of some programmes available showed a lack of transformational focus and/or lack of a mechanism that facilitates transformational learning in its process.

The thesis therefore sets out to look for a programme that facilitates transformational learning and proposes critical theological reflection as a good method to facilitate such learning in a lay leaders' training programme for effective personal growth and ministry practices. To enhance understanding concerning transformative and reflective learning, some views from secular educational theorists were presented for interactions with the biblical understanding in these areas. To show critical theological reflection as an evangelical approach to theological reflection that brings about transformational learning, the epistemological, biblical and theological understanding involved in its process were presented. The importance of critical theological reflection for leaders in the 21st century was seen in its role in helping the leaders face the challenges of post-modernism and the emerging church movement. The feasibility and the challenges of introducing such learning method in the Asian context were also investigated. Finally, a lay leaders' training programme that incorporates critical theological reflection in its learning process was proposed in its working outline and format as a road map to guide us into the working of a programme that can be implemented in the future.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Need for leadership training in the local churches

The study in this thesis arises out of a local practical need of a training programme for the leaders of the church. For many years now, there has been a need of an educational programme to train the lay leaders of Holy Light Church English (HLCE) and the English Speaking Presbyterian Churches of Malaysia. The Human Resource and Leadership Development committee of the English Speaking Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Malaysia in its report at the 18th Annual General Meeting 2007 highlighted the urgent need of a formal training programme for lay leaders. The report (English Speaking Presbyterian Churches of Malaysia, 2007, 31) reads:

> Our communities today are such that Elders, Deacons and church leaders need to have proper formal church leadership training…at the moment, the training offered seems to be either observe the senior leaders and learn what you can or import whatever leadership skills that you have gained in the marketplace to lead the church. Both methods, needless to say, fall short.

This is true in my experience as a lay leader of HLCE. In the early years when I joined the leadership team, I found there was a lack of leadership training available in the church. I therefore enrolled myself in a local seminary for some formal theological training. Later, over the years, various means to train lay leaders have been attempted. These included encouraging them to attend seminars organized by parachurch organizations, courses available in the existing seminaries, some courses and seminars organized by the Spiritual Formation Institute of HLCE. These rather ad hoc and haphazard trainings have not been able to meet the needs of the lay leaders to be effective disciples and leaders. More recently, the Human Resource and Leadership Development Department of the English Speaking Presbytery proposed to the local churches to adopt the leadership training programme by the "Million Leaders Mandate" (2003). This proposal was met with lukewarm responses from leaders of some churches including HLCE because of reservation concerning the effectiveness of the programme. To some, it may just be another programme in the market that teaches about leadership but not one that trains persons to become effective leaders.

What constitutes an effective training programme? What are the essential goals that must be achieved in the educational programme for it to be effective? Is there a crucial element that must accompany the educational process? Therefore, I began to ponder on these questions and went in search for an answer for an effective leadership training programme.

An effective leadership is one that is capable of helping the church to live out the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38; Mark 12:30-31) to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) in their time and place. An effective leader is one who is able to lead and work with the team to achieve the vision of God for the church. According to Barna (1999, 31):

> To be an effective leader, one must be called by God to lead, possess the character of a person of God, and demonstrate a group of competencies that result in leadership. A leader implements the gift and ability to lead by motivating, mobilizing, resorting and directing people to pursue a jointly shared vision from God.

Therefore, there are two essential goals required in an effective training programme for leaders. The first is to bring about the transformation of the character of the leaders to Christ-likeness. The second is to equip the leaders with the skill to build and lead the team to achieve the vision of the church. This calls for a training programme that works on the transformation of the leaders that result in commitment to the Great Commission of Jesus to his followers.

As I enrolled myself in the various avenues of education in the church and seminaries, I noticed that in the training of leaders in the local church, programmes and methods employed tend to focus on teaching the content of the 'being' and 'doing' of a leader. In terms of delivery, the methods employed are mainly passive where the teachers are often the givers of knowledge and the students the receivers. In my practicum entitled "Christian Education in Holy Light Church English" with AGST, I learned that current educational programmes in HLCE and the church in general tend to adopt the schooling model that emphasizes on passive transfer of information with a lack of transformational intention. The result of such training may not produce effective leaders, as information received does not necessarily lead to transformation of the persons. For transformational learning that brings about positive effective leadership, the leaders' active participation in the learning process with the newly acquired

knowledge in both the class and seeing how this knowledge translates into their lives and ministries are important. I was drawn to Julie Gorman (2001, 23) in her exclamation, "There's got to be more!" in calling us back to the transformational goal of education in the church.

The question is how does one bring about such transformational learning that helps the leaders to live out the Christian principles and values of leadership in their lives and ministries? What can be a good method for such transformational learning?

1.2. The focus on critical theological reflection

As I look at the two goals of an effective leadership training programme to transform the leaders in their whole being towards Christ-likeness and the ability to lead the team to achieve the vision of the church, I ask myself what sort of training is required to achieve such goals?

For the purpose of transformational learning that leads to commitment to Jesus, the training leaders undergo needs to go beyond teaching of understanding and belief; it has to help the leaders to learn freely new sets of paradigms and values concerning leadership which they are committed to live by. This transformational learning is one that penetrates the whole being of the leaders – minds, hearts, and hands. In this respect, John Stott (1999) reminded us of the importance of transformation in both mind and heart when he quoted Bishop Handley Moule, "Beware equally of an undevotional theology [i.e. mind without heart] and of an untheological devotion [i.e. heart without mind]" (444). The conversions of their minds and hands are important too. They are not to be too heavenly minded and of no earthly use nor are they to be so earthly minded and of no heavenly use. The ability to think and act theologically appropriate to their time and place is important for effective leadership in the church. This calls for training of the leaders to reflect theologically in whatever they are doing in their lives and ministries. All their activities of motivating, mobilizing, resourcing and directing people to pursue a jointly shared vision from God are to be girded by theological reflections. Unfortunately, this is often not the case as John Yeatts (1995) suggested, "Christian education practice is focused on the pragmatic and practical with little attention to its theological base. Christian education practitioners rarely ask whether or not what they are doing is consistent with their theology" (38).

There may be other methods for such transformational learning; but in this thesis, I propose that critical theological reflection (CTR) holds an important key for this purpose. This hypothesis came about through my personal experience of studying Pastoral Theology where it helped me to be a better leader when the teaching of the module placed a great emphasis on theological reflection of pastoral ministry. The experience was the starting point where I began to see that CTR might be a good method for such transformational learning. I began to see the dynamic of CTR in the learning process that helped me to become a better leader. The conviction grew stronger as I pursued theological training in Christian education at AGST. In my interactions with the teachers and fellow students, there were occasions where I experienced transformational learning when CTR was engaged in the course of the study.

1.3. Aim and method of research

In this thesis, I set out to look for a leadership training programme that brings about effective leadership because of its transformational focus and intention and offers CTR as a good method for such purpose taking note of its Asian context. The focus of the thesis is to look at the educational value of critical reflective practice in bringing about learning that transforms for effective leadership training in the local church. Though this programme is aimed at my local church setting, the principles involved should also be useful for the churches in general. Therefore, the study also hopes to contribute to the training of lay leaders in the wider church context. This could be my contribution in this area of educational endeavour to the Christian community in training disciples and leaders in line with the Great Commission.

The main area of research to establish the hypothesis is by conceptual enquiry into related topics in educational theories and theological writings available for interaction with biblical understanding of theological reflection and transformational learning. I will therefore be looking at:

a. Conceptual enquiry from a review of Christian literature and secular educational theorists concerning transformational learning (TL) for effective leadership training. The thesis will explore the nature of TL and the biblical basis in its dynamic that brings about the necessary transformation of the person for

effective leadership training. The contributions from the secular educational theorists will be looked at to enhance understanding in this area.

b. Conceptual enquiry from a review of Christian research papers and writings in the areas of critical theological reflection in enhancing transformational learning for equipping leaders in the local church. CTR involves a threefold movement where one reflects critically on a life experience in relation to Scripture, culture and the Christian tradition that issues in a practical implication for Christian living. The thesis itself will expand substantially on the nature of CTR and its distinctive characteristics within its widely spread field of reflective learning and action.

c. Proposing a curriculum for lay leaders training in its outline and content to see how theological reflection can be a useful component and be an integral part in the process of transformational learning for effective Christian life and ministry. Some effort will be made to grapple with the Asian context here, as there are aspects of transformational/critical reflective learning that may sit in tension with traditional Asian learning styles of more passive learners and controlling teachers. Some principles in teaching the skill and inculcating the habit of CTR will be presented.

1.4. Some working definitions in this thesis

1.4.1. Transformational learning (TL)

Transformational learning takes place when a person goes through a process of learning that results in lasting positive change in attitude, thought and action towards Christ-likeness.

1.4.2. Effective leadership training programme

A programme that will bring about in the leaders lasting positive change in attitude, thought, and action and ability to exercise Christian responses appropriate to its time and place in their lives and ministries to realize the vision of God for the church.

1.4.3. Critical theological reflection (CTR)

CTR is one process that brings about TL. It involves a threefold movement where one reflects critically on a life experience in relation to the Bible, culture, and Christian tradition that issues in a practical implication for Christian living.

1.5. Sequence of Argument

A key goal of this thesis is to explore an educational programme that contributes to effective leadership training in the local church. While the research recognizes that effective leadership training can come in various means and people learn in different ways, the hypothesis in this thesis focuses on the notion that transformational learning through CTR holds an important key to bring about such effective leadership training. I will therefore examine this observation in light of the Bible, the experiences and understanding of other Christian teachers, and secular literature.

The working definition of transformational learning in this study is one that looks at both the product and the process of learning. Transformational learning takes place when a person goes through a process of learning that results in lasting positive change in attitude, thought and action towards Christ likeness. In this study, the hypothesis is that this process of learning involves CTR. Therefore, the thesis will examine the process of CTR, the development and potential for transformational learning through this process and the strategies by which educators can stimulate this learning and implement it into their educational programmes for leadership training. The study will also look at the skills and techniques of reflection and consider its application in the local church taking into consideration the Asian culture and context. The sequence of argument in this thesis will pursue the following general plan and outline:

a. Existing training programmes fail to produce effective leadership because they fail to facilitate learning that transforms.
b. What we need are programmes that facilitate transformation of learners, hence 'transformative learning'.
c. CTR is an appropriate method of transformative learning.
d. Propose a programme with CTR for practical application.

1.6. Limits and boundaries of the research

The research paper is limited to conceptual enquiry of the related topics and will not be involved with any empirical research. Therefore, there is no data collection, questionnaires, or personal involvement of any participants from the local church community in the study.

With regard to the notion that existing training programmes may not be effective, it must be stressed that it is not the intention or in the scope of this thesis to assess objectively or critique directly the effectiveness of the programmes available in the market. There are simply too many programmes available and it is beyond the scope and expertise of this research to do so. The understanding that existing training programmes may not be effective is deductively inferred from deficits these programmes may have in relation to what constitutes a good philosophy of education in general and what is involved in education for commitment in transformational learning.

In terms of content of the thesis, it will focus on presenting an evangelical perspective of CTR as a good method for transformational learning for effective leadership training. A proposed curriculum for lay leaders training will be given in its outline and content to illustrate how CTR can be a useful component for effective leadership training. It will not be in the scope of this thesis to come out with a programme for implementation nor to assess its usefulness and effectiveness in training lay leaders in the local church. The main thrust of the curriculum proposed is on its broader and more integrated aspect to illustrate the role of CTR in facilitating effective transformational learning and not on the syllabus with its content focus and assessment.

Some factors that pose extra challenges to effective leadership training in a rapidly changing, globalized post-modern world are considered to highlight the importance and useful role of CTR but will not be dealt with in detail in this thesis.

1.7. Chapter summary

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to present why and how this thesis came about and how the topic will be investigated.

Chapter 2 sets out to establish the importance of TL for effective leadership training and examines the argument that some existing leadership training in the church may not be effective because it fails to facilitate learning that transforms. It does so by using the health of the church as an indirect indicator to assess the effectiveness of leadership training in the church. The possible reasons for the ineffectiveness of these trainings, which point to the lack of TL in these programmes, are looked at from an examination of their philosophy of education. It sets the scene for us to look for a pedagogical method that facilitates TL.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide understanding in the concept of TL from the biblical and secular perspectives to help us explore a method that facilitates such learning in the training of leaders.

Chapter 3 explains the biblical basis and understanding of transformational learning in relation to effective leadership training. It explores what is transformational learning and how it takes place from a biblical perspective.

Chapter 4 presents briefly transformational learning from the perspective of secular adult education. It looks at the area of adult education concerning self-directed learning that forms the bedrock from which transformative learning develops. It then looks at the work of transformative theorists such as Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow to see how their insights relate to the Biblical understanding of TL. The understanding of TL from both the biblical and secular perspectives opens up the concept of reflective learning in bringing about TL and leads us to explore critical reflection as a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL.

Chapters 5-7 then introduce and elaborate on why critical theological reflection is a good pedagogical method to bring about transformational learning in a leadership training programme.

Chapter 5 gives some background understandings regarding theological reflection as a good pedagogical method for theological education. It looks at how it emerged as a method of enquiry in theological education and who its main expositors are, its purpose in education and styles proposed. This is to act as a springboard to bring us to a better understanding of CTR since CTR in this thesis, though a distinct entity by itself is not

something new and is closely related to theological reflection in its pedagogical concepts of learning.

Chapter 6 defines CTR in this thesis and explains the process and components involved in its dynamics. It explains the epistemological understanding of CTR, its theological basis and biblical understanding involved in its process that brings about transformational learning.

Chapter 7 moves on to show the practical needs and implications of CTR for the leaders in their lives and ministry. The need of CTR is seen in the calls by other Christian teachers to incorporate theological reflection into the training of people and leaders of the church. The practical implications of CTR are seen in its useful role for leaders in the 21st century in facing the great challenges of the post-modern culture and in assisting them to respond more effectively to the emerging church movement. The chapter also assesses the suitability of employing CTR as a learning tool in the context of an Asian Chinese culture.

Chapter 8 then shows how CTR can be incorporated into a leadership training programme for lay leaders. It discusses some principles involved in teaching the skill of CTR in such a programme. A programme that trains the leaders in CTR through a process of reflective learning is presented in its framework outlining its goals, approach, method, content and format as groundwork to work on for implementation later.

Finally, Chapter 9 gives conclusions as 'drawing together the threads' to the study and provides some suggestions for further work towards effective implementation of a CTR-incorporated leadership training programme.

Chapter 2

Transformational learning and effective leadership training

The thesis arose out of a need of an effective training programme for leadership in the local church. It works on the hypothesis that transformational learning (TL) is important for effective leadership training and that the lack of TL in some programmes may contribute to the ineffective leadership training seen in the church. This chapter sets out to establish the importance of TL for effective leadership training and puts forward the arguments that some existing training programmes fail to produce effective leadership because they fail to facilitate learning that transforms. The biblical basis for the importance of TL for effective leadership will be presented. The effectiveness of leadership training is assessed from surveying the health of the church as an indicator that reflects the effectiveness of the leadership and its leadership training programme. The reasons for the ineffectiveness of the training programmes due to their lack of transformational learning are looked at from an examination of the philosophy of education in the programmes.

2.1. Why transformational learning for effective leadership training?

Why is TL important for effective leadership training? What is the biblical basis for this? To answer these questions, we need to look at the goal of discipleship God sets for the church and what is required in the training of leaders to achieve such goals. The goal of discipleship is for the disciples to grow in their whole beings to be like Christ to obey the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The Great Commandment commands the disciples to love God, and one another with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The Great Commission calls the disciples to take the work of discipleship to all parts of the world. The standard of God for discipleship is of the highest level that demands perfection in his disciples. This is made clear by Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount when he says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)[1]. Jesus himself sets the standard when he told the disciples that he has come to fulfil all the Law of God (Matthew 5:17). In Matthew 5:20, he again emphasizes the importance of this high standard of discipleship

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[1] All Bible quotations in this thesis are taken from the New International Version.

when he said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." Paul recognized this high standard set for his teaching ministry when he shared in Colossians 1:28, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ".

How does one go about working towards such a high standard of discipleship? What is required of those who aspire to be disciples to attain such a goal? To this, Jesus calls for the transformation of the disciples from the inside out. Jesus says in Mark 8:34-35, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up the cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." Concerning this, Bill Lawrence (2008) has this to say, "The Bible is not a self-help book; it is a self-death book. The Bible doesn't help self; the Bible crucifies self" (11). Paul in Ephesians 4:22-23 further amplifies this concept of TL and dying to self. To do so, Paul asked us to put off the old self corrupted by its deceitful desires, and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness through new attitude of the minds. Therefore, to achieve this basic goal of discipleship, it is important that the education given to its people be aimed at working towards the transformation of the whole person and thus the need of TL.

Now coming back to the question of the need of TL for the leaders in their training programme, there are two reasons why such a need arises. The first is leaders who are entrusted with such great task of leadership are themselves not exempted from such high standard of discipleship; furthermore, they are to lead by example. The second has to do with the high standard Jesus laid down for leadership in the church. For those who aspire to be leaders, Jesus says in Mark 9:35, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Moreover, to anyone who wants to be great as a leader, they "must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-45). It is clear that those who aspire to serve as leaders are called to give up their lives and be servant leaders. To do so the leaders need to be transformed and thus the need of TL in leadership training programmes.

The question is how effective are the leadership training programmes in achieving such a goal? We will turn to the health of the church as an indicator to assess the effectiveness of the leadership in the church and its training programme.

2.2. The importance of effective leadership and health of the church

There is a direct correlation between the health of a church and the effectiveness of her leadership. The quality of pastoral leadership is one of the most significant indicators of the current health of the church. George Barna in looking at the habits of highly effective churches listed leadership as the most indispensable habit among the nine habits investigated. Barna (1999, 55) emphasized:

> Let me divulge one other important lesson from our research on leadership in effective churches. You can overcome many deficiencies in a church's ministry and organization, but *you cannot compensate for the lack of good leadership.* Nothing will cripple or even destroy a church more completely than the absence of effective leadership.

Barna reinforced this notion that the health of a church is dependent on the health of its leadership in his further research on the spiritual health of the church. In this later research, Barna (2001) concluded that, "the presence or absence of strong leadership is one of the traits that distinguish the highly effective churches of America from those that are doing well-intentioned religious activity" (245). Furthermore, the importance of effective leadership refers not only to the key leader/s who is/are leading the church but includes leadership at different levels throughout the church's ministry. In his research on small group ministry, Barna (2001, 248) found out that despite the small group ministry doing well in the area of relationship, it has shown only negligible growth in Bible knowledge, the application of scriptural principles or overall spiritual maturity in the people. One of the contributing factors identified in the research is the lack of effective leadership within the group. It is therefore acceptable to argue that there is a direct relationship between effectiveness of leadership to the health of the church. An effective leadership team leads to a healthy church and vice versa. The question is, are there evidences that the health of the church is unsatisfactory which reflects the ineffective of its leadership and thus its leadership training programme? Let us survey the health of the church.

2.2.1. The health of the church

The health of the church can be measured in both quantitative and qualitative ways. A survey of the health and effectiveness of the church by Barna Research Group in America has revealed a short fall in the health of the church. According to Barna (2001, 235), in spite of the nation's population increase and a climate of rising interest in spirituality, Christian churches actually decreased in size during the '90s. In their research, healthy churches are more often the exception than the rule. The spiritual maturity of the people of the church has also left much to be desired. For example, the OmniPoll of the Barna Research Group (1998, 121) in looking at the similarity of attitude between Christians and non-Christians concluded that there was not much difference between them. This is because *most Christians have plentiful exposure to God's truth and exhortations, but few have actually been pierced by the truth, principles, and meaning of the Christian faith*. Julie Gorman (2001, 23) lamented that while we are made for and crave to know God, our education has failed to foster the learner and teacher on the spiritual journey of transformation to know God. As a result, the church is weak in that while there are many conversions and enrolment into church membership, the impact the church has on the community is becoming less and less – Christians are indistinguishable from the world. The cry that the church is often one mile wide but one inch deep is a phenomenon that applies also to some so-called 'growing mega-churches'. This is supported by Greg Ogden (2003) who quoted the Joint Statement on Discipleship at the Eastbourne Consultation when he wrote, "As we face the new millennium, we acknowledge that the state of church is marked by growth without depth. Our zeal to go wider has not been matched by a commitment to go deeper" (22); he also quoted John Stott (Ogden 2003, 22) who participated at the consultation as saying:

> For many years, 25 or more, the church growth school has been dominant. I rejoice at the statistics, but we must say it is growth without depth. I believe it was Chuck Colson who said the church is 3000 miles wide and an inch deep. Many are babes in Christ.

Another evidence of the weakness of the church is the concept of the 'incorporatization' of the church by the world where the church has been influenced and overtaken by the world's values. Instead of being the 'salt and light' of the world, the reverse is now true. One example is in the church growth movement where the assessment of church growth

is only by quantity, efficiency, and not the qualitative and effectiveness of what one does as well. The maxim that 'just does it as long as it produces result' has become the defining goal for success. While not discounting the importance of numerical growth, the truth is the Bible does not advocate that numbers justify means. Moreover, doing something according to God's command does not always produce immediate visible results in quantitative measurable ways. In the church in Acts, we are told God 'added to them daily those who were being saved' as they concentrated on doing what they were called to do as a biblical functioning community (Acts 2:42-47). This exaltation of number and mega-church has led to atheological practices by many churches who simply copy "successful model or formula" of church growth without taking into consideration their church context and culture[2]. These rather senseless and sometimes desperate attempts have often led to disappointment and disillusionment of many church leaders.

From this brief survey, there are evidences that the health of the church in America and the Western developed world leaves much room for improvement. How about the state of health of the church in Malaysia and HLCE?

2.2.2. The spiritual health of the church in Malaysia and HLCE

In 2006, the NECF Malaysia Research Commission carried out a study on the spiritual health of the church in Malaysia in which HLCE participated. Let us look at the results of this survey briefly as an assessment of the spiritual health of the church in Malaysia and HLCE.

2.2.2.1. NECF Survey[3]

The study set out to measure the spiritual health of the evangelical churches in Malaysia by looking at the responses of Christians to critical moments of their life spiritually in three areas as an indicator of their spiritual health. The three areas assessed were:

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[2] This is well illustrated by Schwarz Christian A. 2005. *Color Your World with Natural Church Development – Experiencing All that God has Designed You To Be.* Ohio: Church Smart Resources.

[3] For a detailed presentation, refer to Ang Minni, Lim Siew Fong, Rev. Wong Kim Kong, eds, 2007, 12-52. *The Spiritual healthcheck of the church in Malaysia*, NECF Malaysia Research Commission.

1. Spiritual experience.
2. Spiritual coping orientation.
3. Spiritual typology.

In terms of spiritual experience with God, the result showed that a significant number of respondents have the propensity to rationalize and make decisions or initiate a service for God without waiting for divine guidance on important life issues. This reveals a tendency of those with a pragmatic mind to self-manage one's own life when God is silent. In terms of spiritual coping orientation, the result affirmed the respondents' propensity to rationalize and adopt their own plans and means of coping with crises than to let God work out His plan. Many may not have the spiritual stamina to trust and wait for divine guidance. A significant number of respondents received crisis as punishment from God; and /or initiated by Satan. They also have the propensity to run from altar to altar to find more of God there for relief or 'quick fixes'. As for spiritual typology, the predominant typology of the participating churches is Heart Spirituality followed by Head, Mystic and Kingdom Spirituality. This revealed the influence of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement on Christians in Asia including Malaysia. As shared (Ang Minni et al, 2007), "Although such influence has produced a growing vitality of Asian Christians, the models Asians are adopting are nevertheless consciously or subconsciously, predominantly American Pentecostal Charismatic model with various versions of the 'health and wealth' gospel, without recognizing its detrimental impact" (32). The spiritual typology of HLCE from this study showed very much the same trend as the result for the Malaysian churches namely, Heart Spirituality (30%) followed by Head (26%), Mystic (23%) and Kingdom Spirituality (9%).

From this study, there were evidences that the Malaysian churches including HLCE have areas of weaknesses in their spiritual health. This weakness in the spiritual health of the church may reflect the weakness of leadership that may in turn be linked to the weakness of the leadership training programme. There may be various reasons why this is so. In this thesis, the hypothesis is that the ineffectiveness of these training programmes may be attributed to the lack of TL in their programmes. We therefore need to examine some training programmes to test this hypothesis.

2.3. Why are some existing training programmes not effective?

To look for some possible reasons why some existing leadership training programmes are not effective, I set out to look at some training and teaching on leadership available in the church. The method of investigation is a conceptual one based on an assessment of the philosophy of education of some selected programmes, literature and seminars concerning teaching on leadership that I have come across[4]. From the result of this survey, there are features in the philosophy of education in these training and teaching on leadership that point to a lack of TL in these programmes. This is seen in a lack of a clear transformational focus and an absence of a built-in mechanism that facilitates transformational learning in their educational processes.

2.3.1. A lack of transformational intention seen from philosophy of education

A good philosophy of education answers the what (content), why (purpose), who (the teacher and learner), and how to (process) questions. Of all the questions concerning the philosophy of good education, the question of purpose stands out as the most crucial one in that it holds the key that determines how the other questions will orientate themselves to bring the purpose to fruition. Jim Wilhoit (1991) pointed out that a lack of a clear purpose constituted a major cause of failure of Christian education when he asserted, "The current crisis in Christian education stems, in large measure, from a lack of clear purpose at the grassroots level" (9). In my examination of the philosophy of education in some leadership training programmes and books available concerning teaching on leadership, while there is an awareness of the importance of transformation, there seems to be a heavier emphasis placed on information transferred rather than the transformation of the learners. There are two main features in their philosophy that point to a lack of transformational intention – a heavy orientation towards a schooling model in its mode of transmission and an over-emphasis in information transferred in its curriculum.

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[4] These included leadership training materials by Million Leaders Mandate (2003) and Center for Church Based Training (2005), and books on the teaching of leadership by Banks (2004), Barna (1997), Blackaby (2001), Blanchard & Hodges (2005), Clinton (1988), Getz (2003), Hughes (1998), Hybels (2002), Malphurs (1999, 2005), Maxwell (1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1998, 2005), Sanders (1994b, 1999), Wilkes (1998), Wright (2000) and others.

John Westerhoff (2000) alerted us to the adoption of the formal schooling model with a neglect of the informal approach as a cause of failure in education in the church. He maintained, "Christian educators and local churches have functioned according to a school-instructional paradigm…I contend that we have become victimized by this schooling-instructional understanding of religious education and imprisoned by its implication" (5-7). This is true in the leadership training programmes surveyed in this thesis. The method of teaching is essentially a school-instructional paradigm where the trainers share or impart knowledge of leadership principles to the leaders in a classroom manner. Take for example, the training of leaders by the "Million Leaders Mandate" (2003). The course is structured in such a way that participants come to a class where a trainer will take them through the course material. Learning is through reinforcement of understanding concerning leadership principles through class interactions and guidance from the trainer with some action plans at the end of each study.

Another feature found in training programmes and teaching on leadership that revealed their lack of transformational focus is the overemphasis on information transfer. While information is crucial and useful for learning, an undue emphasis on its impartation to the neglect of other factors in the educational process has led to failure in transforming the individual. In these programmes and many books on leadership, I notice that their focus is to provide understanding in helping the leaders to grow in their character and capability to be good leaders. In the "Million Leaders Mandate", there are six lessons devoted to three areas critical in leadership development namely, spiritual formation, skill formation and strategy formation. In the curriculum, great emphasis is placed on the leaders' understanding of the biblical truth through the mind, heart, and hands. To enhance the leaders' understanding of the principles of leadership, visual learning through pictorial presentation is given; to ensure the leaders learning the information given, key points are emphasized in each study. There seems to be a general assumption that the delivery of such knowledge will lead to effective leadership. While the teaching and impartation of knowledge can help the leaders to carry out their ministries more effectively, it may not lead to the holistic transformation of the leaders, which is the ultimate biblical intent of education. The same is true in many books on leadership surveyed in this study.

2.3.2. Absence of mechanism that facilitates transformational learning - the place of CTR

The other observation that some training programmes and teaching on leadership may not be effective is not a lack of transformational intention but a lack of a built-in mechanism in its process that facilitates TL. For TL to take place, the truth is even if the intention is clear, the content is good, the students are well prepared, and the teachers are capable and knowledgeable, it can still be ineffective when something is missing in the educational process to facilitate such learning. Of all the teaching material on leadership that I have surveyed, only the programme for leaders' development by Center for Church Based Training entitled, "Church Leadership Series: The Leader" (2005) employed a clear strategy in its learning process to work on transformation of the leaders. It employs a Six-Step Wisdom Process that aims to work on transformation of the leaders' head, heart, and hands through theological reflection, pursuing godly character in the presence of community, and intentionally applying what is learned. The rest rely mostly on passive transfer of information in their educational endeavour.

Why is a built-in mechanism important in bringing about learning that transforms?

The purpose of any educational endeavour in the church is the holistic transformation of the learners towards Christ-likeness. Hill (1985, 103-104) presented the four hallmarks of Christian development in the life of the disciple based on understanding from Ephesians 4:11-15. These are drawing the person to God, growing in Christ, maturing in the community with other believers and issuing in service to all persons. To achieve such goals, Hill (1991, 2.5) believes that, learning in the faith community is more than the simple acquisition of knowledge or skills. It goes with the three notions of learning namely, "learning that", "learning how" and "learning to be (or become)". These involve learning that leads to 'acquisition of knowledge', 'knowing how to perform intelligently' and 'a personal knowledge of God that results in a change in attitude and values of the person'. Martin Buber (1947, 2.16) reinforced the importance of this concept when he challenged that:

> Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character. For the genuine educator does not merely consider individual functions of his pupil, as one intending to teach him only to know or to be capable of certain definite

things; but his concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you know and in his possibilities, what he can become.

Buber therefore sees the purpose of education as one that helps individuals to develop holistically in their character to the full potential. As such, an effective leadership training programme should have a clear transformation focus on its leaders' character to that of Christ.

How does such education that transforms come about?

Education that transforms involves teaching of values and commitments that go beyond beliefs and understanding. Such education for commitment goes beyond the impartation of knowledge and acquisition of certain skills; it requires an inner transformation at the core of the person. Hill elaborates this in his sharing on education for commitment that he equates with values education in the context of religious education in school[5]. Values education argued Hill (2004) is "not merely teaching *about* values but encouraging individuals to endorse and *live* by certain values" (57). He (Hill 2004, 56) explained further:

> By definition, religious education has a primary contribution to make to values education. It doesn't merely involve the transmission of an inherited body of content to a captive audience in the classroom. Nor is it concerned just with the development of a set of skills, mostly cognitive, relevant to the analysis of belief systems. It is an attempt to persuade students to think through basic questions of personal meaning and to examine their own life purposes in the light of relevant insights from previous generations, with a view to arriving at their own freely held values and commitment and living by them.

What is required for such learning to come about? Are human beings capable of such learning? Hill (2004, 73) in his sharing on education for commitment shows that humans are armed with great faculties for such learning. These abilities include self-awareness, critical and analytical thinking, imagination, creativity, accommodation of paradox and mystery, and the will to choose and act. In his sharing on "Changing the

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[5] Even though the book was directed at helping teachers of religious education in school, there are many useful principles one can learn for education in the church. This is because as Hill (2004,6) made it clear that his interest in religious education stems from the fact that he takes religious commitment seriously and he wrote as a committed Christian desiring to interact with those who are of the same faith or of different faith.

Values of Church people", Hill (1990, 13) acknowledged that such change is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, he also calls us to play our roles as partners of God by 'knowing something about the methods of teaching which make it more likely that 'will change not only their *minds* but also their *ways*'. According to Hill, the principles involved in such teaching have to do with biblical approach to knowledge characterized by 'revelation, praxis and relational learning'. In this approach, learning to change comes through some forms of experiential knowledge as in the revelation of God to the person. Such learning also involved the practice of reflection on action in the context of a group or community. Hill did not offer a specific method or programme on how these principles can be applied or changing the value of church people. In this thesis, I will try to show that CTR is a good pedagogical method that embraces some of the principles given by Hill above to facilitate transformational learning for the training of leaders in the church.

2.4. Summary

The ultimate purpose of leadership training programmes is for the holistic transformation of the leaders to be like Christ for effective work in the church to glorify God. This calls for TL of the leaders. In this chapter, I set out to establish that some existing leadership training programmes may not be effective because of a lack of TL in these programmes. The importance of TL in the training of leaders is seen from the biblical basis of the high standard of righteous living placed on discipleship which the leaders are not exempted from, and an even higher standard of commitment placed on the calling of leadership in the kingdom of God. In the investigation, we see that there is evidence of a deficit in the health of the church in general and at HLCE. As demonstrated, there is a direct correlation between the health of a church and the effectiveness of her leadership. This deficit in the health of the church therefore indirectly reflects the ineffectiveness of leadership and its training programme. An examination of the philosophy of education in some programmes revealed that there is a lack of transformational intention, and a failure of a built-in mechanism to facilitate TL. These findings support the hypothesis in this thesis that the ineffectiveness of leadership training may be attributed to the lack of TL in these programmes. From this investigation, it follows that there is a need of programmes that bring about TL for effective leadership training in the church; and more importantly a method that

facilitates such TL in its learning process. Education that transforms involves teaching of values and commitment that goes beyond beliefs and understanding. Such teaching that goes beyond learning of skill and information impartation calls for a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL in its learning process. In this thesis, CTR is being offered as a good method for such purpose. Before we explore this further, we need to learn more about TL in relation to effective leadership training.

<center>**Chapter 3**</center>

<center>**Transformational Learning for Effective Leadership Training – A Biblical Perspective**</center>

In the previous chapter, we established the importance of transformational learning (TL) for effective leadership training and the ineffectiveness of some existing training programmes because they failed to facilitate learning that transforms. It follows that we need to look for a programme with a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL. In this thesis, critical theological reflection (CTR) is proposed as a good method for such a purpose. To understand the role of CTR in bringing about TL, we need to know more about TL and the dynamic involved in its learning process. To do so in this chapter, we will examine the working definition of TL in this thesis in relation to the various understandings put forward by other teachers. The biblical basis and understanding involved in the dynamic of the TL process in this thesis will also be presented. At the end of it, a revised definition of TL to illustrate the process involved, and the extent and nature of transformation required will be given to strengthen the proposal that CTR is a good method to facilitate such learning.

3.1. What is transformational learning?

Different people have defined and approached transformational learning in various ways. Most proponents look at the product, process, or both, of TL. For Julie Gorman (2001), "To commit to transformational learning is to commit oneself to examining assumptions and paradigms that will challenge our comfort, our control, and our concepts…and results in our more fully knowing (not just rationally) God" (26). This definition sees the importance of fully knowing God as its product that comes through some challenging examination of assumptions and paradigms in its process of learning. According to Bill Hull (2006), "In spiritual transformation, we move from the person we are and continue to change by degree into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:16-18)" (188). He put forward six areas involved in the work of transformation namely, the transformed mind, character, relationships, habits, service and influence based on the life of Jesus. Hull (2006, 130) puts forward a Transformational Triangle to illustrate how the process comes about through the transformation of the inner persons when they position themselves by choosing a certain pattern of life. In such lives, they learn to

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interpret their life events and circumstances in the light of Scripture with insight from the Holy Spirit as they serve one another in the community. In addition to this, he also sees the practice of spiritual disciplines as an important key to spiritual transformation (Hull, 2006, 188-193). Dallas Willard (2002, 1-3) in his quest to put on the character of Christ for today's Christian, looks at TL at a deeper level of the heart, which he termed 'renovation of the heart'. He sees humans as spiritual beings that live from their hearts and spiritual formation as "the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite 'form' or character" (Willard 2002, 2). He maintains that this process of spiritual formation is necessary as the values of the world that have great influence on how Christians live today stand contradictory to the values of the kingdom of God. Willard (2002, 3) asserts:

> The greatest need you and I have, the greatest need of humanity in general, is renovation of our hearts. That spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come has been formed by a world denying God. It must be transformed. Indeed, the only hope for humanity lies in the fact that, just as our spirit has been formed, so also it can be transformed.

The 'renovation of the heart', which returns us to the character of Christ involves TL. To do so, Willard coined the acronym, "V-I-M", which stands for vision, intention and means as a pattern to work towards spiritual transformation. He explains, "If we are to be spiritually formed in Christ, we must have the appropriate vision, intention and mean" (59). His contention for the failure in spiritual transformation among Christians today is not that it is impossible, or that the effectual means are not available; it is because it has not been intended and this is largely due to the fact that the people have not been given a vision of life in God's kingdom (Willard 2002, 62).

For Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon (1995, 10-12), TL needs to work on spiritual and psychological growths of the persons which go hand in hand. For them, spirituality is a holistic one that recognizes the dynamic interrelation between our spiritual and psychological selves in its quest for holiness and wholeness. Spiritual transformation comes through two movements of self-appropriation and self-transcendence. Self-appropriation is seen as a process of learning through a habit of self-reflection that leads to a deeper knowledge of self, of knowing who we are, why we choose what we do, and what our feelings and desires are. Self-transcendence refers to a gradual transformation of self from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. It involves developing an intimate

relationship with God, a compassion for others and the ability to discern God's will and a willingness to do it. TL in Christian life involves an ongoing conversion in both these areas that complement each other to bring about transformation of the person to imitate Christ's love to others and to become whole in the process.

From the above brief review of TL, we see that various teachers put different emphasis and ways on the process of TL and suggest various character, nature and extent of transformation and formation of the person towards Christ-likeness. I will now present the working definition of TL in this thesis, and work on expanding and sharpening it to strengthen the proposal that CTR is a good method to facilitate such learning by looking at the biblical basis involved in the TL advocated in this thesis.

3.1.1. Transformational learning in this thesis

In this thesis, transformational learning takes place when a person goes through a process of learning that results in lasting positive change in attitude, thought and action towards Christ-likeness. This working definition of transformational learning takes into account both the product and the process of learning. In terms of product, it looks at the holistic transformation of the persons in their minds, hearts, and hands to become like Christ. Christ is the perfect model used for this goal of transformation. In terms of process, TL is an active, dynamic, interactive learning process that involves the persons' experiences and Scripture under the Spirit's guidance.

The goal of TL involves holistic transformation of the persons where the knowledge received comes with the conviction of the heart leading to a change in attitude and active obedience. As such, teaching that helps the persons to acquire knowledge and skill of discipleship alone is not sufficient. What they do is to be an outflow from the conviction of the truth in their hearts. They not only know the truth but also believe in the truth that translates into action. It is as Jesus' command and challenge to us – "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). Disciples who are transformed are those loved by God and respond to his love with action. This is illustrated in Romans 12:1-2 where disciples who are being transformed in their minds by the truth are to live out their life of worship to God as they received His mercy. Here, the minds, hearts, and hands of the disciples go together. In the Bible, there are examples of those who live out their faith with an informed mind without a transformed heart. Their faith

is sterile and their actions are often rigid devoid of life. One example is the Pharisees who failed to appreciate the teaching of Jesus on the Sabbath because of their learning that came mainly through their rigid, intellectual interpretation of the law of God. This led to their rigid applications of the law. They forbade Jesus' disciples to pick grains and rebuked Jesus for performing healing during the Sabbath because of their rigid adherence to the law that commands them to cease work on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:2). Another example is the questioning of Jesus' disciples by some people for not observing the law on fasting in comparison to John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18). Once again, they were practising fasting rigidly as they failed to understand its real meaning when they received the instructions only through their minds.

The process of TL is an *active*, *dynamic*, *interactive* process that involves the persons' experiences and Scripture under the Spirit's guidance. It is *active* because learning calls for active obedience to practise what is learned. This active obedience is part of the process of learning. It is *interactive* because learning comes through the interactions of the person's experience with the Scriptures. I therefore agree with Julie Gorman (2001) when she says, "As believers, all our knowing must be shaped by our relationship to the logos (the Word)" (26). This interaction is one that involves both the heart and mind of the person. As John Stott (1999) pointed out, "We are to be neither such emotional Christians that we never think, nor such intellectual Christians that we never feel. No, God has made us human beings, and human beings are by creation both rational and emotional" (443). It is *dynamic* because the learning process goes on throughout the persons' lives as they live out what is learned and continue to learn from such experiences in the light of the Scriptures. These are carried out under the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, TL is an ongoing process of learning where people bring their experiences to be shaped by the Scriptures resulting in their knowledge of God that leads to a positive influence in their attitudes, thoughts and actions towards Christ-likeness throughout their lives. In such interactive process, the Scriptures provide a guide for actions carried out by the person and the experience of that action is fed back to be checked by the Scriptures to lead to further actions. Such ongoing interaction of Scripture and action and experience calls for reflective learning and practices, which will be elaborated when

we look at CTR. To illustrate this process further, let us turn to the biblical understanding involved in the dynamic of its learning process.

3.2. Biblical understanding of the dynamic of transformational learning

The biblical understanding of the dynamic of TL in this thesis is seen in the edification process of the believers. It is a Trinitarian concept where the believers encounter God and Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit as they bring their experiences to interact with God and his Scriptural truth for their growth in Christ-likeness. TL takes place in the believers through the meditation of Scripture, personal encounter with Christ as the truth, and the experiences with God in their lives with the help of the Holy Spirit.

3.2.1. Transformation through meditation and reading of Scripture

TL can come about through the meditation and reading of Scripture. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:12 that 'the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart'. The transformational power of Scripture is recognized by Dallas Willard (1998) in his effort to bring back discipleship to the church when he pointed out that, "Jesus and his words have never belonged to the categories of dogma and law, and to read them as if they did is simply to miss them" (1). Dogma according to Willard is what you have to believe, law is what you must do, and in these respects, Scripture is much more than that. Henri Nouwen also identifies the transforming power of Scripture in his understanding of the role of spiritual reading and reflection of God's Word in the Bible. Nouwen (1997, 15-16) believes:

> Spiritual reading is…about reading spiritual things in a spiritual way. This requires a willingness not just to read but to be read, not just to master but to be mastered by Words. As long as we read the Bible or a spiritual book simply to acquire knowledge, our reading does not help us in our spiritual lives. We can become very knowledgeable about spiritual matters without becoming truly spiritual people…As we slowly let the words…enter into our mind and descend into our hearts, we become different people. The Word gradually becomes flesh in us and transforms our whole beings.

God's Word in the Bible indeed has transforming power over us and plays a central role in TL.

3.2.2. Transformation through the encounter with Jesus Christ the Truth

TL comes about when one encounters the truth, Jesus Christ himself in the educational process. In John 1, there are numerous references that Jesus himself is the Word of God made flesh to dwell among us. Jesus is uniquely the living Word of God for us. In John 14:6, Jesus tells his disciples that he is the way, the truth and the life that leads them to know God the Father. To highlight this personal aspect of truth in Jesus and the importance of personal relationship with Jesus in TL, Palmer (1983, 47) pointed out,

> Jesus did not say, 'I will speak true words to you' or 'I will tell you about the truth'; he claimed to embody truth in his person. To those who wish to know the truth, Jesus did not offer propositions to be tested by logic or data to be tested in the laboratory. He offered himself and his life.

In this sense, truth is personal and powerful to change the believers as it comes in the person of Jesus himself through the work of the Spirit in the believers' life. Julie Gorman (2001) concurred with this when she writes, "In this sense, truth becomes "personal" as one interacts with the living God in carrying out his "word" in a specific situation" (28). Therefore, believers who set out to obey the teaching of God in their lives encounter Jesus in the truth and experience TL in the process.

3.2.3. Transformation through the experience with God

God uses experiences with his people to transform them. In the Bible, there are those who are transformed through their experiences of 'crises of belief' with God when they are put in situations where they have lost control. We see this in Jesus' miracles and words that were aimed at prompting the individuals involved to question their values, assumptions, and lifestyles in their encounters with him. In the case of Martha, it was to roll away the rock to raise Lazarus from death (John 11:40) and for the rich young ruler, it was to give up the one thing that was closest to his heart (Luke 18:22). To the disciples, it was in feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6:37) and to Peter, it was in baptizing the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47). For Nicodemus, it was about being 'born again' (John 3:3) and to the woman at the well, she was asked to reflect on her life style (John 4:7). Referring to such life transforming experiences, Gorman (2001, 33-34) commented:

When facilitated by a caring "guide" and seated firmly in a relational perspective of a "bigger God", such occasions become "aha" moments of insight into self, the nature of God, the understanding of biblical truth, and the wisdom of living out the truth.

Our experiences in lives can be occasions for TL when we recognize them as the invitation of God to transform us. This is especially so when God wants to take us to new paradigms and innovative actions as leaders to serve him better. This TL through experiences with God is well illustrated by Blackaby and King (1994, 50-64) in their book *Experiencing God*, where they shared how God is always at work around us and invites us to a love relationship with him. The invitation of God is a 'God-sized assignment' that will cause an experience of a 'crisis of belief' in us. When we join God by taking a step of faith to respond to his invitation, we experience his love and come to know Him and undergo TL in this experience with Him.

3.2.4. The role of the Holy Spirit in transformation

The Holy Spirit's crucial role in TL is often not appreciated and He has become more like a validating seal and a bystander to what we do in education. Carol Lasey Hess (1996, 119) echoed this sentiment:

Historically, we have tended to presume we know what Christian education is and then fit the Spirit into that formulation...The real predicament …is the unintentional marginalisation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is almost seen as a relief pitcher who comes in at the ninth inning to sustain a win…but who is otherwise on the periphery.

This is unfortunate and something we need to attend to in our educational endeavour. There are two important roles played by the Spirit in TL of the believers. The first is that the Spirit is our Teacher-Counsellor who teaches and leads us into all truth. In John 14:16-17, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit who is called the Spirit of truth to the believers to be their Counsellor. The Holy Spirit is the one who will teach the disciples all things and will remind them of everything Jesus has said (John 14:26) and he will testify about Jesus to them (John 15:26). The second is that the Spirit is the Enabler for the believers to have intimate relationships with Christ for the work of TL. In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul prayed for the believers to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner being (v16) and for Christ's dwelling in their hearts through faith (v17a) so that they will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God's love in their lives. According to Peter O

Brien (1999, 258), "The experience of the Spirit's strengthening activity is the same as that of Christ's indwelling". The strengthening of the Spirit in their inner beings goes together with the indwelling of Christ in their hearts. The key to the believers' building their love relationship with Christ for their transformation is through the strengthening of the Spirit in their lives. As indicated by Carol Lasey (1996, 38-39), the Spirit is the one who opens up the potential for us to go beyond our limits and convicts us of the truth that sets us free. He does this by centring the human spirit in God as well as opening up the human spirit to God and others. The Spirit reveals the truth in us and helps us to see our real-selves as we really are and helps us to be open before God for his work of transformation in us.

3.3. The definition of TL revisited

From the above discussion, a revised definition of TL for this thesis is as follows:

TL is an ongoing active, dynamic, interactive process of learning under the guidance of the Holy Spirit where people bring all their life experiences to be shaped by Scriptures resulting in their knowledge of God that leads to radical change in their attitudes, thoughts and actions towards Christ-likeness. This revised definition is important to emphasize the nature and the extent of change brought about by TL as well as the process involves in TL advocated in this thesis. This is to highlight the role of CTR in helping to bring about such learning in educating the leaders of the church.

In term of the nature and extent of the holistic change brought about by TL of the person towards Christ-likeness, I agree with John Emmett[6] that this likeness in Christ is not 'merely a matter of an image projected, but rather an image embodied by the Spirit of the risen Christ'. Such transformation goes beyond learning that works on formation or reformation of the person. According to Emmett, there is a difference between formation, reformation, and transformational learning and recognition of these terms is important in helping us to understand our conversion or transformational process that

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[6] John Emmett is an examiner of this thesis and I am grateful for his input to the thesis. Permission was given to quote some of his thoughts on this topic.

involves a movement from formation, through reformation to transformation[7]. Emmett further shared, "we are each shaped, formed, into a dominant worldview, with its attendant practices and pathways to belonging. Formation is the result of imbibing culture, dominant spiritualities and meaning making frameworks". In reformation, "some of the previous formation is confirmed, even strengthened; some might be corrected or dismissed. There will be consequent modifications to values, beliefs and some practices in relation to changes in our culture of our times". In transformation, "the change is not a minor adjustment, a fine-tuning or even an adaptive change. The previous formation, even reformation, is transcended, replaced in full". TL in this thesis works on the radical change that brings about the total transformation and not merely the formation or reformation of the person.

In term of the process of TL, I share with Emmett his concern that much of the church's ministries are focused on formation and reformation. In sharing his reflection on the literature around formation and transformation, he pointed out that the movement between them is often truncated where it is assumed that a person is transformed by the adoption of new ideas. According to him, "True transformation comes only through critical participation in the reality of the liberation and reconciliation God offers through Jesus Christ, enables, and empowers through the Holy Spirit's active presence". For such transformational learning, "culture and context become critical participants. Values, beliefs, practices, belonging – each and all are most thoroughly open to change". I cannot agree more with him and this is where reflective learning and thus CTR plays a useful role in facilitating such TL, which I will elaborate later.

3.4. Summary

This chapter presented a biblical understanding of TL to help us see the role of CTR in working towards an effective leadership training programme. We see the various approaches to TL with different emphases given to the process and product from the perspective of some Christian leaders. Using a working definition of TL for this thesis, a discussion on the biblical understanding involved in its dynamic led to a revised

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[7] According to Emmett, *Formation* has to do with the initial shaping of a person. *Reformation* has to do with making changes to worldview we have been formed in. *Transformation* has to do with a whole worldview change.

definition of TL. This revised definition of TL clarifies the distinct components involved in its process, and the nature and extent of holistic transformation towards Christ-likeness that calls for learning that goes beyond formation and reformation learning. The biblical basis of the dynamic involved in such transformational learning process is based on a Trinitarian concept where persons bring their experiences with God to interact with the Bible under the guidance of the Spirit. Through this experience, the learners encounter Christ, the living Word of God and are transformed holistically to the likeness of Christ that goes beyond an image of Christ projected. Such TL that involves active and dynamic interactive learning process where culture and context become critical participants calls for reflective learning and practices where CTR can play a useful role. Before we look at how CTR can play such a role, let us attend to another source of information that will help us further understand the role of reflective practices in TL. This source of information comes from the field of secular adult education concerning TL.

<div align="center">**Chapter 4**</div>

<div align="center">**Transformational learning and secular adult education**</div>

This chapter will look at the contributions of secular adult education towards our understanding of transformational learning (TL). As we identify with the notion that all truth is God's truth, we therefore believe that there are some insights from secular adult education that can help us understand TL. We will focus on the areas that give us understanding of adult education related to the development of secular transformative learning. We will look briefly at self-directed learning and andragogy promoted by Knowles and then move on to examine the work of secular transformative theorists such as Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow. The purpose is to see their contributions to help us understand TL and its process, and more importantly, how their insights relate to the Biblical understanding of TL to strengthen the proposal of critical theological reflection (CTR) as a good evangelical model of theological reflection for TL in this thesis. Therefore, my interaction with these theorists will be limited in its scope to those contents that are consistent with Christian commitment for the above purpose. As such, the focus of the interaction is on seeing how their understanding on TL relates to the Christian perspective of learning and not on making critical assessment of the dynamic involved in their pedagogical processes. I will interact more critically with Freire whose educational philosophy is influenced significantly by Christian perspectives in its epistemology because of his Roman Catholic upbringing. It is important to note that while the scope of analysis on these theorists is limited in this thesis, it does not mean that I endorse readily all the understanding regarding learning in their pedagogies for Christian educational practice.

4.1. Transformative Learning and adult education

Professional adult learning became a distinct field of educational study in the 1920s. While there are many models and theories put forward, we will confine our discussions in this thesis to andragogy and some perspectives related to self-directed learning that help in the promotion of transformative learning.

Malcolm Knowles promoted Andragogy[8] in 1968 as a way to describe adults learn, as distinct from pedagogy, which is the art and science of teaching children. Instead of dichotomizing them, Knowles sees andragogy and pedagogy as two ends of a spectrum of learning (Knowles, 1980, 43). He established five crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the child learners due to their increasing maturity (Knowles (1984, 12). These are:

a. Self-concept: adult's deep desire for self-directed learning and a move away from dependency on teachers.

b. Experience: an accumulation of rich reservoir of experiences that become an increasing resource for learning.

c. Readiness to learn: their readiness to learn from changing roles and circumstances posed to them.

d. Orientation to learning: a special interest to apply what is learned and a shift from subject-centred to problem-centred learning.

e. Motivation to learn: an internal motivation for learning in themselves.

From these assumptions, adults are therefore better equipped for self-directed learning and their experiences can provide a good resource for such learning. Their desire to be independent, their readiness to learn and their interest to apply what is learned make them more capable of helping in the planning and learning process of their own education. As Knowles (1980) pointed out, there should be "a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint enquirers" (47). As asserted by his mentor Cyril Houle (1996, 30), Knowles' contribution towards adult learning calls us to 'involve adult learners in as many aspects of their education as possible' and to create a climate to promote such self-directed learning. According to Cranton, self-directed learning plays a key role in what she termed consumer-oriented learning. In this type of learning, Cranton (1994, 12) explained:

> Learners identify their needs, set objectives based on those needs, select materials and resources that are relevant to their learning, choose the strategies

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[8] Knowles popularized the concept of "andragogy", although he was not the first to use the term. Andragogy first appeared in the writing of a German teacher named Alexander Kapp, in 1833. Commenting on Plato's education theory, Kapp contrasted andragogy (andr- meaning 'man') with pedagogy (paid- meaning 'child' and agogos meaning 'leading').

by which they will meet their objectives, and evaluate their own progress. The Educator becomes a resource person, manager, or facilitator and does not engage in challenging or questioning what learners say about their needs.

However, there are some challenges and difficulties faced by such learning. For this learning to be effective, Cranton (1994, 13-14) noticed for example, the learners must be highly motivated, know what they want to learn, and have skills to set their own objectives, find resources and evaluate their own progress. The problem is that not everyone prefers or necessarily has the skill and maturity for such learning. This is also put forward by those who challenge Knowles' assumption about adults as independent learners for it is known that some adults are not independent learners and require structure and teachers for help. In addition, it has been criticized that such learning, which are left largely to the adults themselves, are unlikely to challenge the learners' assumptions or change their values to bring about learning that transforms. For transformational learning that brings about change, another form of learning which Cranton called 'emancipatory learning' comes into play. According to Cranton (1994), emancipatory learning is "a process of freeing ourselves from forces that limit our options and our control over our lives, forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control" (16). The process of freeing ourselves in this learning is what leads one to TL. Jack Mezirow elaborated this concept of emancipatory learning in his Theory of Transformative Learning, which we will shortly turn to.

4.2. Secular transformational theory

From the brief sharing on the development of adult education, we see that Knowles' Andragogy and self-directed learning help to lay the ground for adults to learn on their own and get involved in their own educational process. As noted such independent learning may not be suitable for all adults and such learning on its own is often not transformational. However, such independent attitude helps adults to be more receptive to TL and there are ways to train adults in TL. In order to look for a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL for which they can be trained, we need to gain understanding into the learning process involved in bringing about TL. To do so, we will look to secular transformative theory for help. The two main secular theorists concerning TL we will look at are Freire's social transformation through "conscientization", and Mezirow's transformation of perspective through critical reflection and constructive

discourse. We will also see how their understandings reconcile with biblical understanding of TL.

4.2.1. Paulo Freire and his Theory of Social Transformation

Paulo Freire (1921-97) is well known for his work with poor Brazilians on liberation of the oppressed through social transformation in the 1970s. His experience of poverty and hunger during the 1929 Great Depression led to his identification and concern for the poor and shaped his particular educational worldview. According to him, too much emphasis on education has been given to gaining knowledge through formal learning which he termed "banking concept" of education. This concept is seen as an instrument of oppression where the teachers exert control over the students. Instead, he advocated a more informal problem-posing concept of education, which he sees as an instrument for liberation. Here, teacher and students become jointly responsible for a process of inquiry through dialogue. Students are no longer passive listeners but become critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher much like the emancipatory learning described earlier. Such learning is possible only if adults see themselves as independent learners capable of some degree of self-directed learning.

Paulo Freire's philosophy of education is based on humans' ability and vocation to act upon the world to change it for a better life individually and corporately. According to Freire (1972, 191), the world is not static and there are changes to be adjusted to and problems to work on. Humans are given abilities for praxis to reflect on one's self, one's action and experiences. He held that learning occurs through this continual, simultaneous action and reflection (shared praxis) with others in the community (1972, 133). Humans are also able through the process of 'conscientization' develop their self-awareness, dignity and hope for their eventual transformation that leads to their liberation. This problem-posing concept of education that came through dialogue, praxis, and conscientization brought on a new paradigm and understanding concerning learning that transforms. Such TL that comes through the liberation of oppressed leads to social transformation.

4.2.1.1. Biblical responses to Freire's Social Transformational Theory

There are some concepts of education concerning TL in Freire's social transformational theory where we find biblical support.

The first is Freire's concept that people can be liberated from oppressions through TL. The power of TL that liberates the poor peasants from oppression is consistent with the understanding that Christians are liberated by the truth (John 8:32, 36) that sets them free to live the eternal and abundant life (John 6:51) in the kingdom of God. Furthermore, Freire's concept of education that people are liberated in their oppressions through TL also finds biblical support in those who experience the transformational truth of God when they undergo trials and oppressions. This is seen in the Bible where God does not exempt his children from difficult experiences in lives, because through such experiences He is able to transform them in their encounter with the truth for their training in maturity. This is seen in some passages of the Bible where God uses suffering and disciplines to train Christians in maturity (Hebrews 12:7-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7, 4:12-13).

The second concerns the power of social transformation that comes through the liberating education in the poor peasants. The power for social transformation from liberated lives is also seen in Christians who are given the ability to live as light of the world and salt of the earth to bring transformation to the society (Matthew 5:13-16). Jesus makes it clear that individuals are saved into a family of God to live as witnesses of God's love to influence the society for Christ. Jesus came to save not only the individual but also the family and the world.

The third is Freire's recognition of the ability of humans for praxis to act appropriately to take control of the changing world. This is consistent with the biblical teaching of God creating humans with ability and power to rule the world (Genesis 1:27-28).

Finally, the appreciation of Freire on learning by both individuals and through the corporate setting also goes in line with the biblical concept of nurture carried out in the individual and corporate settings. The people of God are called to learn on their own and as a community to transform themselves and the world to usher in the kingdom of God.

I will now make a critique on Freire's theory from an evangelical Christian educational perspective. As pointed out above, there are some concepts in Freire's theory of social transformation that identify with the Christian understanding of education. This may be the influence of Catholicism in his upbringing. However, Christian Liberation Theology also influences him significantly in his philosophy of education. As pointed out by Burke (1997), "Freire had several different kinds of connections with the Christian church. His pedagogy was developed in the same milieu as Liberation Theology and both influenced it and was influenced by it" (23). In terms of Christology, Burke (1997, 24-25) maintained that the influence of Christ on Freire was more of his humanistic immanent aspect than the transcendent aspect. This is concurred by Pazmino (1988) who shared, "Freire refers to himself as a Christian humanist and describes his educational philosophy as humanistic" (68). From this brief review of Freire's Christian association, we see that his identification with Christian theology helps to bridge to some extent, his pedagogy with Biblical principles of education. However, his Christian theology that is inclined towards a liberal and humanistic view constitutes a major reason why his pedagogical concepts may sit in tension with Christian educational philosophy. Let me elaborate.

Freire's purpose of education is for the liberation of the oppressed and the transformation of society. This arises from his identification with the human Jesus who is always reaching out to the poor and his interpretation that oppression in the society is the result of broken relationship between man and man due to the fall that needs restoration. While Freire's analysis and reasoning for the unjust world and understanding of the heart of Jesus to attend to the poor and oppressed has its biblical basis, his approach to solving the problem through educating the oppressed and social transformation need some critical analysis. In his largely humanistic approach to education, Freire has an overly optimistic view of the capability of humans to solve the world problem. While humans are valued as being made in the image of God, given the charge to care for the creation, and as a being stand only a little below the angels, they are still born with sin and suffer imperfection. Their capacities are therefore limited. Furthermore, God's restoration of human brokenness and the ushering in of the kingdom of God calls for human dependence on the transcendent Jesus and the Holy Spirit; both of which are sorely missing in Freire's pedagogy. Another issue of contention is the ultimate aim of Freire's pedagogy in working towards social

transformation as its end. From the biblical perspective, education is for the transformation of people to Christ's likeness and social transformation is only one part of the outcome of that process. The focus is more on the people's relationship with God and one another and the transformation on their being to Christ-likeness rather than the restoration of justice in the world.

Another area of Freire's pedagogy that warrant some comment concerns his epistemology that generation of new knowledge is possible through its pedagogical process. Freire's epistemology concerning the generation of knowledge is subjective in that it is dependent on the participants' contributions in the learning process. However, traditional Christian epistemologies affirm that God's revelation of Himself and his truth in the Bible is complete and there is no further revelation or new knowledge from the study of Scripture today. Biblical truth is normative for our lives and is the foundational truth for all learning and interpretive purposes. While interpretation of the Bible is necessary for its correct application in its various context and culture, and disagreement is allowed on the nature of the sacred text, the revelation of God's truth is complete and final. Thus, there is no such revelation of God's truth from our reflective learning today. This will be elaborated further when we look at the role of CTR in facilitating learning that transforms.

Freire's view on the partnership in the learner-teacher relationship is another area that may find disagreement with the traditional Christian pedagogy. Traditional Christian pedagogy is a teacher-centred pedagogy as pointed out by Burke (1997, 32) based on the notion that 'God's truth was deposited in the sacred texts by revelation and that some were divinely called to the special task of understanding and interpreting these texts'. I agree with Burke from the teaching of Scripture where some are empowered with the gift of teaching and called to the office of teacher (Romans 12:7b, 1 Corinthians 12:29c, Ephesians 4:11). Jesus himself was seen as 'teacher' to his disciples and was given due recognition as a 'teacher' by those who received his teaching.

4.2.1.2. Freire's contribution to Christian pedagogy

While there are areas of Freire's pedagogy that find disagreements with the traditional Christian pedagogy, there are various contributions we can receive from his pedagogical process. As Pazmino (1988) highlighted, "Much can be gained through critical

interaction with educators such as Freire because his insights address areas of weakness that have plagued evangelical educators" (72). What are some of these areas?

The first is in the area of Freire's emphasis on his learning through praxis where action and reflection go hand in hand. This is of much relevance as Burke (1997) rightly pointed out, "Learning is readily separated from action in the churches, either with the result of learning unaccompanied by action, or action not directed by learning" (27-28). Therefore, we have much to learn from Freire in this area to bring about learning that integrates our actions and theology. This value of reflective learning that incorporates praxis in its learning process will be picked up by CTR in this thesis.

The second area of contribution by Freire concerns the problem with the 'banking model' of education he highlighted to us. This is relevant because much of what we see in education in the church today has knowingly or unknowingly adopted such model. This was true with what I found in my practicum with AGST-MST where I looked at how education was conducted in Holy Light Church English (HLCE). I found that such banking model was used not only in HLCE but also for the church in general. This is inconsistent with the biblical understanding of the 'priesthood of all believers' where all Christians are called to participate directly with God in all areas of their Christian lives including the area of education. As pointed out earlier, while there are those who are specially empowered with the gift of teaching and called to the office of teaching, all believers are also given the capacities and access to God and the Holy Spirit to participate in their educational endeavour. Therefore, as we learn from our teachers, we are also to be responsible for our own learning by participating actively in the learning process. In this regard, Freire's over optimistic humanistic view on the capabilities of the learners may be overstated, however, those of us who see ourselves as incapable of self-directed learning and thus fail to participate and take responsibilities for our educational endeavours are equally misinformed. We are to participate actively in our learning process with the help of the Holy Spirit and at all times be humble to receive teaching and guidance from our teachers.

The third area we can learn from Freire is the emphasis he placed on 'corporateness' in the learning process. This sits well with the Hebraic tradition where learning takes place in and as a community, which holds true in the Old and New Testaments. This feature of learning is particularly relevant today with the invasion of individualism in our

culture, which the church is not exempted from. The church can learn much in this area of 'corporate learning' as she is called to live, to learn, and to worship together as they journey with God accomplishing his mission on earth[9].

From this brief review, we see that Freire's pedagogy has areas that identify positively with the Christian perspective of education, which makes useful contributions to our educational endeavour for TL. At times, his pedagogy that is highly influenced by his humanistic and liberation theology can cause departure from the Christian perspectives of education. However, even such departure can be adapted to good effect when it points out our weaknesses and directs us back to areas where we may have departed ourselves from a good philosophy of education in the church.

4.2.2. Jack Mezirow and his Theory of Transformative Learning

Jack Mezirow is recognized for his theory of transformative learning through a process of critical reflection[10]. This idea of transformative learning came about as he experienced 'disorienting dilemma' in his career as a social action educator when he encountered the writing of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich that challenged him greatly in his understanding concerning adult education and social action. Another significant event was his wife's return to college, which led him to a study of personal development involving 83 women returning to college. In this study, he described comprehensively how adult learners see the world, question the meaning of what they see through the process of critical self-reflection. Another important formative influence was the work of psychiatrist Roger Gould, which added a psychological dimension to his theory. In addition, Mezirow (1991, 7) also gives specific credit to Jurgen Habermas, whose theory of communicative action 'provides the social theoretical context for the transformation theory of learning'. Mezirow suggests a triumvirate domain of knowing, namely instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory that has its corresponding

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[9] For more information on this concept of learning as a community, refer to Fleischer (2004), Regalado (2001, 181-184), Veverka (1997), Walton (1992).

[10] Many of the ideas in theories such as this one, which focus on critical reflection, have a background based on the work of John Dewey, an adult education theorist who in the first half of the century identified reflective thinking as a goal of education.

understanding from Habermas's framework of knowing[11]. According to Mezirow (1991, 88), emancipatory learning is often transformative for it involves the learners questioning their existing assumptions and convictions which can result in a new set of beliefs and values. For Mezirow (1991, 224-225):

> The goal of adult education is to help adult learners become more critically reflective, participate more fully and freely in rational discourse and action, and advance developmentally by moving towards meaning perspective that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative of experience.

He therefore sees the importance of adults having the ability to formulate beliefs through critical reflection of their experiences in their context to make informed decisions and actions. To do so, adults need to learn how to make meaning out of information, experiences and ideas. He feels that adults have often uncritically assimilated values, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and meanings from others into their frame of reference. These adults often make decisions based not on well thought-out ideas but rather on false assumptions, values and beliefs of others. Transformative learning is what he sees as a possible solution to such dilemma. This led Mezirow to formulate transformative learning, which involves teaching adults to become more aware of their assumptions and habits of thinking through the process of critical reflection and constructive discourse. According to Mezirow (2000, 7-8):

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

Transformative learning occurs when new frames of reference are established; habits of mind and points of view are transformed. This learning process is facilitated through critical reflection and constructive discourse. These reflection and discourse are often triggered by 'disorienting dilemma' that causes them to assess their assumptions and beliefs. Disorienting dilemmas are significant personal events such as a personal crisis and an internal search of meaning in life. Not all disorienting dilemmas lead to

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[11] Habermas's framework of knowing includes technical knowledge – acquisition of informational data as in the positivistic paradigm; practical knowing – understanding meaning; emancipatory knowing – transformation through critical self-reflection.

transformative learning. Some people can glide through severe personal crisis without any change by the loss. What is more certain is that this disorienting dilemma acts as a trigger to critical reflection. Reflection is the process of critically assessing the content, process, or premises of our effort to interpret and give meaning to an experience (Mezirow 1991, 104). Of the three, it is the reflection on the premises that results in meaning making that has the greatest transformational effect on the individual.

4.2.2.1. Mezirow's transformative learning from a biblical perspective

In Mezirow's transformative learning theory, two important components are involved in bringing about transformational learning. The first is one's special experience, which he termed 'disorienting dilemma'; the second is the process of critical reflection on these experiences. What are the biblical perspectives to this understanding of TL?

The use of special experiences to bring about transformational learning resonates well with the biblical understanding that God uses our personal experiences of 'crises of faith' to transform us. According to Downs (1994, 193), "Life experiences can and should force us to examine our understanding of God's character and work and drive us back into the Bible for insight. As life questions us, it helps us see where and how we need to grow". This is seen in earlier sharing from the previous chapter concerning the biblical understanding on the dynamic of TL using the Blackaby and Kings' model of 'Experiencing God' (1994, 50-64). In this model, we see that God invites us to join Him in his work so that we come to know him through a love relationship with Him. His invitation often comes in the form of 'crisis of faith' that challenges our beliefs and trust in Him. This 'crisis of belief' can be compared to the 'disorientating dilemma' in Mezirow's transformative theory. Just as 'disorientating dilemma' provides the experience that leads to transformative learning, God's invitation for us to join Him leads to the experience of 'crisis of faith' with Him that transforms us.

In terms of the process of reflective learning on these experiences, there is a parallel and a discrepancy between Mezirow's transformative learning and the biblical understanding of TL. For the similarity, Mezirow's critical reflection in questioning their existing assumptions and convictions that lead to a new set of beliefs and values sees a parallel process in the biblical TL advocated in this thesis. In TL, God constantly instructs Christians to review and reflect their lives' experiences and actions with the

teaching of God that leads to their change in perspectives and actions. Such reflective process with Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit leads to TL as in the transformation of perspective in Mezirow's theory.

In terms of differences, the transformational power of God's Word and the centrality of Scripture in the reflective process is what make biblical TL different from Mezirow's theory. In biblical TL, the Bible plays a central role in bringing about TL in the learning process. Though the human learners play an active role and participate with God in the educational endeavour, changes in perspectives and values are brought about and dependent on the transforming power of the Scriptures under the Spirit's guidance. On the other hand, the process of learning through critical reflection by Mezirow is dependent on the learners' skills of rational discourse, critical thinking and ability to assess experience objectively. It is mainly subjective and relies heavily on the ability of the learners. These views are consistent with the biblical understanding that humans are endued with special God-given abilities because they are made in the image of God. However, this humanistic view of Mezirow's in his philosophy of education like Freire, is an over optimistic one. Biblical TL takes into account the fallen imperfect nature of humans and look to God and his transforming power in Scripture and the Holy Spirit instead of reliance on human ability for the work of transformation. Having said so, Mezirow's view of humans' capabilities for critical reflective learning, should challenge us to consider utilizing these God given abilities in the training of Christians in the kingdom of God. The training in critical reflection to bring about TL is what CTR in this study is concerned with and will be elaborated later.

4.3. Summary

In this chapter, we set out to look at secular adult educational theories with the purpose to enhance our understanding of TL in the church.

Through the lenses of Knowles' Andragogy and related adult self-directed learning, we see the development of adult education towards TL because of their abilities to be independent learners.

To look for a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL, we turn to Freire's social transformation and Mezirow's transformative theory. Freire put forward a problem-

posing concept of education that liberates the oppressed for social transformation through a process of dialogue, praxis, and conscientization. His promotion of praxis, appreciation of humans ability for critical reflection, and emphasis on corporate learning are useful areas we can learn for the promotion of TL. In terms of a biblical response to his theory, there are areas in Freire's pedagogy that identify positively with the Christian perspective of education. However, his pedagogy is also influenced by his humanistic and liberation theology that causes it to sit in some tension with the Christian perspectives of education. This as we noted, can still be adapted to good effect when it acts as a challenge to point out our weaknesses and direct us back to areas we need to attend to in our educational endeavour.

With regard to Mezirow's transformative learning, his understanding that transformative learning comes through a process of critical reflection on the 'disorientating dilemmas' finds its biblical identification in the fact that Christians also go through 'crises of belief' as 'disorientating dilemmas' in their faith venture with God as experiences for reflections that transform them. Mezirow's theory also sits in tension with biblical TL with his over optimistic view of humans' capabilities to achieve TL on their own because of his humanistic view of education.

From this investigation, there are features in both Freire's and Mezirow's theories that point to the importance of reflective learning and practice to facilitate TL in their learning processes. In this thesis, CTR is proposed as a good pedagogical method that embraces such learning process to bring about TL.

Chapter 5

The background to theological reflection

In the previous chapters, we established that there is a lack of effective leadership training in the church because of a lack of transformational learning (TL) in some existing training programmes. We then explored understanding concerning TL from the biblical and secular perspective to look for a good pedagogical method that facilitates TL. In both the biblical and secular approaches to TL, we discovered that reflective learning and practices play an important role in the educational process of TL. In this thesis, I propose critical theological reflection (CTR) as a good method that facilitates TL because of its engagement with reflective learning and practice in its learning process. CTR in this thesis as a pedagogical method while having its own distinctive features is not something new but is closely related to theological reflection (TR) in its pedagogical concept of learning. In this chapter, we will therefore look at some background concept regarding theological reflection in general to help us look at CTR and understand its role in facilitating TL for training lay leaders. We will look at some questions such as: What is TR and its main purpose in education? When did it emerge? Where is it intellectually 'located' as a method of enquiry and how does it play a role in TL? Who are the principal expositors and how has the debate developed?

5.1. Theological reflection and its purpose

Theological reflection is a term that needs some qualifications (even though it has been around for more than 40 years) because the term TR can be misconstrued in its practice and intentionality. The term 'reflection' may give a false impression that it is mainly a passive exercise of mental activity in its process. The term 'theological' also needs some qualification as reflection that is 'theological' naturally leads one to the assumption that the purpose of the reflection is to gain knowledge of God and His word. This passive nature of learning and the mere acquisition of knowledge of God from the practice of TR cannot be further from the truth. So what is TR? What is involved in its process, and what is its ultimate purpose?

TR is a distinct form of theologizing that involves reflection on an experience in relation to Christian faith tradition that leads to practical implication for life.

The three main components in TR are experience, reflection and action. In TR people come individually or as a group to reflect on their experiences with God in order to learn from the experiences. This learning is expressed in appropriate actions in accordance to the Christian faith. TR is different from secular reflection because its interest is in God as the word 'theological' denotes. However, this interest in God is not confined to the abstract proclamation of God's truth in its Word or the acquisition of the knowledge of the truth alone; it is one that extends to people's encounter with God in the process of reflection that leads to God-directed actions in their lives. The action-reflection practices have a transformational effect on the practitioners. This encounter with God in their experiences causes the persons to learn more about God and his expectation that helps them to respond appropriately to his teaching. Action and reflection go together to help the persons to learn something in their experiences from God about God and of themselves. As Kinast (1996) emphasized, "This integration of reflection and action is what ultimately makes theological reflection theological" (x). This learning leads to actions in their lives that provide further experiences for reflective learning. TR is therefore a continuous process of ongoing action and reflection that has transformational effect on the practitioners.

TR as an educational tool has the transformation of the people as its core purpose. Even though the term may give the impression of a mainly passive exercise of mental activity, TR is meant to be an active engagement of the person or persons with God to learn from their experiences to obey God in his command. As asserted by Kinast (1996), 'Theological reflection is a method to help people learn from their experience... it is action-orientated and often change-orientated" (viii). The action and change here is towards the transformation of the person to obey God and his commands. It is a way to help people to learn to obey the teaching of God that "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). TR has great implication for the ministers of God as indicated by Kinast (1996, ix):

> It helps a minister recognize God's role in the ministry. This recognition may entail some changes in the minister's self-awareness, outlook, motivation, and decisions. These changes become the basis for new action – the way a minister conducts the ministry and changes in the process.

TR therefore works on the persons and leads to transformational change of their whole being in their minds, hearts and hands as they invite God into their life experiences through an ongoing action-reflection practice in their lives and ministries.

5.2. When did theological reflection emerge?

Several sources lead to the recognition of the practice of TR as a distinct entity in the Christian communities. These sources are highlighted by Kinast (2000), "Its distinctiveness is further conveyed by the several sources that have contributed to its development – Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology, Black and Hispanic/Latino theology, catechetical theology, clinical pastoral education, spiritual renewal and ecumenical dialogue" (1).

The idea of TR was first mooted in the 1960s when liberation theology came into Latin America where small Christian communities came together to reflect on their social, economical, political and cultural practices in relation to their religious beliefs to provide pastoral plan of action for a better life. At about the same time in the United States, some African American and women groups in their quests for freedom also started the Liberation theology and Feminist theology movements respectively as they reflected on their experiences of oppression in their lives. Also in the United States at this time, the clinical pastoral education that trained pastors and chaplains in skill for their personal development began to put emphasis on the reflection of their actual experiences with patients. The other factor that contributed to its development is the employment of TR in the spiritual renewal and ecumenical dialogue in both the Protestant and Catholic circles to strengthen the practice of ministry through better grounding in its theology.

5.3. Where is theological reflection intellectually 'located' as a method of enquiry?

With regard to the question where is TR intellectually 'located' as a method of enquiry, TR is not regarded as a distinct area of enquiry such as pastoral theology, systematic theology, biblical theology and the like. Rather it is a distinct *form* of enquiry that brings theology into the reality of people's lives. It uses their experience as the place for the 'practice of the Presence of God' for their growth and transformation. As Kinast (2000, 3) emphasized:

The reality of theology, which theological reflection seeks to disclose, is the presence of God in people's experience, a presence that invites them to encounter God where they are and to participate in the divine life which is offered to them there.

The form that TR takes is one that seeks to bring theology into the experiences of people's lives. It does so by inviting God's presence into their experiences where they interact with God and his teaching. It sees the value of experience as an opportunity to participate in the divine life offered by God. It does not merely use experience to draw understanding and apply theological principles in people's lives. Rather it promotes the interaction of people with God using their experiences as a means to know God and to be faithful to his teaching. In essence, TR as a method of enquiry makes theology come alive in the life experience of the people for their TL and not merely for an increase of knowledge from its reflective activities.

In this way, TR works as a distinct form of reflective pedagogy. It is useful as a pedagogical method that facilitates TL for two basic reasons.

The first is the integration of theology and practice that reflection brings. Conventionally, theological education works from theory to practice where theology gives rise to and feeds our practices. Such education puts emphasis on informational learning where information learned is expected to lead to better practices. In reflective pedagogy, learning comes from reflection on practice that feeds back to theory. Such ongoing reflective practices that integrate theory and practice lead to better ministerial practices and have a transformational effect on the learners.

The second feature in reflective practice that is transformational lies in its ability to challenge learners in their values and beliefs that affect their actions. Reflection on their actions with theology leads them to review their perspective and values that often go unchallenged in a passive informational transferred mode of learning. The process of reflection often leads the learners to better self-awareness and helps them to scrutinize their behaviour, which may otherwise be governed by habits and unconscious motives. Therefore, such reflective practices often work towards the formation and transformation of the learners.

5.4. The styles of theological reflection

Over the years, there have emerged various styles of reflective learning in TR. It is not in the scope of this thesis to elaborate in detail on this but a brief review of the five styles of reflections put forward by Kinast (2000, 5) will give some perspective on the scope involved. The five styles are based on their different emphasis determined by the type of experience the practitioners focus on, how they correlate it with the faith tradition and what sort of praxis they envision emerging from the reflection. They differ in their range of experience and breadth of praxis covered by the practitioners in their reflections.

The first is the *ministerial style,* which focuses on experiences and praxis within the context of church ministry as advocated by James and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead.

The second is the *spiritual wisdom style* that is open to the full range of life experiences but with an emphasis on Christian formation and the appropriation of the faith tradition. Its main advocators include Thomas Groome and Patricia O'Connell Killen together with John de Beer.

The third is the *feminist style* that goes further still by reviewing and reconstructing the faith tradition by using women's experiences in both the church and society in the present time and in the past. The praxis it envisions is transformation of the church and society towards a more holistic, integral relationship between women and men. Here, there is no major single voice but rather a collective enterprise with many voices throughout the world. As Kinast (2000) shared, "a feminist style is an international, collaborative undertaking" (27).

The fourth is the *inculturation style* that embraces both men and women as it is shaped by the local and global culture. It shares the same critical and constructive impulse as the feminist style but directs its praxis towards new cultural expression of the gospel. As the word inculturation suggests, the cultural setting in which people reflect on their experience is the focus in this style of theological reflection (Kinast 2000, 40). It is developed and used most extensively by those who focus on evangelization in a foreign culture. One of its most articulate advocator is Robert Schreiter.

The final style given is the *practical style*, which examines the experience of both religious and secular communities as they engage society in all its aspects, with Don Browning as one of its strong advocates. As pointed out by Kinast (2000, 52), this style of TR focuses its reflection on current praxis rather than an application of theory to practice and concentrates on the community of faith and its relationship with the larger society instead of the minister and the minister's relationship to the congregation. The conviction here that all theology is practical is seen in the emphasis placed on interpretation of the theology behind the practices of faith communities to guide its action toward social and individual transformation.

Of the five styles, I will present some distinct characteristics of the *ministerial* and the *spiritual wisdom style* as the process of CTR in this thesis has closer alignment with these reflective styles.

According to Whitehead and Whitehead (1995), "Theological reflection in ministry is the process of bringing to bear in the practical decision of ministry the resources of the Christian faith" (ix). The distinctiveness of the Whiteheads' TR lies in its strength that helps the ministers to deal more effectively with today's complex contemporary ministerial context. The three distinct characteristics of their method lie in their portability, in that, Christians can carry it into their everyday life; performable, where reflections can be translated into effective action; and communal, where it can be carried out as a community as they face the challenges together. To do so, they proposed a tri-polar model within a method for theological reflection. The tri-polar model includes three sources of relevant information seen as participants in the conversation of reflection namely the faith tradition, personal and communal experience and contemporary culture. The Christian faith tradition refers to our religious heritage that embraced both Scripture and history of the Christian church. The three-stage method they proposed involves a process of attending, assertion and response that examines the movement from insight to pastoral action. It shows how the three participants in the dialogue present their case, engage one another and move towards a practical response. In the first stage, the reflectors attend to the three sources of information in the model. The second stage sees the conversation between the sources by the reflectors openly and receptively that leads to the emergence of shared understanding. This leads to the third stage of appropriate pastoral actions, which

include planning, implementing and evaluating. The ministerial context in its operation and the inclusion of church tradition and culture in the reflective process by the Whiteheads is what CTR in this thesis identifies with closely.

Thomas Groome's shared Christian praxis arose from his investigation into Christian religious education and pastoral ministry. He first introduces "shared praxis" to a wider audience in 1980 in his book, *Christian Religious Education*, which addressed six foundational questions to Christian religious education, identified most readily as : what, why, where, how, when, and who. In relation to the 'how' question, he proposed a 'shared praxis approach' in his book, *Sharing Faith* in 1991, where he explained and expanded its key ideas. "Shared Christian praxis" according to Groome (1991, 135) is:

> A participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their sociocultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign for all creation.

Groome's shared praxis has five sequential movements as follows (1991, 146-148):

a. Movement 1: Naming/expressing "present praxis".
b. Movement 2: Critical reflection on present action.
c. Movement 3: Making accessible Christian Story and Vision.
d. Movement 4: Dialectical hermeneutic to appropriate Christian Story/Vision to participants' stories and visions.
e. Movement 5: Decision/response to lived Christian faith.

The method of shared praxis begins with identifying a focusing activity that leads to a "generative theme" which becomes the nucleus of learning experience and focus for the five sequential movements that follow. The focusing activity comes in variety of experiences, such as the learning experience from reading the Bible story together; experience from a field trip; a concern shared by parents about their children; a religious sacramental worship, a concern for the elderly and so on. The purpose of choosing the focusing activity is to help people turn toward their present praxis and identify a "generative theme" to draw them into active engagement with the topic studied. As Groome (1991) pointed out, "The focusing activity turns people to their own "being" in place and time, to their present praxis, and establishes a focus for the curriculum" (146).

This focus for curriculum is the generative theme, which Groome explained, is "some historical issue – question, value, belief, concept, event, situation and so on – that is likely to draw participants into active engagement because it has import and meaning for their lives". For example, a focus activity of a mission trip to the poor may result in the generative theme of feeling of compassion for the poor that becomes the focus for the five-movement reflection.

In the *first movement*, the participants express their experiences of the generative theme honestly without bias or interference in reference to their own lives or society or both. The expression can be verbal or non-verbal, religious or secular. They are free to express their sentiments, attitudes, intuitions, or feeling towards it and so on. The form of expressions can be through any form of human expression such as speaking, writing, symbolizing, miming, dancing, and gesturing and so on.

In the *second movement*, the participants engage in a critical reflection on their experience of the generative theme to clarify what God may be revealing. This includes an analysis of the past, and how such analysis led up to the present action; it also includes a critique of assumptions, interests, prejudices, and values associated with it, and imagination of the possible future action. The intent is to deepen the reflective moment and bring participants to a critical consciousness of present praxis (Groome 1991, 147).

In the *third movement*, the participants bring in the Christian story and vision into their reflections to recognize God's self-disclosure to them. The story symbolizes the faith life of the Christian community over history and in the past that are expressed through scriptures, traditions, liturgies, and so on. Its vision reflects the promises that arise from the story that called and empowered Christian to live now in God's reign in the world.

In the *fourth movement*, the participants engage in a dialectical hermeneutics that flows between their own story and visions and the Christian story and vision. The participants ask questions such as, "How does this Christian story/vision affirm, question, and call us beyond present praxis?" or "How are we to live more faithfully toward the vision of God's reign?" This is to enable the participants to connect the Christian faith to their lives and thus making the faith their own.

The *fifth movement* offers the participants an explicit opportunity to make decisions on how to live their Christian faith in the world. This brings in the engagement of the whole being of the participants with the new knowledge they learned for the formation and transformation of the whole person through their praxis. These responses chosen by the participants, according to Groome (1991) "can be primarily or variously cognitive, affective, and behavioural and may pertain to the personal, interpersonal, or sociopolitical level of their lives" (148).

Groome's theological basis is based on two facts: the first is that God reveals himself and his will in the life experiences of the people; the second is that people can recognize God's revelation through a process of reflection on the God-given experience in their present action in the world. In this process of reflection, people can come to the knowledge of God in both word and deed that leads them to new actions that work towards the reign of God in the world. In addition, this revealed knowledge can inform, form, and transform the people as they come to know more consciously, of whom God is and whom they are. Groome (1991, 2) stresses this integral connection between knowledge and being when he asserted:

> I have been convinced for some time that the "learning outcome" of Christian religious education should be more than what the Western world typically means by "knowledge"; that it is to engage the whole "being" of people, their heads, hearts, and life-styles, and is to inform, form and transform their identity and agency in the world.

Learning is not merely cognitive or the enlightenment of the mind, it also carries with it the revelation of personhood, the being of the person. Knowledge that enlightens is also knowledge that transforms the person. This epistemological understanding of knowledge and being and the inclusion of a transformational intention in the reflective practice of Groome is what CTR in this thesis most identified with. However, it is important to point out that while CTR identifies with Groome in his concept that revelation of God and his truth that transforms us can come through a reflective learning process, it does not mean that new revelation of God's truth, which is the exclusive privilege of the apostles, can come to us through the CTR process. The sufficiency and finalization of revelation in Scripture is complete; there is no further revelation of God's truth for that purpose today. This important understanding and distinction will be further

elaborated when I present the biblical understanding concerning the dynamic of CTR in the next chapter.

5.5. Summary

This chapter gives us background understanding concerning theological reflection and showed that TR is not a passive process of reflective practices that leads to mere acquisition of knowledge of God but an active process involving the persons bringing their experiences to encounter God in the process of reflection that leads to God-directed actions in their lives. At the core of it, TR's main purpose as an educational tool is for the transformation of the people. TR has evolved as a distinct pedagogical method of enquiry that promotes interaction of people with God using their experiences as a means to know God and to be faithful to his teaching. It arose because of a wide range of contributions from liberation, feminist, and Hispanic theology as well as influences from ecumenical effort in the Protestant and Catholic circles to promote better understanding of ministry practices through interactions with theology. Various styles of TR have been proposed with varying emphases placed on the three basic components of reflection, experience and its practical implication and the mechanism in its dynamic that brings about TL. Of the five styles presented, CTR has a closer resemblance to the *ministerial style* because of the ministerial context and its inclusion of church tradition and culture in the reflective process. Its resemblance with the *spiritual wisdom style* is seen in its epistemological understanding that learning is derived from lived experience through an active/reflective process in our lives and ministry. This I will elaborate further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Critical Theological Reflection in Training God's People

The thesis investigates the role of critical theological reflection (CTR) in training lay leaders. In the previous chapter, we sought to understand theological reflection in its definition, evolution, purpose, and dynamics, because CTR is closely related to it as a pedagogical method that facilitates transformational learning (TL). We also looked at the various styles of TR available to help us gain a better understanding of the diversity of emphasis placed in its learning process. We will now look at CTR to see its role in bringing about TL for effective leadership training. This chapter will define CTR and look at the main components and dynamics involved in its process that brings about TL. It will also look at the epistemological understanding of CTR and its theological basis and the biblical understanding involved in its process that brings about transformational learning.

6.1. What is critical theological reflection?

The focus of this thesis is to look for a method that brings about TL. While there may be other methods that bring about such learning, CTR is one such method being investigated in this thesis due to my personal experience of reflective learning that helped me to become a better leader. CTR involves a threefold movement where the individual or group reflects critically on life experiences in relation to the Bible, culture, and Christian tradition resulting in practical Christian living that glorifies God. It has the three main components of TR namely experience, reflection and action and involves a threefold movement in its process, which are:

a. Identifying the experience.
b. Reflecting on the experience.
c. Issuing in praxis that leads to further reflections and actions.

The *first movement* calls for the identification of the experience for engagement in the reflective process. This experience refers to any life experience or experiences of the individual or group doing the reflection. It can be of any experiences, as the Christian life has no dichotomy of the spiritual and physical. As Brother Lawrence (1982, 80-84) taught us, every moment of life can be an experience of the practice of the presence of

God. However, it should be noted that some experiences are more useful and meaningful for reflection in CTR. These include major life issues and decisions concerning family, career, friends and society. For leaders of the church, those issues that relate to their ministries are especially meaningful and fruitful for reflection. Examples such as experiences from a mission trip, community work, working with the youth group, taking a Sunday class or children's care group, attending a retreat/seminar/workshop/worship/church meetings, and so on are all useful for reflection. An important feature of experience identified for reflection in CTR is that this experience can refer to past experience or present ongoing experience. This is because I believe ongoing reflective practice is important to help the person to be effective in their lives and ministry. The practitioners' engaging in 'reflection in action' as part of the reflective practice in CTR is different compared to other styles of reflective learning shared in the previous chapter. While this ongoing 'reflection in action' may be new to reflective learning in the Christian setting, it is not new to others such as Schön who has done much work in this area.

The *second movement* in CTR is reflection on the experience identified in the first movement. Reflection is important, as one cannot assume people will automatically learn from 'what happens' to 'what it means'. In terms of reflection, a person or group can reflect on experience with respect to many sources such as psychological, sociological, economic, political, legal, and cultural and so on. In CTR, the source of reference bears close resemblance to Whiteheads' tri-polar model that includes the Bible and the Christian tradition and the contemporary culture of the people who are engaged in the reflective process. A reflection on experiences in relation to God's teaching in the Bible connects them to God and helps them to discover God's perspective for their experiences. The 'Christian tradition' refers to our religious heritage that embraced the history of the Christian church. The inclusion of the church's faith tradition can be bewildering and even confusing for the great diversity of expressions that existed in its practices. However, it is important for it brings with it the rich tradition of the church, which can be a liberating and enriching learning experience. The inclusion of the cultural context in the reflective process is important for it examines the attitude, values and biases that constitute the social milieu in which we live. It helps to make the reflective process more real and honest and stays relevant to our task of ministering to the world. The reflection on experience can be performed by

an individual or in a group. In a corporate setting, it is important to provide a safe and encouraging space for such reflective learning to take place.

Concerning the reflective process, CTR sees the importance of reflecting of experience before, during and after actions. Of the three, reflection while in action may be new. Messer (1989) stresses the importance of persons reflecting both in practice and about practice. According to Messer (1989), "The model for all Christian ministries is Jesus Christ. Jesus himself might be described as a practical theologian, uniquely integrating the dimensions of both practical thinker and a reflective practitioner" (156). An example of Jesus practising reflective praxis during ministry is seen in the story concerning the stoning of the adulteress, where he reflected on who should cast the first stone (John 8:1-11). Jesus engages himself with reflection while he was in action in his challenge to the crowd to see if anyone has no sin.

The *third movement* stresses the action-orientated and ongoing nature of CTR. The purpose of CTR is not merely for better understanding of God's teaching but is one that seeks to achieve holistic transformation of the minds, hearts and hands. This transformational change is expressed in obedient actions that glorify God in their lives and ministries. As such, the resulting action or praxis from reflection encompasses the purpose of God. CTR that begins with an issue in a person's life will lead to a practical action that is in accordance with God's will. The process of TL through CTR involves an ongoing action reflection in life and ministry. The resulting praxis leads to further reflections and actions. This action reflection cycle is a dynamic feature of CTR and an ongoing process in the person's life and ministry.

6.2. The epistemological understanding of CTR and its theological basis

6.2.1. The epistemological basis of CTR

The epistemological basis of CTR is one where knowing is derived from lived experience through an active/reflective process. This epistemological understanding is closely aligned to the praxis epistemology put forward by Groome in his model of theological reflection. According to Groome (1980, 146-148), an epistemology that derives from action or experience is increasingly being recognized in recent years and he cited numerous Catholic and Protestant

educationists who have been working towards this epistemological shift. To him, Dewey was a most significant advocate for such epistemology grounded in an experiential way of knowing. Groome (1980) further pointed out, "For Dewey experience does not inevitably give rise to knowing. But all true education must be based in experience that is "reconstructed" and properly guided" (146). This "reconstruction and guidance" is seen in CTR where the reflection of experience is carried out in relation to Scripture, Christian tradition, and culture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Such experiential knowing in CTR that employs the reflective process and praxis has a transformational effect on the leaders. Gorman (2001, 28) points out the importance of experience for TL when she claimed:

> For a person to be changed we must provide experiences in both formal and inner logic. These lead to both rational and intuitive learning. The transformational teacher bridges two worlds – the scientifically provable world of reasoning and the transcendental world of the spiritually mystical (mystery).

She argued that traditionally we teach abstract formal concepts as principles drawn from logic (2001, 28). This helps us to know about God's truth, as we understand through reasoning. However, this can result in learners who can "think and talk" right without actually being transformed by the "right". In TL, learners who are transformed by the truth also live out the truth in their lives. For such TL to take place, the learners need to go through a process of inner discernment of the truth in their lives. CTR provides such discerning opportunity in its reflective learning process as the leaders bring their experiences to interact with Scripture, Christian traditions and culture. The dynamic involved in such reflective process is seen in what Mezirow shared concerning his premise reflection on 'disorientating dilemma' that leads to new meaning making. The difference is, in CTR, learners are informed, formed and transformed in their whole beings through such experiential learning in their interactions with the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

6.2.2. The theological basis of CTR in the Old and New Testaments

The theological basis of the epistemological experiential knowing of CTR is consistent with the biblical concept of knowing in the Old and New Testaments. Groome (1980) summed it up this way, "In the biblical understanding then, people come to know the

Lord in the midst of historical experience, by reflecting on the activity of God there, by entering a relationship with God and God's people, and by their lived response to that relationship" (145). According to Groome (1980, 141-142), the Old Testament's Hebrew word for knowing '*yada*', encompasses the knowing that is from the heart through active and intentional engagement in lived experience. I agree with him and see this in the teaching of God to his people in Deuteronomy 6-8 where 'knowing God' was always in the context of a living relationship with him. To know God and his teaching, they were constantly reminded to reflect on their lived experiences with God that showed who He is and what was required of them. Even in the teaching to their children, they were to recount these experiences to their children for them to know Him (Deuteronomy 4:9). Another avenue that shows the importance of experiential learning is in the Jewish calendar with all the feasts, celebrations and worship where God invites the people to an experiential learning with him. The time of celebration is a time of remembrance and reflection for them and the future generations to know who God is and what He has done. The 'knowing of God' through experiential learning leads to obedience and working with God in their lives. Such experience with God will lead them to further experiential learning.

In the New Testament, Groome (1980, 142-145) pointed out that to "know God" continues to have the same meaning as in the Hebrew Scriptures seen in the teaching of Paul and John. Such knowing of God does not happen in a vacuum but in a love relationship with him in their lives. According to Groome (1980), "For Paul, "knowing God" is grounded in a loving relationship and leads to loving service for others", and "for John to "know the Lord" is to love, to obey, and to believe" (143). To 'know God' is to be in a loving relationship with God and involves active obedience to his command in the community of his people.

6.2.3. Reflective learning in Jesus' teaching ministry

Experiential knowing in CTR that employs the reflective process is seen in Jesus' teaching ministry to his disciples. There seems to be a built in cycle of 'action reflection' on their learning process. The disciples were witnesses to his many power encounters of healing and miracles thus providing rich experiences for reflective learning. In her book on making disciples, Collinson (2004) highlighted the wide

variety of experiences and situations Jesus used as rich resources for reflective learning in his training of disciples. Collinson (2004, 55-56) pointed out that Jesus:

> structured their lives and activities in such a way that they were constantly being challenged to question and learn from a multiplicity of informal situations…They learned new skills and behaviors as Jesus led them into demanding or life threatening circumstances which stretched their faith to its limits and beyond.

Jesus spent much time with his disciples taking them to wherever he went providing them with experiences and opportunity for reflective learning. This is seen for example, in Jesus' training of the disciples in Mark 6:7-13 where he sent them for mission work in Galilee. On their return, they "reported to Jesus all that they have taught and done" (v30) thus creating an opportunity for reflective learning. In the midst of his busy public ministry, Jesus provided opportunities for the disciples to withdraw from the crowds in order to have time for reflective learning from their experiences before moving on to further ministry. Even the experiences of failure are turned into transformative learning moments. This occurred in Mark 8:17-21 when they were worried about having no bread just after the great miracles of Jesus' feeding the five thousand and the four thousand with just a few loaves of bread. As Collinson (2004) shared, "The discipling method used by Jesus…included learning through shared action and reflection and being given freedom to act and fail" (42). The disciples were allowed to fail and in fact, such failing experiences were used as opportunity for reflective learning.

Another feature of Jesus teaching through reflective learning is seen in his use of stories and parables. To the question of who the neighbour was, he gave the story of the Samaritan for further reflection and action. Others include the parables of the sower for the teaching of the Word of God, the many parables that teach on the kingdom of God, and the parables concerning the second coming of Christ. Even for Jesus himself, Collinson (2004) made the interesting comment from the Book of Luke that Jesus was probably trained in reflective learning when she shared, "It is interesting to note that this pattern of action and subsequent reflection was one which Jesus probably first observed in the life of his own mother (2:19, 51)" (71).

From this brief survey, there is no doubt that experiential learning through the reflective/active process plays an important role in the training of Jesus for his disciples. We will now look at the biblical basis of how CTR can facilitate TL.

6.3. The biblical understanding of the dynamic of critical theological reflection

To understand the process of CTR that helps to facilitate transformational learning, we will look at the biblical understanding of the dynamic of CTR in its reflective process that consists of:

a. Scripture plays a central role in CTR.
b. Reflection of experience is carried out with Scripture, church tradition and culture guided by the Holy Spirit.
c. The process of the reflection leads to revelation truth and innovative actions.
d. The ongoing dynamic process of action and reflection in life and ministry leads to transformational truth.

It is important to show the biblical understanding of CTR in its reflective process for CTR in this thesis is a distinct evangelical approach to reflective learning as compared to learning through theological reflection by the various proponents discussed earlier.

As noted, CTR may find some allegiance in its epistemology with the praxis epistemology put forward by Groome, and a closer resemblance to the *ministerial style* because of its ministerial context and the inclusion of church tradition and culture in the reflective process. However, it is important to make clear that CTR as an evangelical approach to reflective learning is firmly rooted in the understanding that Scripture plays a central and uncompromising role for its interpretive purpose. It upholds strongly that Scripture is normative for all our understanding of God's truth, and the revelation of God's truth is complete today for our purpose to know God and his will for us. The reflective learning from CTR does not lead to new revelation truth as that is the domain and privilege given to the Apostles alone. The purpose of CTR is to help us learn the truth given in Scripture for our effective application of God's teaching in our lives and ministries in our context today. All these features that promote CTR as an evangelical approach for TL will be elaborated as we look at the biblical understanding of CTR in its dynamic learning process.

6.3.1. The central role of Scripture in critical theological reflection

The purpose of CTR in the training of leaders is to achieve TL to help them to be effective in their lives and ministries. To achieve such purpose, Scripture plays a central

role in CTR because it is the voice of God that guides us to his nature and purpose for effective ministry. For CTR to facilitate TL, Scripture forms the foundation and reference point for all its reflective/active process. Concerning the importance of Scripture that reveals the nature and purpose of God for TL through theological reflection, Julie Gorman (2001, 35-37) believed:

> Scripture becomes the most powerful "tool" available for transforming learning that issues from critical theological reflection...because the Logos has become one of us, we must always be theocentric…We must engage learners in theological reflection in all they think and do, questioning everything by the purpose and person of God.

The reason Scripture plays such a crucial role in CTR has to do with the understanding of ministry the leaders are called to. The working definition of ministry in this thesis is defined as every act we do that brings on a revelation of who God is and his purpose for us. Therefore, an effective ministry is one where every act is carried out in accordance to his nature and purpose. To guide our reflective learning to achieve this purpose, Scripture plays a central role as Anderson (1997) shared, "the created world has no "theological voice" and the initiative thus lies with God as the revealer" (6). It follows that God has chosen to reveal His nature and purpose for our ministries through the Scripture. Therefore, in CTR, we are dependent on Scripture to reveal his nature and purpose for us and thus the central role of Scripture in CTR.

As we will see, CTR in this thesis involves reflection on experience with Scripture, tradition of the church and culture.

It is important to be clear in distinguishing the relationship between these three lest the centrality of Scripture is unwittingly compromised. For Christian reflective practice, the Scripture is normative as God's Spirit inspired revelation. While holding onto the belief of 'Sola Scripture', we also understand that it is not 'Scripture alone' as Scripture is subjected to interpretation for its proper application in everyday life. Perhaps, we can put it this way, the normative standard for reflection is Scripture; but we read Scripture through the lenses of the tradition of the church and the cultural context we are in. Therefore, reflection on experience in the light of Scripture with tradition of the church taking into consideration the cultural context in CTR does not take away the centrality and normative role Scripture plays in the Christian life, but rather it enhances its

position by showing its relevance and authority to speak to every situation in life. I will elaborate this further in my next point.

6.3.2. Reflection of experience with Scripture, church tradition and culture guided by the Holy Spirit

In CTR, reflection on experience is not with Scripture alone but includes the church tradition and culture even though Scripture forms the foundation in its reflective process. This has to do with the nature of the study, interpretation and application of Scripture in our lives. There are some important principles that need special attention for a proper interpretation and application of God's truth in our lives.

First, in the study and interpretation of the Scripture, no matter how objective the truth is discovered, the subjective bias of the interpreters cannot be discounted; furthermore, the interpretations are limited by the capacity of the human mind even when it is carried out under the Spirit's guidance. According to Fee and Stuart (1982, 16-20), there is a need to learn how to interpret the truth of Scripture to arrive at the "plain meaning of the text", because of "the nature of the reader and the nature of the Scripture" involved. In terms of the reader, Fee and Stuart (1982, 16) explained:

> We invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understanding of words and ideas. Sometimes what we bring to the text, unintentionally to be sure, leads us astray, or else causes us to read all kinds of foreign ideas into the text.

In terms of the nature of Scripture, the "Bible is at the same time both human and divine" (19). This dual nature of the Bible demands the task of interpretation because of the "tension that exists between its *eternal relevance* and its *historical particularity*" (19). Therefore, proper interpretation of Scripture is important to guide us to live out God's teaching in our lives.

Second, in terms of the application of Scripture in our lives, there is the danger of pushing the abstract truth to the point of absurdity void of life and reality. This can lead to rigid and even foolish application of the truth in their lives. As Anderson (1997) warned, "*When truth is pushed to the point of absurdity, it becomes foolishness.* Theology that cannot stand the "absurdity test" is likely to be poor theology, if not a

dangerous theology" (12). He then recomended, "discernment is necessary to preserve the truth from becoming folly" (12). How does such discerning process take place?

The discerning process that is necessary to preserve the truth is seen in CTR where experience is reflected with Scripture in the light of its church tradition and culture under the guidance of the Spirit. According to Anderson (1997, 11-13), there are two ways the brain perceives truth that comes from sense experience - one sees concept of truth as abstract knowledge; the other sees truth as a disclosure of reality through experience. The first is called formal logic and the second is called inner logic. Formal logic is defined as a way of thinking in accordance with concepts that are timeless and contentless with regard to personal being. An example of an abstract knowledge that has become a principle is 'it is always wrong to steal' as any violation contradicts the universal principle of truthfulness. It does not give any room to challenge the principle even in a situation where such principle may be superseded because another equal or greater principle comes into play. An example of such a situation is, "Can one steal if one is going to die of hunger?" Here the principle of sanctity of life calls the principle of honesty into challenge. On the other hand, in inner logic truth needs to be discerned in the context of reality and experience one is confronted with. Such discernment calls for the reflection of the insight from God in Scripture that reveals his purpose and nature in the experience of our lives. In CTR, the inclusion of the tradition of the church and the cultural context in the reflective process help to enrich our understanding of God's timeless truth and yet stay relevant to the practice of our time. Such reflection will give rise to revelation truth and innovative action that is in line with God's nature and purpose revealed in Scripture for the believers in the present day context. Such reflective exercise does not take away the centrality and normative value of the Scripture, but rather it works to preserve it.

6.3.3. The process of reflection leads to revelation truth and innovative action

In CTR, the process of reflection helps the person come to revelation truth and innovative action. To illustrate this, we will look at the example of Paul with the issue of circumcision for the gentiles in Romans 2:25-29; 1 Corinthians 7:18-19; Galatians 5:2-6, 6:15.

Through the process of reflection of the experience before him with Scripture and tradition and culture of his time, Paul saw that circumcision was instituted in the beginning as a sign of a covenant made between God and his people. The very significance of circumcision was to demonstrate the covenant relationship of God with his people established through Abraham for all humanity. As Paul reflected on this teaching of God in the new context he was in, he saw the expression of this covenant in the new love relationship completed through the gracious act of God in his Son, Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God has brought in a new covenant and the people are to live as a new creation. As Paul shared, "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything" (Galatians 6:15). In the new covenant, circumcision is no longer a circumcision of the skin but of the heart (Romans 2:29). The evidence of a circumcised heart is in the expression of faith through love (Galatians 5:6) and obedience expressed in the believers' lives. That is why Paul writes, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything" (1 Corinthians 7:19). The act of circumcision of the skin is no longer a sign of the people keeping the covenant but their actual daily living expressed through love and obedience that demonstrates it.

When the Jewish Christians turned circumcision into an abstract rule and absolute criteria for all Gentile baptized believers, they defeated its original meaning and significance. When they argued that circumcision was necessary for the admission of all Christians to the kingdom of God, Paul disagreed. Paul was able to come out with innovative action to do new things with new situations while staying true to the teaching of the Word of God as he received revelation truth through the reflective process.

It is important to point out that while Paul received new revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit through a process of reflective practice, the revelation he received carried with it apostolic authority which we today can no longer claim to have[12]. While we can learn from Paul the principle of reflective learning to understand revelation truth that leads to innovative action for our context today, we are to be careful not to interpret Scripture as if fresh new revelation can come to us. The Canon of Scripture is complete by itself and no further new revelation is necessary today. Paul and the Apostles carried with them

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[12] For a better understanding of this unique apostolic office and authority in receiving God's revelation and inspiration to transmit his teaching in Scripture to us, refer to Stott (1984, 148-151).

this authority to receive new revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit that we do not have today. This apostolic revelation of Scripture by the Holy Spirit is also seen in Peter's ministry to Cornelius, which we will shortly see.

6.3.4. The ongoing dynamic process of action and reflection in life and ministry leads to transformational truth

In CTR, the ongoing dynamic process of action and reflection in life and ministry leads to transformational truth. CTR is a continuous cycle of action-reflection-action that goes on throughout their daily activities. The continuous revelation of the truth of God in the ongoing reflective practices helps to train the persons in the work. An example to illustrate this is the ministry of Peter to Cornelius where he experienced TL concerning the baptism of the uncircumcised Gentiles in the Holy Spirit through the action reflection cycle. In this example, we see the innovative action of Peter baptizing the uncircumcised Gentiles as he was transformed in his paradigm of seeing God's ministry to the Gentiles. This continuous process of action-reflection cycle transforms Peter with fresh revelation as he participates with the Holy Spirit in his ministry. Let me elaborate this by the account in Acts 10:9-11:18.

6.3.4.1. First reflective action and revelation – Peter went to Cornelius' house and learned that no person is unclean

The episode began when Peter in his vision was asked to eat all the so-called "unclean animals"; he was left wondering about the meaning of the vision (Acts 10:9-17). As he was reflecting on the experience, he received a fresh revelation from God not to call any person impure. He said in Acts 10:28, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection." As a result, he was transformed to obey the Spirit's command to go to Cornelius's house.

6.3.4.2. Second reflective action and revelation – Peter preached to the Gentiles and learned that God shows no favouritism

When Peter asked Cornelius for the purpose of his visitation, he learned of God's command to Cornelius to invite him to his house (Acts 10:29-33). He responded readily

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to the request to preach to the Gentile audience and received his second revelation that God does not show favouritism to anyone who fears him. He says in Acts 10: 34-35, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

6.3.4.3. Third reflective action and revelation – Peter baptized the Gentiles in the Holy Spirit and learned that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all believers

As Peter obeyed God's command to preach to the Gentiles, he saw the work of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles and they began to speak in tongues praising God; this experience led him to proceed to baptize them in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44-48). As he did so, he received another revelation that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is also for the Gentiles when he shared with the circumcised believers in Acts 11:16, "Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us…who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

In all these instances, we see a continuous cycle of reflections on the experiences with the Word or command of God that leads to further actions and reflections. As Peter participated in this reflective process of action and reflection, he received fresh revelation of God's nature and purpose and was transformed to obey God and participated with the Holy Spirit in his ministry.

6.4. Summary

This chapter defines CTR in this thesis and takes us through understanding of the process by which CTR helps bring about TL. It shows the components and threefold movement involved in CTR where the individual or group reflects critically on life experiences in relation to the Bible, culture, and Christian tradition issuing in practical Christian living that glorifies God. The centrality and the normative value of Scripture are emphasized and the reflective process that includes the tradition of the church and cultural context works not to diminish but to enhance the central position of Scripture. The Old and New Testament way of learning to know God and his teaching supports the epidemiological understanding of CTR based on experiential learning through the action reflection process. This is further supported by Jesus' training of his disciples where

rich life and ministry experiences were used for reflective learning. Finally, the biblical basis of how CTR can facilitate TL was illustrated in the biblical understanding of the dynamic involved in its reflective process. It shows how ongoing action reflections on experiences with God and Scripture, church tradition and culture under the guidance of the Spirit lead to transformational truth in our lives.

The place of critical theological reflection for leadership training and ministry today

In the previous chapters, I put forward the epistemological, biblical and theological understanding concerning critical theological reflection (CTR) and showed that it is a good method to facilitate transformational learning (TL) in the training of leaders. In this chapter, I will show the place of CTR for leadership training and its practical implications for ministry today.

I will show there is a place for CTR to be incorporated into leadership training programmes from a perceived need of reflective learning for effective leadership training by some Christian leaders and teachers and the evidence of a lack of reflective learning and practice in the life of the people and the leaders of the church. I will also show how CTR plays important roles in the lives and ministries of the leaders to help them face the great challenges of the post-modern world. The suitability of employing CTR as a learning tool in the context of an Asian culture will be assessed.

7.1. The need of critical theological reflection for lay leadership training in the church

Barna (1999, 132-3), in looking at the philosophy of faith development process of the highly effective churches, drew our attention to the importance of developing a tool to help Christians to be reflective people. He pointed out, "the systematic theological development process implemented by highly effective churches does not create clones; it creates thinking Christian who are given tools to respond to reality in a way that is consistent with their faith…this philosophy advances the notion that Christians should be a reflective people" (140). In Malaysia, Loh (2007, 189) pointed out that without reflection on theology, 'theologians' can be dangerous and irrelevant:

> The very failure to critically reflect and theologise properly, leading to the possibility of not only ultra-fundamental Islamic groups like the Talibans or Al-Qaeda, but also the ultra-right wing, Bible-thumping 'evangelicals' who have been nicknamed 'Christian Talibans'. At another level, without theological reflection, we can see that if there are some Muslims who are blindly pro-Arab

and all things Arab, there are also some Christians who are blindly pro-Israel and all things Jewish.

In looking at the 'what' theological training is required to equip the pastors and leaders, Loh asked, "Do we want pastor-scholars and church leaders who can think theologically and critically and yet still shepherd their sheep? Or just pastor-managers with communications, marketing and other skills transferred from the secular world" (190)? My answer to this question is we should desire both. We want our leaders/pastors to be shepherd leaders who are able to reflect theologically on what they are doing appropriate for our time and effective communicators and managers of our faith. We want leaders to be practical theologians whom according to Messer (1989, 151) are those 'who walk humbly with their God, practising what they preach and effectively relating the gospel to people in their concrete situations of life'. To do so, Messer (1989) argued, "the commitment to critical reflection in ministry distinguishes the practical theologian from many other types of ministry" (163). One thing that makes the practical theologians stand out is the praxis of ministry because of their commitment to critical reflection. This commitment to critical reflection calls for reflective learning in the training of leaders. There is therefore a need to restore reflective learning into the training programme for leaders in the church.

The importance of training lay leaders in CTR finds resonance with David Burke's (2004, 6-7) call for students in the theological seminaries to be taught about the 'generation of knowledge through reflection on practice'. According to Burke (2004, 7), this practice is 'a powerful tool for their own life-long learning' to meet 'the unique, complex, messy realities of their ministries'. He further asserted that, "if pastoral students have learned 'how to learn' through reflection on experience in theological college, and if this has been inculcated as a learning habit, they are well equipped for better practice and better learning" (7). I cannot agree with him more and see this as applicable to the training of lay leaders in the local church as in the case of the pastoral students since there is a great resemblance in the reality of their ministries. Learning from experience through some form of reflection before or after an experience may be a manner of learning that some have been accustomed to. But most of the time this has been done on an on/off basis; a truly intentional manner of doing so is uncommon from my observation of those involved with ministry in the local church. There may be some planned time of interaction and discussion on how the last church camp went, how the

message from the pulpit is speaking to the church, how to prepare for the coming mission trip, what strategy to reach out to the community, what projects to serve the people in a disaster strike area and so on. However, a built-in understanding and mechanism that takes reflective learning in the process is seldom done intentionally.

Another important reason why leaders need to be trained in reflective learning is that they are often the teachers or trainers of God's people in the local church. In examining the underlying principles of designing programmes involving in building indigenous leaders, Elliston (1998) maintained, "we should take care about the kind of teachers who are provided and the training model in which people are expected to learn" (210). This is as he correctly pointed out, "teachers teach as they have been taught, leaders lead as they have been led…curriculum developers develop curricula which mirror both the curricula and world view from which they came" (209). This is something I identified with in the training I received at the seminary. The philosophy of education employed by the teachers, albeit non-articulated, is one that emphasized information transfer with a great inclination towards Freire's "banking model". Those of us trained in the seminary with this model tend to carry to some extent the same banking concept of education in training the people and leaders of the local church. I see in myself, and have witnessed in those who have come to train leaders in my local church. The lack of reflective learning for the pastors/leaders in the seminaries has led to a lack of such learning in the people and leaders in the local church. Therefore, there is a need of a lay leaders training programme that incorporates CTR in its learning process. This need is further strengthened by the evidence that there is a lack of reflective practice in the lives of the people in the church and a lack of reflective learning in the training of leaders in the church and seminaries as presented below.

7.1.1. Lack of reflective practices in everyday life

Christians are called to exercise God's wisdom in their lives. Such wisdom comes through reflective practices of God's Word in their lives. Unfortunately, many Christians today fail to live with such guiding truth to make any sense of what they are doing. There is little integration of the truth with their lives. According to Banks (1993, 50-66) there is a gap between our belief and our daily lives. He claimed that 'few of us apply or know how to apply our belief to our work, or lack of work; we make only minimal connections between our faith and our spare time activities; we have little

sense of a Christian approach to regular activities; and our everyday concerns receive little attention in the church'. Barna (1999, 131) also echoes this lack of integration of the truth and our everyday life when he verified:

> Our research concluded that fewer than 10 percent of all born-again Christians possess a biblical worldview that informs their thinking and behaviour. A Search Institute survey suggests that most church-going adults have a faith that inadequately integrates the vertical and horizontal dimensions of their Christianity.

Both Banks and Barna attributed this lack of integration to the lack of reflective practice in our daily lives. For Banks (1993), he "felt that in some Christian circles there is too much doing and not enough thinking" (35). For Barna (1999) , "the problem is that most Christians do not devote anything but a spare minute here and there to grappling with the underpinnings and personal implications of Christian theology" (130). I concur with them when I see the lack of reflective practice in my local church experiences. This is true whether it is dealing with issues concerning the running of the church in the board meeting, coping with challenges of daily life issues, confronting disasters that strike us in the world, the responses often come in the more pragmatic manner than one that arrives after some theological reflection. As shared by Barna, such lack of engagement in serious theological dialogue is simply because they are incapable of sustaining a sophisticated conversation about their faith. This argued by Barna (1999, 134), may be a result of losing something that existed in the old today when he pointed out:

> Centuries ago, this (*reflection*) was not an especially noteworthy view; the dominant societal view was that reflective life was a natural and desirable state of being. In today's culture, however, reflection is typically deemed to be the domain of philosophers, scholars and retired people – that is individuals who have the luxury of time to think about such esoteric things as the reasons for our actions or the implications of our choices. The rest of us it seems are too overwhelmed by information, financial pressures, leisure options and other demands to devote much energy to reflection.

It may be true that we are losing the old art of reflective living because we are drained of energy by the busyness and pressure cooker of the modern world. However, I think the problem goes further than losing something people in the past used to do. Another reason we do not have much reflective practices is that we do not know its importance and are not given teaching on how to practise it. This teaching and training has been lacking in both the church and training institutes. Is there evidence for this?

7.1.2. Lack of reflective learning in theological school training

Niebhur in his book written some 50 years ago brought out the importance of action and reflection in the training of leaders in theological schools. According to Niebhur, the failure of theological school training pointed to the lack of action and reflection in its method with an over emphasis on the theoretical aspect in its work in addition to a lack of focus on its purpose. Niebuhr (1956, 125-6, *italics added*) wrote,

> Our reflections on the nature of a theological school and on the methods of study have emphasized the theoretical character of its work…its work is theoretical through and through…Though our difficulties in the development of the schools have risen in part from failure to achieve adequate understanding of our ultimate purposes and our total activity; *they seem also to be partly due to inadequate theories of the relations of action and reflection.*

Concerning the lack of reflective learning in seminary, Banks (1999, 8) in recent years again highlighted this dire need in Bible Institutes and lay training centre. He shared that the influence of the schooling approach to theological education has led to these teaching institutes to:

> Major on building up students' knowledge of the Christian tradition, and it is this knowledge that they seek to illustrate from experience and to apply in practice. Bible institutes insist on field education alongside studies, and lay centres encourage students to use their workplaces as laboratories for testing what they have learned. Yet in both settings a fully integrated approach to reflection and action is rare…over the years, in fact, most Bible and missionary colleges have progressively become more academic in nature.

Banks (1993) also showed that many major Christian pioneers and thinkers learned through thinking and acting together and he shared, "In all these people *(referring to Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, the Puritans, Wilberforce, Kierkegaard, and Bonhoeffer)* thinking and acting shaped and informed one another. Reflection was directed toward life and was influenced by it" (135, *insert and italics added*).

The fact that these two Christian leaders and teachers spoke on the same need of reflective learning in the training institutes some 40 plus years apart showed that this need has not been addressed effectively. This heightens the urgency for a training programme that incorporates reflective learning in its curriculum.

7.2. The place of CTR for ministry today

I will now share why CTR has a useful role to play for Christian leaders in the 21st century. We will look at how it helps the leaders to face some challenges posed by the rapidly changing, globalized, information overload post-modern world. I will only present the principle and dynamic behind why CTR is particularly useful and suited to help the leaders to confront the challenges of the post-modern culture. We will not be taking on individual issues relating to the post- modern culture for they are too complex for the scope of this thesis.

7.2.1. The challenges of the post-modern world

Church growth in the developed world has stagnated or even in decline over the years. One of the factors for the poor showing is the challenges of tremendous changes in values and cultures brought on by the post-modern world. According to Gibbs (2001), "The transition from modernity to postmodernity represents a seismic shift that can result in churches becoming paralysed in the midst of the shock waves" (24). Quoting from resources that showed dismal attendance of the church in Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, he sent out a siren call of the possibility of the collapse of the church in a post-Christian and post-modern Western culture (2001, 18-19). On the American scene, he shared the insight from Mike Regele whose company, Percept Group, Inc., provides sophisticated demographic data-gathering and mapping for anywhere in the United States. His conclusion is that hundreds of local congregations will close their doors because of failure to discern the signs of times and to seek spiritual discernment and vitality to meet the challenges. According to Mike Regele (as quoted in Gibbs 2001), "The combined impact of the Information Age, post-modern thought, globalization, and racial, ethnic and religious pluralism has displaced the historic role the church has traditionally played. As a result, we are seeing the marginalization of the institutional church" (19). Gibbs (2001, 216-218) maintains that in the traditional position, the church existed in the privileged centre of the society as in the time of Constantine. In the modern position, the church was marginalized under modernism to the periphery. In the post-modern world, the church finds itself now 'as just one segment in that fragmented world' and so has lost its privileged position. What are some factors that lead to this marginalization?

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One of the factors that contribute to this marginalization of the church is the notion of relativism with the loss of absolute truth in assessing what is right or wrong. In the pre-modern world, all truth and all knowing was seen to originate from God. In the post-modern world, truth has become relative and experiences of 'what feels good' and 'what works' have overtaken truth. This has led the church to lose its position and relevance in the world. Another factor that contributed to the marginalization of the church is the lack of reflective thinking and action by the church in exercising her faith. Edmond Chan (2001) in his assessment of the impact of modernity in an 'Age of Pragmatism' expressed this lack of reflective practice as the 'crisis of Truth'. In reference to this generation he lamented, "Unexamined assumptions shape the thinking of a lazy generation. In the revolution of ideas, what engages the mind is no longer "what's true" but rather, "what works"…there is a profound lack of a discerning reflection on truth. It is a generation that thinks it thinks" (51). As pointed out, there is apathy in this generation to think or engage in discerning reflection. What is worse is they do not even realize the lack of it. Even when they think, the reference point is pragmatism based on 'what works'. This lack of reflective practice and the loss of absolute truth of the Word of God have resulted in the marginalization of the church.

A practical example that shows the importance of reflective practice in the post-modern world is the recently much debated emerging church movement[13], which confronts the church. The proponents of this movement started their journey of conversation out of a concern for the lack of effectiveness of the church in reaching out to the post-modern world. They see the importance of preserving the experiential dimension in the traditional way of worship practices such as the use of images, symbols, incense and others. McLaren (2001, 19) who is one of the main proponents of this movement talked about 'a new kind of Christian' in the post-modern world where 'we become postconquest, postmechanistic, postanalytical, postsecular, postobjective, post critical, postorganizational, postindividualistic, post-Protestant, and postconsumarist'. Carson

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[13] It is difficult to define the emerging church. To get an idea on this new movement and debate, some of the books to refer to are: Carson (2005), Kimball (2003, 2007), McKnight (2007), McLaren (1998, 2001), Oakland (2007), Sweet (1991, 2000), and there are many others.

(2005, 29) in looking at this movement and its implications brought home some salient features of the movement when he commented:

> For almost anyone within the movement, this works out in an emphasis on feelings and affections over against linear thought and rationality; on experience over against truth; on inclusion over against exclusion; on participation over against individualism and the heroic loner.

One of the main concerns expressed on this movement is its fidelity to Scripture in the practice of Christian faith in relation to the post-modern culture. There is a worry that in their zeal to make the Gospel palatable and acceptable to the post-modern audiences, they may have compromised the truth in advocating an experience-driven Christianity with experience-based worship where experience may have overtaken doctrine. As Carson (2005) put it, will they become "a church that is so submerging itself in the culture that it risks hopeless compromise"? (44) Another concern is that the movement may have given in to the New Age ideology in its experience-based practices of mysticism in worship. It is not in the scope of this thesis to get involved in this debate. However, looking at the issues in the debate that concern greatly with the truth of Scripture, the role of experience, the consideration of tradition and the importance of an appropriate Christian response in the post-modern culture, I feel CTR may have a useful role in helping us to respond more effectively to the post-modern world which will be elaborated below.

7.2.2. The usefulness of CTR for leaders in the post-modern world

CTR has a useful role in helping the leaders to respond appropriately to the post-modern world. The unique features of the post-modern world with its tremendous changes and the loss of absolute truth make the call for theological reflection in the training of leaders in confronting such challenges more relevant and urgent. In calling the leadership to take on the challenge of post-modernism, Gibbs (2001, 37) suggests:

> Christian leaders must be equally skilled in exegeting both Scripture and culture, bringing the understanding derived from this interplay to the task of applying biblically grounded insights to the issues of postmodernity. They are challenged not just to be able to think clearly but to have the nerve and faith to act decisively in navigating through stormy and uncharted waters.

Leaders are called to think and act consistent to Scriptural truth and remain relevant to the changing culture facing them. In discussing how Christian education can foster faith commitment in facing the challenges of post- modernism, Singer (2005, 304) sees the role of theological reflection as a way to help Christians practice their faith with commitment and conviction while in dialogue with those of other faiths. CTR that anchored its reflection of experiences in the absolute truth of Scripture with sensitivity to culture and tradition leading to appropriate action is therefore a good method to help the leaders for such task.

CTR arises from a post-modern epistemology. It is therefore important to comment on it from a Christian viewpoint. This thesis is advocating that the reflection we do in CTR should be subjected to the normative rule of Scripture in order to preserve its Christian identity. As thus qualified, CTR will help the leaders to keep their focus on Scripture as absolute truth as they face the challenges of relativism and the supremacy of feeling in the post-modern world. It will help the leaders to live out the Christian faith appropriate to the culture and tradition without compromising Scriptural truth to bring the good news to the lost generations.

Another reason why CTR is particularly suited to help leaders of the post-modern world is the fast-paced information overloaded nature of the new world that calls for flexibility and responsiveness of the leaders to think and act appropriately to their situations. In the traditional and modern context, the society is stable and change was more predictable and evolutionary. In the post-modern world, change is continuous and comes rapidly without warning. The challenge of the ever-changing world needs the leaders to think and act creatively in accordance with their faith. The leaders need to learn to think and act on the spot with flexibility and be open to the leading of the Spirit to respond appropriately to the changing environments. The reflective practice of CTR is useful in such situations for it prompts the leaders to respond appropriately with the truth while having a willingness to consider alternative perspectives and actions. Such reflective practice, according to Messer (1989), "prompts the practical theologian to act on the basis of the best information and insight one can muster at the moment of decision, but living with the freedom to decide differently tomorrow if new truth emerges" (163). Such flexibility and responsive action that anchors itself in the truth while staying

relevant to the time and place in CTR is what made reflective practitioners effective ministers in the post-modern world.

7.3. The practice of critical theological reflection in the Asian context

We will now look at the relationship between reflective learning and the Asian learning culture to assess its suitability for implementation in the Asian context. We will explore the question if reflective learning is another 'one of those western things' that can make it a hindrance in introducing it into an Asian learning context. Alternatively, is critical reflection a part of the Asian teaching culture that has escaped notice and can be reemphasized to encourage its implementation in the training programme for leaders? To speak of a single Asian context is as foolish as to speak of *a* Western context. However, given the dominant influence of Confucius, it is appropriate for this study to represent the Asian voice through a Confucian perspective. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, we will only look at the teaching of Confucius and his philosophy of education to assess the Asian perspective with respect to this question.

In looking at the Chinese philosophy, Dawson (1987, 71) alerted us that the approach we use should not be a Western intellectual tradition for seeking truth, rather we should look at 'how the Chinese intellectual tradition developed out of certain historical circumstances and how it helped to mould the minds of men in later generations'. He also drew our attention to the fact that it is difficult to pinpoint the real Confucius because of a lack of historical evidence for doing so. Just as there is a distinction between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of the theologians, so we can draw a distinction between the historical Confucius and Confucianism. In the Asian context, what we have to deal with is Confucianism not Confucius. This is because much of what Confucius said and taught have only been compiled four hundred years after his death. Even for the *Analects* that are considered the most authentic version of his teaching, Dawson (1987, 71) pointed out that 'there can be no uncertainty that he uttered any of the sayings ascribed to him; and they are so devoid of context that it is often not easy to follow their source of quote'. However, these obscurities in Confucius and his teaching should not deter us from gaining some understanding of the Chinese philosophy from his teaching, for Confucius is still revered as a sage who has greatly

moulded the Chinese philosophy. Yao (1998, 30-31) demonstrated this great influence of Confucius' teaching on the East Asian way of life:

> Whatever image Confucius is given and whether he is perceived as a patron god or as a human sage, Confucius remains the greatest shaper of East Asian culture of life….As an embodiment of the Confucian wisdom, Confucius continues to play a major part shaping and reshaping culture, history, politic, religion and education in China as well as many other East Asian countries.

Confucian philosophy is recorded in the *Four Books: Daxue (The Great Learning), Lunyu (The Analects)*, *Zhongyong (The Way of the Mean*) and *Mengzi (The Mencius).*

An examination of Confucius' teaching showed that its philosophy of education is largely that of a humanistic nature. As Dawson (1978) pointed out, "the belief that all men are born equal and are infinitely perfectible is a basic and profoundly humanistic Confucian doctrine" (86). A major concern of Confucius with education is the quest of self-realization towards sage-hood that helps the person to live well within the family to contribute to the society and country. According to Tu (as quoted in Wang & King 2006, 5), 'sagehood is defined as striving to become a genuine human being who through self-transformation, a kind of inner illumination, realizes not only the moral goodness that is intrinsic to his/her nature but also the cosmic creativity that embraces the universe in its entirety'. There are two major elements to consider in the sage-hood. The first is the emphasis on moral development of the person. As noted by Zhang (2004), "The ethos of (*Confucius)* humanism has the following characteristics: It stresses moral self-cultivation and learning in order that one might become a man of virtue, with lofty ideals" (2). The second is the desire to achieve harmony with the universe. Dawson (1987) supported this when he asserted, "Thus one of the major principles of Confucian doctrine is that in order to secure harmony and happiness in the world man must bring himself and his activities into a harmonious relationship with the universe" (76). The main purpose of Chinese education is therefore towards the building up of the person's moral thinking and being that find resonance with nature and the universe.

7.3.1. Confucius' Silent Reflection

Confucius' journey to sage-hood involves education of the person that brings changes in their thoughts and actions through inner illumination as they learn to live well with

others. According to Lin (1955), "Chinese humanism, or Confucianism, concentrates on certain human values…For Chinese Humanism in its essence is the study of human relationship (*jenlun*) through a correct appreciation of human values by the psychology of human motives to the end that we may behave as reasonable human beings (*tsuo jen*)" (16). This process of development of the sage's self-concept that stresses on inner experiences of external knowledge called for silent reflection. In their attempt to examine Mezirow's transformative learning and the long-standing philosophy of Confucius to see their contributions to reflective and transformative learning, Wang and King (2006) found that Confucius put a great emphasis on reflective learning. They wrote, "To Confucius, learning could not occur without silent reflection (Confucius, 500BCEc)" (4).

According to Wang and King (2006, 7), Confucius' silent reflection is a way of examining, "tasting," comprehending, understanding, confirming, and verifying the quality of one's life. Underlying this process of integrated effort to reflect deeply, "digging and drilling," necessarily leads to an awareness of the self not as a mental construct but as an experienced reality. Learning according to Confucius is much more than the seeking of a body of knowledge of external truth; it is the acquisition of deeper knowledge about how to be human and transforms one's life into meaningful existence. This requires the understanding of the self that involves a continuous process of internalization that needs reflection and questioning. This Confucian perspective on learning and reflection for the education of persons towards sagehood is in some way aligned with the concept of transformative learning through reflective practices. In discussing the key aspects of Confucius teaching, Zhang (2004, 182-189) shared some of the principles used which showed features of reflective practices. These include elicitation and guidance where "He skillfully made good use of any opportunities and conditions that would inspire them to use their minds and think independently" (183). Another is integrating learning and thinking where Confucius said, "Learning without thinking is like eating food without digesting it, and is just as useless. But thinking without learning produces nothing practical, so it is also harmful" (185). Another one is the gaining of new insights through reviewing old material and learning through practice.

From this brief review of Confucianism, it can be inferred that Confucius' employment of silent reflection and internalization in the learning process to achieve sage-hood is somewhat akin to reflective learning seen in the learning process of CTR in this thesis.

7.3.2. Teaching reflective learning in an Asian context – is it feasible?

Coming to the question: Does the traditional Asian teaching culture that is so informational orientated with styles of passive learners and controlling teachers so entrenched in the learning process make it too great a tension to introduce CTR for effective leadership training?

The idea that traditional Asian Chinese teaching culture is heavily information-orientated with passive transfer of knowledge from teacher to students arose from the assumption that much of learning comes through rote learning and the 'cramming teaching methodology' employed in its educational practices. This is probably an impression, albeit unproven, obtained by seeing the great amount of information that needs to be memorized and regurgitated by the learners of the classical texts and the nature of the Chinese language with its vast pools of vocabulary. In looking at the philosophy of education of Confucius and Dewey, Radcliffe (1989) shared that Asian learners' perceptions of the teachers are those with authority who are there to impart a body of knowledge to their student. This is highlighted by Ng (2000) in her experiences of teaching Asian students where she shared, "Asian students and church members who view the teacher, professor or pastor as expert will expect knowledge to be transmitted to them rather than to engage in questioning or discussion, no matter how reluctant teachers are to do the former " (317). These perceptions of the teachers may become a hindrance for them to learn CTR where teachers act as facilitators of equal standing with them.

While these assumptions and impressions may be true, as shown above, a deeper look at some of the philosophy of education advocated by Confucius reveals that there is also some emphasis placed on reflective learning. Concerning the importance of thinking in study, Confucius taught, "Study without thought is labour lost; thought without study is perilous". Confucius also pointed out the importance of self-directed learning through reflection when he shared, "Never enlighten a disciple unless he wants very much to get

it in his mind and yet he cannot. Never initiate his thinking unless he wants very much to speak and yet cannot find his tongue".

Therefore, from this brief presentation, we can see that while this perception of passive learners may be true and can be a hindrance, there are some features of reflective learning seen in the educational practices of Confucius in his teaching, which can be reemphasized to encourage the implementation of CTR in the training programme for leaders in the Asian context. However, for many who are familiar with teaching in the Asian culture, the practical difficulty of such implementation should not be under-estimated. This is because the passive learner nature and the heavily informational orientated 'banking model' of education that is so deeply ingrained in many who grow up with this culture will pose a great challenge. It is not in the scope of this thesis to deal with this area but suffice it to say that it does warrant a further look as a subject for exploration by itself.

7.4. Summary

This chapter has taken us through the understanding that there is a need of a leadership training programme that incorporates reflective learning in its process. It takes its arguments from the evidence of a lack of reflective practices in the ministry and lives of the leaders and people of the church, which is a result of a lack of reflective learning in their training. Pastors/leaders who are themselves not equipped with such skill and understanding will not carry out their training for the lay leaders in their church with reflective learning in its curriculum process. Therefore, there is a need of a lay leaders training programme that intentionally incorporates CTR in its programme. It also presents the important roles CTR plays in ministry for leaders in the 21st century as they face the challenges of the post-modern world. CTR can help to reestablish the absolute position of Scripture as the guiding truth and trains leaders in theological reflection to respond effectively to the post-modern challenges. The value of CTR is seen in its ability to help the leaders to respond appropriately to the great and rapid changes that come their ways while keeping true to the biblical teaching and staying relevant to the culture and tradition. The brief review concerning the feasibility of introducing CTR into an Asian culture reveals that reflective learning might not be as 'threatening' as one thinks because it is to a certain extent a feature of educational practice found in Confucius' teaching to his disciples. This can encourage the introduction of reflective

learning in the Asian Chinese context though its practical difficulty is not to be underestimated.

Chapter 8

Learning the skill of critical theological reflection in a transformational leadership training programme

In the previous chapters, we established that critical theological reflection (CTR) is a good pedagogical method that facilitates transformational learning (TL) for an effective leadership training programme. So how does one go about training leaders through a CTR process that brings about TL? How can the leaders learn the skill of CTR and make it an integral part of their lives for lifelong learning in a leadership training programme?

In this chapter, we will look at the structural outline and content of a lay leader's training programme that incorporates CTR in its learning process. The purpose is to provide a landscape mapping for a more definitive programme to be developed later for implementation. Since the training of lay leaders in CTR may be something new that calls for paradigm shifts of the pastors and teachers, this chapter will discuss some of the problems and challenges faced in learning CTR. The roles of the educators in such venture will also be touched on.

8.1. The roles of the educators

The training of lay leaders in the church for effective ministry in this thesis involves the teaching of CTR in their learning process. This training is not just about transmission of a body of knowledge concerning character formation and skills necessary for leadership. It is also about training the leaders in the skill of CTR and making it a pre-disposition and habit that they will acquire for their life long learning. It involves helping the leaders to think and work through some issues and experiences in life and ministry in relation to their understanding of scripture, tradition of the church and their culture to arrive freely at new sets of beliefs and values to live by. According to Dewey (1997, 29), the purpose in training people to think, is to help them 'to learn to think well, not (*just*) to think' for the ability to think is a 'prior and independent existence of natural powers' which is the basis why people can be trained. The trainer's concern is 'with the proper direction, not with creating them'. Therefore, in a programme to teach the skill of CTR, the focus of the training programme is aimed at providing the proper direction

on how such learning takes place. To achieve such goals, a clear understanding of the roles of the educator and some principles involved in training lay leaders is important for its success. One important principle concerns the transmission of knowledge. In their enthusiasm to impart spiritual truth to the leaders, they are to be mindful of the danger of over-zealous impartation of knowledge or even indoctrination of the leaders, albeit an unconscious one. Such approach may not be effective in bringing about positive change and may even backfire. As pointed out by Hill (2004, 57-58) in the context of religious education in schools:

> At the empirical level, schools and teachers have it partly in their power to change student values. It is even possible for them to have some success by using such techniques as conditioning, indoctrination, utilizing peer-group pressure, exerting the teacher's power of personality, or presenting an untrue picture of life. Such strategies can be very effective in swaying many students involuntarily towards embracing certain value outcomes desired by external authorities… However benevolent the teacher's intention may be, the attempt to make them conform is likely to backfire.

This is also alerted to us by Andersen (1996, 17-20) who agreed with Buber that education in the church is 'essentially education of character' where teachers' roles are to facilitate such 'development of character and personality'; they 'may indeed persuade, not force, impose or invade, even if they possess the truth'. To avoid such danger, educators need to be clear of their roles. To teach and engage learners in CTR, educators take on the role of facilitators more than the conventional teachers' role of imparting knowledge. As facilitators, they play the roles of co-learner and provocateur as suggested by Cranton (1994, 128) in her sharing concerning the reformist perspective of emancipatory learning. As co-learners, according to Cranton, they become equal participants in the process of learning, discovering, and challenging one another. They work with the learners and find out about their lives and experiences in relation to the subject learned. Their tasks will not primarily be trying to provide information or teach the skill related to the topic discussed. Rather, they will encourage the learners to interact with the topic from their experiences and share those experiences with others. The educators build an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, sincerely engage in learning, and stimulate enthusiasm and interest in others for interactions. As provocateurs, according to Cranton (1994), educators "challenge, stimulate, and provoke critical thinking…guide learners into an awareness of distorted assumptions and help them deal with the discrepancies between their expressed values and their

actions" (128). These two roles of CTR educators as facilitators are summarized by Brookfield (1987, 29-31) as:

> Those who assist us to become critical thinkers…in breaking out of our own framework of interpretation…acting like mirrors who help us interpret and question our ideas and actions from a new viewpoint…and who are like 'psychological demolition experts' who with care and sensitivity…encouraging people to probe their assumption, without taking them to the point at which this probing threatens their self-esteem.

In short, educators who engage the leaders in CTR work as facilitators who provide encouragement, guidance and help for them to be involved in a process of reflective learning. Their roles vary greatly in leading the group in a CTR learning experience. At times, they are more of a spiritual director and at other times more of a technician or process guide, and at still other times a leader. Sometimes, they are also the learners. Their tasks include helping the leaders to identify the experiences for reflective learning, encouraging them to bring their personal experiences for reflections and get them involved in the reflective learning process. The educators are also to facilitate the identification of experiences related to the topic for reflective learning. This can be done either through providing stories of others with such related experiences whether real or imagined, or creating such experiences for the participants through assignments that expose them to such experiences. Another task of the educators is to encourage the participants to seek mentor-friends or they may act as one themselves. This is to provide an accountability check for the participants to work towards active obedience of what is learned. They are also to get involved with the learners' ongoing reflective learning.

It is important to realize that commitment as disposition to act on one's core belief in the Christian life is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. CTR educators who are involved in this teaching for commitment are not responsible for such change in the learners but they can participate effectively with the Holy Spirit in this transformative process when they play their roles well. The success of the process is dependent on the cooperation of the participants and the facilitators with the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to look at some resistances educators may face in teaching reflective learning.

8.2. The resistance to reflective learning

In this section, some barriers to reflective learning are considered, but it is not in the scope of this thesis to show concrete steps to overcome them. Some learners may resist the learning of CTR because of the result it brings and the process they have to go through. In terms of result, CTR that leads to acquisition of new knowledge that calls for new commitment can be threatening to the learners. As pointed out by Cranton (1996, 79-80), transformative learning which involves emancipatory learning is not easy because such learning leads to some fundamental change in perspective which is not natural and will be resisted. Cranton (1994, 18) observed:

> Unlike either subject- or consumer-oriented learning, emancipatory learning is difficult and often painful process…adults will resist contradictions to their beliefs and will deny discrepancies between new learning and previous knowledge. In response to a challenge to their assumptions, many learners will entrench themselves even more firmly in their belief system and become hostile or withdrawn in the learning environment.

Such receptivity to change poses a great challenge in CTR. Furthermore, the follow-up actions committed to by the leaders can also be a challenge for it is not easy to follow through what one has committed. This is where a mentor-friend can be of particular help in providing encouragement, guidance and accountability for the leaders to be faithful to their tasks. The mentor-friends will also be good partners for the leaders to engage in further reflective learning from what is practised. This will help the leaders to work towards life-long reflective learning.

Another major reason for the resistance to CTR is the need of critical thinking involved in its process. The process of critical thinking extends beyond 'technical rationality' which Schön (1983, 21-24) explained as professional activity through application of scientific theory and technique to solve problems in the "learned professions" such as medicine, law, business and engineering. The epistemology of such learning involves technical knowledge that belongs to the domain of the positivist (Schön 1983, 31); whereas reflective learning through critical reflection involving emancipatory knowledge belongs to the domain of the constructivist. The latter demands the learners to work through the knowledge actively instead of receiving it passively and that can be difficult for some. The process involved in critical reflection is also beyond Dewey's approach to reflection that aims at problem solving through thinking of the options

available. Dewey's (1997, 79-115) reflection is also more cognitive involving thinking through empirical and scientific means of deduction and induction, making judgment through process of analysis and synthesis and so on. According to Brookfield (1987), "Being a critical thinker involves more than cognitive activities such as logical reasoning or scrutinizing arguments for assertions unsupported by empirical evidence. It involves recognizing the assumptions underlying our beliefs and behaviors" (13). This according to Brookfield (1987, 15-23) involves identifying and challenging assumptions, exploring and imagining alternatives, analysis and issuing in responses. Such process of learning involving introspection of the persons can be difficult for some and may be resisted. Furthermore, it is learned over a period of time. As Brookfield (as quoted in Galbraith 1998, 319) pointed out, "Critical thinking is learned incrementally, in fits, and starts. It is not a smooth flowing voyage along a river of increasing self-knowledge and self-actualization. It involves anger and anxiety as well as joyful moments of insights". Therefore learning CTR can be a challenging but rewarding journey for those who embark on it.

The other area that may give rise to some resistance is the corporate setting of carrying out CTR. The discipline of communal reflection requires the participants to be open and the willingness to allow others to examine their experiences. Such openness and the willingness to be vulnerable do not come by naturally for most people. The diversity of voices in the group can create tension and will need a structure for honest confrontation among the differing views and values. There is a need of a holding environment for the reflective community to discern and grow together.

Another resistance that may be encountered concerns the use of emotion in CTR. We are to be careful of the emotion we bring to the reflection. Few adults are comfortable with bringing their feelings into reflection because emotion is seen as volatile, unreliable, and subjective. To overcome this, we need to learn to see that to be 'extra-rational' as in the exercising of our emotive and imaginative faculties does not mean we are being irrational. The emotion and imagination employed in the reflective process of CTR are to complement the rational analytical abilities we exercise and not to supersede it. In addition, CTR defined in this thesis that has its anchor firmly rooted in the Scripture as the uncompromising truth for all its reflective practices will help to steer all reflections and actions consistent with God's truth.

Another resistance that is unique with CTR in this thesis concerns the emphasis it places on reflection not only before and after the action but also reflection while in action. Of the three, the third may be new to some and will face more resistance. This aspect of learning to act and reflect at the same time has educational value that has not been employed or explored often in theological education. According to Messer (1989), "The persistent criticism of much theological education is that it trains persons *for* the work rather than *in* the work" (157). This mode of learning was highlighted by Burke (2004, 7) who shared that generation of knowledge through reflection on practice takes place not only through 'reflection after practice' as in professional journaling or 'reflection before practice' as carried out in anticipation of the challenges posed, but also through 'reflecting in action'. This third type of reflective practice occurs as the leaders learn to 'think on their feet' in confronting their daily life issues and ministry. It is particularly suitable for leaders who are serving in the uncertain, complex, and fast-changing world where they are required to respond spontaneously in confronting unpredictable and complex issues while they are engaging in actions. All these practices need to be taught especially so the third one because of the complexity involved in its learning process. Schön (1983, 50) provides some encouragement when he pointed out that such practice of reflection-in-action is not something totally foreign to people as 'both ordinary people and professional practitioners often think about what they are doing, sometimes even while doing it'.

With this introduction to some of the understanding concerning the roles of CTR educators and some resistance that may be anticipated, we will now look at the principles involved in a leadership training programme that incorporates CTR in its learning process to bring about TL and trains leaders in acquiring the skill and predisposition to CTR for their lifelong learning.

How does one go about such venture? In looking for a method for such reflective learning, Burke (2004, 7) suggested we come out with a 'good principled pragmatic' approach that is 'guided by good theology' and practice that is 'adjusted to the working realities of ministry'. I propose that a curriculum with a CTR-incorporated leadership training programme in this thesis can be one such approach. What are the principles involved and what does this curriculum look like?

8.3. A CTR-incorporated leadership training programme

CTR in this thesis has the three main components namely experience, reflection and action and involves a threefold movement in its process, which are:

a. Identifying the experience.
b. Reflecting on the experience.
c. Issuing in praxis that leads to further reflections and actions.

To incorporate CTR in the learning process of a leadership training programme, we need to see how the threefold movement can be worked out in its learning process in the programme. These are shown as follows:

a. Identifying the experience
The first movement involves identification of experience for reflection. What are the experiences the leaders can bring for reflections in the study? Any experience can be brought for reflections in the study; however, the most useful ones are those that they identify with personally in their lives and ministries related to the topic studied. These can be real experiences or hypothetical ones that arise from their interactions with material provided in the course. The latter come by the leaders' interaction with stories or case studies related to the topic prepared in the course notes. Experiences can also come from practical assignments given to the leaders in the course. It can be done as a practicum related to the topic.

b. Reflecting on experience
The second movement involves reflection of these experiences with Scripture, culture and traditions of the church. The leaders are to engage actively with all the three sources in their reflections. To do so they are provided with related scriptural references to the topic studied for their reflections. To help them to attend to the culture and tradition of the church, they are given some reading material on the topic by both secular and Christian authors and are also encouraged to read further on their own and to consult significant others concerning the topic to enrich their reflections.

There are various avenues where reflective learning takes place in the course. One is personal reflections as the leaders spend time on their own reading and reflecting on the

pre-course material provided; the other is in the group settings where corporate reflection takes place when they come together during the course. Both of these will involve mainly with reflection before and after actions. To learn to reflect while engaging in action, they can do so when they carry out the tasks they have committed to after each study. They can bring back such learning experiences for further corporate reflection in the class. They can continue to sharpen their skills of reflections as they face issues of their lives and ministries even after the course. Also in the practicum, CTR can be built into the learning process to sharpen their skill in reflection especially in area of reflection-in-action.

c. Issuing in praxis that leads to further actions and reflections

The third movement in the CTR process concerns the praxis that issues from the reflective learning. Such insightful action from the reflective process is a holistic one involving the *head, heart, and hand*. In terms of the outcome of the reflective learning, the leaders are therefore to examine what new understanding or insight they have gained in their *minds*, what new convictions they experience in their *hearts* and what practical commitments they are going to take with their *hands* because of their reflections. Such praxis leads to further experiences for ongoing reflective learning in their lives.

The question is how does one incorporate the threefold movement involved in the learning process of CTR into a training programme? To do so, a five-step CTR-incorporated process is proposed as a format used in the programme for training of lay leaders of the church.

8.4. The five-step CTR-incorporated process

To train leaders in the skill and predisposition to CTR, I propose a leadership training programme with a five-step CTR-incorporated process shown below (pages 98-102). In the five-step CTR-incorporated process, the leaders go through a process of reflective learning and practices to achieve transformational learning concerning a body of knowledge. It is a practical outworking of the three dynamic movements involved in the learning process of CTR discussed above. It will help to train leaders through the process of CTR that brings about transformational learning and assist them to acquire the skill and predisposition to CTR for their lifelong learning. Through the five-step

CTR-incorporated process, the leaders get to have 'hands-on' learning practice of CTR in the course and see the value of CTR for transformational learning. Through such learning process, the leaders not only acquire the skill of CTR, but also develop a predisposition to CTR and learn to integrate it as a useful tool into their life-long learning process even after the course. This is because leaders trained in skill and predisposition of CTR can go on in their lives acquiring more knowledge on their own and undergo transformational learning for effective ministry.

I will now present the steps involved in this CTR-incorporated process to show how they are worked out in each module for the topic studied in a leadership training programme. They are as follows:

Step 1: Identify the issue and related experience
The leaders prepare themselves by some pre-course reading materials concerning the topic to establish the issues and related experience for CTR. They do so by looking at their personal experiences in relation to the topic to bring them for reflection. They are to go through the case studies or stories both real or imagined, provided to invite further experiences for reflection.

Step 2: Personal reflection on the experience
The leaders spend time in reflecting on their experiences related to the issue or topic with Scripture, their culture, and church tradition. These experiences can be their own personal experiences in relation to the topic or imaginary experiences as a result of interactions with the reading materials provided by the course. To help them in their reflection, they are provided with related passages in the Bible for their study and useful articles related to the topic to challenge and deepen their understanding of the topic. They are encouraged to consult with other people who may provide useful information for their further understanding of the topic and help them to attend to their culture and the traditions of the church more effectively. They are also encouraged to read around the topic and search related Bible verses themselves to reinforce their understanding to enrich their reflection.

Step 3: Issue a personal response

The leaders come out with some personal holistic responses that involve their minds, hearts and actions with regard to the issue or topic studied from the reflection. They are encouraged to list down how the reflection has resulted in some changes in understanding on the topic (mind), conviction or emotion evoked from the topic (heart) and what active obedience they are going to do (hand).

Step 4: Corporate reflection with the group

The leaders come together in the class for a time of learning and corporate reflection to enhance their understanding of the topic. They come to challenge, affirm and sharpen one another in an atmosphere of openness and love. They will share and interact with each other what they have learned in their personal interaction and reflection on the topic.

Step 5: Taking actions to obey

The leaders continue to work out their further actions as a result of the reflective learning in the group. They are to express their commitments to the group and plan to work with their mentor-friends to practise what has been learned. The new experiences gained from these actions will provide further opportunities for reflective learning and interactions with one another in the group and with their mentors. They are encouraged to practise reflection in action as they engage themselves in those tasks.

Steps 1-3 are the preparation stage and are concerned more with the individual learning through the CTR process in their personal time in preparation for the group interaction.

Steps 4-5 are the 'come and learn together' stage and are carried out in the corporate small groups setting to sharpen their CTR skill to enhance their reflective learning.

It is important to note that the whole process is bathed in prayer with a keen awareness of the need of the Holy Spirit. From the beginning to the end, the leaders take every step in prayer with keen awareness that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who gives wisdom and understanding to them. When they face difficulties in the process, their first action is to go on their knees and look to the Spirit for guidance, encouragement and help. The participants are also required to work with a mentor-friend in the course of

their learning to encourage and to keep an accountability check on their active obedience.

8.5. A proposed curriculum of a CTR-incorporated lay leaders training programme

I will now propose the framework of a curriculum for lay leaders training that employs the five-step CTR-incorporated process discussed above in its outline and content. It is important to note that what is presented is only a conceptual curriculum to show how CTR can be incorporated into a training programme for lay leaders; even its content is not a comprehensive one. It *merely* serves as a map to help us navigate this new terrain of learning CTR and see how it brings about TL. It is not yet ready for implementation or assessment of its effectiveness. An actual programme for implementation will need much further work and is not within the scope of this thesis.

8.5.1. The purpose

To develop effective leadership through equipping them with biblical understanding of spiritual leadership and impart skills and predisposition of CTR for their life-long transformational learning and growth towards Christ-likeness for achieving the mission of the church.

8.5.2. The goals

- To be able to study, interpret, and apply the Word of God in their lives and ministries.
- To understand the biblical foundation of spiritual leadership.
- To develop godly character for leadership in their lives.
- To acquire the abilities to equip the people of God, for their vocation of being partners in God's mission to their neighbours.
- To acquire the skill and predisposition for CTR for life long transformational learning and effective ministry.

8.5.3. The outcomes

- To exhibit spiritual discernment in decision making concerning daily life issues and ministry practices through CTR in their context and culture.

- To demonstrate tangible evidence of developing godly character of humility, obedience and trust in God in their lives.
- To know and apply the skills of leading and guiding, caring and protecting, equipping and helping the members of the church to grow in maturity in Christ to reach out to the community.
- To show understanding, skill, and predisposition towards the practice of theological reflection in daily lives and ministries with the people of God and their neighbours.

8.5.4. The approach and method

A CTR-incorporated lay leadership training programme sets out to bring about TL through reflective learning by employing CTR in its process. Its purpose is also to help the leaders to acquire the skill of CTR and make it become an integral part of their learning process for their life long learning. There are important principles involved in training leaders with such new venture. First, the leaders need to be introduced to an understanding of CTR, its relation to transformational learning, and how they can practice it in their learning process. The second thing is to incorporate CTR into the learning process of each module of the curriculum. The method employed in the training of leaders is the five-step CTR-incorporated process. For example, a course on spiritual leadership will include a transmission of a body of knowledge concerning biblical principles of servant leadership from the model of Jesus. However, a major part of learning comes from the leaders being taken through a process of reflective learning on servant-hood leadership by a CTR-incorporated learning process in their personal time and in the group. Their personal experiences concerning servant leadership in their lives will be a useful resource for reflective learning. Such reflective learning will take place at two levels: a personal one in their own privacy and a corporate one in the class. They will arrive at some understanding concerning servant leadership that transforms them to live out this principle in their lives and ministries that act as the resources for further reflective learning for them and the group. Thus the teaching process will embody the content of what is taught.

8.5.5. The content

The approach and method employed in this training programme for lay leaders emphasize both the importance of transmission of a good body of knowledge as well as imparting the skill of CTR to the leaders for their life-long learning endeavour. Therefore, in terms of content for leadership training, the syllabus has two major components: one deals with the development of the character of spiritual leadership while the other deals with the skills necessary for the work and ministries of leadership in the local church. In relation to the ministry skill, topics that have special relevant to the Asian context will be given attention[14]. As a major focus of the training is to impart understanding and practice of CTR for the leaders, a teaching session on CTR will be included at the beginning of the course. In terms of the ministry skills that will be covered in the course, they will be those that are related to their tasks of leading and guiding, caring and protecting, equipping and helping the members of the church to grow in maturity in Christ to fulfil the mission of the church.

As one of the goals of the training programme is to have a predisposition towards the practice of theological reflection in lives and ministries, the syllabus will pay attention to issues relating to matrix of matter that arises from daily life and issues related to ministry practices. Everyday life issues[15] concerning family, work, leisure, neighbourhood and community are therefore important consideration for reflective learning in its process. The intersections of a matrix of matter of daily life issues provide opportunities for TL through CTR and promote integration of reflective practice into the person's life.

A *suggested* syllabus with *some* of the topics covered in the curriculum looks like[16]:

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[14] These include areas such as understanding other prominent Asian religions and spiritualities, spiritual warfare, healing and deliverance especially in relation to the Asian context.

[15] This is of particular importance because one of the qualifications for leadership in the church is that those who aspire to be leaders must manage their household well and have good reputations with those in the society (2 Timothy 3:4-5, 7-8, 12 and other related passages).

[16] The topics are not comprehensive and are subjected to change according to the need of the group and its local context.

8.5.5.1. The Syllabus

Introduction: Understanding CTR and the course

This will take the leaders through an understanding of what is CTR and transformational learning, its dynamic and how to practise it individually and corporately. The course purpose, goals, outcome and the five-step reflective learning process will be shared.

Part I: Building Godly Leaders
- Understanding spiritual leadership
- The character of a godly leader
- Christian spiritual practices

Part II: Ministry Skills
- How to study the Bible
- Teaching and preaching
- Prayer
- Discernment and decision-making
- Evangelism and mission
- Hospitality and fellowship
- Counselling
- Healing and deliverance
- Spiritual warfare
- Understanding vision
- Church management
- Time management
- Leading a small group
- Team work

8.5.6. A working format for each topic in the syllabus

The following is a suggested format used for learning each topic based on the principles of the five-step CTR-incorporated process in this thesis.

Preparation Stage

Leaders will work through steps 1-3 in the privacy of their home with the course notes and reading material provided.

Step 1: Identify the issue

Christian writing concerning the topic

Case studies and stories which can be real or hypothetical

Step 2: Personal reflection on the topic

Scriptural study

Attend to culture and tradition

Consult others and literatures

Step 3: Issue a personal response

Mind - Deeper Understanding

Heart – Emotion and conviction

Hand – Active obedience

Come and Learn Together Stage

A sharing/teaching on the present topic – Going through steps 1-3 together.

A discussion and review of the previous study (after the first study session) can be included. It can include a discussion on what has been learned as a result of active obedience to the previous lesson.

Step 4: Corporate reflection with the class

A time of small group reflective interaction on the topic.

Bring the materials learned from step 1-3 for discussion and interaction.

Step 5: Taking actions to obey

 A time of commitment to active obedience of what is learned.

Work out what, how, when, what changes need to be made in yourself for the task.

Plan and set goal with the mentor-friend to carry out the action.

Post study: A time of reflection and action

To take CTR further, post-study actions and reflections on the task committed are encouraged and will be reviewed together with the group in the next study. The leaders are to practise reflection in action as they engage themselves in the task.

8.6. Summary

This chapter provides some understanding to help us work towards the implementation of a CTR-incorporated lay leaders training programme. It touches on areas such as the role of educators and some of the resistance anticipated in such venture. CTR educators are seen as facilitators who provide encouragement, guidance and help for the learners to be involved in a process of reflective learning. The resistance and difficulties faced by the learners because of the result it brings and the processes they have to go through are highlighted but concrete steps to overcome them are not provided as it is beyond the scope of this thesis. A training programme for lay leaders in its structural outline and content that serves as a map for leaders to be trained in the skill and predisposition of CTR for their lifelong learning is presented. In this map, the leaders learn through a five-step CTR-incorporated learning process and the format used for each topic covered in a *suggested* syllabus is presented. The leaders are taken through a time of personal and corporate reflective learning as they interact with the information provided concerning the character development and skill of leadership in the course.

Chapter 9
Conclusions

In this last chapter, I will bring to conclusion of what the study is about and its main findings, and suggest some further work that can be looked at for an effective implementation of a CTR-incorporated leadership training programme in the future.

9.1. The initial research question

The thesis sets off to look for an effective lay leaders' training programme because of a lack of such programmes in my experience as a lay leader going through training in the local church and the seminaries. The hypothesis of the study is based on the notion that existing training programmes fail to produce effective leadership because they fail to facilitate learning that transforms. Therefore what is needed are programmes that facilitate transformation learning (TL) in learners, hence 'transformative learning'. Critical theological reflection (CTR) is proposed as an appropriate method of transformative learning.

9.2. The research method

The thesis focuses on presenting an evangelical perspective of CTR as a good method for TL for effective leadership training.

The main area of research to establish the hypothesis is by conceptual enquiry into related topics in educational theories and theological writings available for interaction with biblical understanding of theological reflection and transformational learning. It looks at Christian literature and secular educational theorists concerning TL for effective leadership training and review Christian research papers and writings in the areas of CTR in enhancing TL for equipping leaders in the local church. It then proposes a curriculum for lay leaders training in its outline and content to see how theological reflection can be a useful component and be an integral part in the process of transformational learning for effective Christian life and ministry taking into consideration the Asian context. The practical implications of CTR for leaders in their lives and ministries are touched upon especially in its significance and relevance in the post-modern context.

9.3. Some main results of the study

The following are some main results obtained in the study:

a. The effectiveness of the church is dependent largely on the effectiveness of her leadership. An effective training programme is therefore crucial for the health of the church. In this study, it has been noted that there is a poor health in the church due to its lack of effective leadership training programmes because of a lack of transformational focus and intention and/or lack of a mechanism that facilitates TL in its learning process.

b. In this thesis, TL takes place when a person goes through a process of learning that results in lasting positive change in attitude, thought and action towards Christ-likeness. In looking at understanding concerning the dynamic of TL from the biblical and secular theorists perspectives, there are features of reflective learning and practices involved in its learning process that give support to CTR as a good pedagogical method to facilitate such TL. Furthermore, the understanding of TL from the secular theorists such as Freire and Mezirow helps to enhance our understanding in this area and makes a positive contribution to the transformational educational endeavour in the church. In our interactions with these theorists from the biblical perspective, we may not agree with their over optimistic humanistic view concerning humans' abilities to transform themselves. However, this disagreement should not blind us from seeing the value of human ability albeit an imperfect one, to participate with the Holy Spirit in education that transforms in the church. On the contrary, their understanding can act as a challenge and point us to areas we can work on.

c. CTR in this thesis is one process that brings about TL. It involves a threefold movement where one reflects critically on a life experience in relation to the Bible, culture, and Christian tradition that issues in a practical implication for Christian living. It is related closely to theological reflection in its pedagogical concept and therefore identified to some extent with reflective learning proposed by others in the field. However, it is important to note that CTR in this thesis is an evangelical approach to theological reflective pedagogy and take the

centrality of Scripture as uncompromising normative for all its interpretive purposes. Furthermore, it also takes the view that God's revelation of His truth is complete today, thus revelation and understanding gained from the process of CTR are for the purpose of proper understanding and application of Scriptural teaching in our lives and ministries for our context today. It does not carry with it the apostolic authority to receive new revelation for the Canon of Scripture is complete today.

d. The practical implications of training leaders in CTR go beyond its being a good method that facilitates TL for the leaders in their trainings. CTR goes with them as an indispensable tool for their lifelong learning. It also provides them a useful tool to take on the challenge of ministry in the rapidly changing post-modern world. This is seen in the challenge posed by the emerging church movement where the centrality of Scripture in CTR will steer the leaders towards effective and proper actions in their tasks of evangelisation to the post-modern world.

e. Coming to the question: Is reflective learning yet another 'one of those western things' that can make it a hindrance to introduce it into an Asian learning context? In the investigation, an examination of Confucius' teaching and his philosophy reveals that there is some emphasis placed on reflective learning. Therefore, we can say the art of reflective learning may not be as foreign to the Asian context as we thought. The feature of reflective learning seen in the educational practices of Confucius can be reemphasized to encourage the implementation of CTR in the training programme for leaders in the Asian context.

9.4. Conclusions of the study

From the evidence presented in this study, it is concluded that CTR in this thesis that constitute an evangelical approach to reflective learning is a good pedagogical method for effective leadership training. CTR will help in the educational endeavour of the church to steer away from the conventional informational orientated, schooling 'banking model' and work towards education that commits to TL of the leaders.

9.5. Further Work

As I reflect on what have been shared in this thesis, some future works can be done to further enhance the lay leadership training programmes presented.

To begin with, a detailed programme for implementation and evaluation of its effectiveness is an immediate task that can be embarked upon. This will put to work the principles shared especially that of the five-step CTR-incorporated learning process to see whether it can work well in practice.

Another area that can be explored further is the dynamic and understanding involved in the practice of corporate CTR in a team as they are engaged in ministry and life together as shared by Fleisher (2004, 316) in her article advocating '*communal* or corporate praxis in which communities engage together in action as well as reflection'.

Further work can also include looking into the understanding and practice of reflection in action in the Christian perspective, and see how it interacts with such concepts advocated by Schön and others in this field.

Another area is the role of mentor-friend in helping and guiding each other through CTR in ministry practices. The conventional roles of mentor-friends are to provide support, guidance, encouragement and accountability for each other. To help one another to learn through CTR and to practice it together is something new that is worth exploring for effective mentoring in building a healthy church.

Finally, how the teaching of reflective learning in an Asian context especially in relation to overcoming the culturally learning barrier in its implementation will be worth working into.

9.6. A personal closing remark

Coming back to the remark by Julie Gorman (2001, 23), "There's got to be more!" concerning TL as a goal in our educational endeavour, and the calls of Niebuhr (1956, 125-6) and Bank (1999, 8) for reflective learning in the teaching institutes some 40 plus years apart, there is indeed a dire need for reflective learning to be incorporated in a training programme that transforms leaders in the church today. As we look at the

change of events in the world that heralds the coming of Jesus again, the poor state of health of the church in general, and the ever-increasing complex and changing world we are called to minister to, the task of equipping of leaders for effective lives and ministries is getting more urgent and necessary. The present study has demonstrated that CTR is a good pedagogical method to train leaders for such a task. Therefore, towards this end, I hope this thesis will at least begin to stir us to work at bringing reflective learning and practice into our lives and ministries to become effective leaders in the church today.

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