

# **Religion, Migration and Human Trafficking: A Case of Christian NGOs Working among the Victims of Human Trafficking in the Philippines, Malaysia and China**

An Essay Presented to  
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## **Abstract**

This experimental study investigates whether faith-based organizations are making an impact in preventing or caring for the victims of human trafficking and prostituted women. This study assumes that human trafficking is closely linked with migration which often causes prostituted women to be trapped into sexual slavery. This study critically suspects that because human trafficking is closely linked with organized syndicate and criminal organizations, faith based organizations remain on the sideline of social engagements and that they lack the skills and resources in translating their spiritual advocacy into the public sphere. This study executed an in-depth interview with particular faith-based organizations working among prostituted women to probe whether these organizations are actively engaged in combating human trafficking in their own respective area of ministry. This study utilizes critical questions to test whether there are indications of participatory engagement of these organizations in partnering with government agencies or the civil society.

This study finds out that faith based organizations are driven by their passion to see victims and prostituted women transformed by the power of the gospel. This observation is based from the following evidences that faith-based organizations, despite the danger and risk involved, are actively engaged in providing various interventions and aftercare services for the victims fueled by their religious convictions and values. It was evident from the study however that migration, whether it is legal or not, is a mechanism of organized syndicates to deceive and betray victims of human trafficking. Also, it resonates to the study that combating human trafficking in local and international level requires corroborative network and engagement of faith-based organizations to non-government organizations and government agencies such as legal and justice experts. This study suggests a theological framework in which faith-based organizations adopt and suggests ways on how to mobilize Christian churches to combat human trafficking in the local and international context.

**Key Words:** Faith-Based Organization, Migration, Human Trafficking, and Engagement

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## **1. Introduction**

Some years ago, Marieta (23), a young lady from the province of Isabela, Philippines applied as a domestic helper in Malaysia with the desire to help her family from the debilitating effect of poverty in her village. Marieta is the eldest among her six siblings of her parent. She finished high school but most of her brothers and sisters had not yet completed their secondary education. Because of her desire to help her family, she tried her best to find a job in Manila, until one day, a lady who was working in an agency in Manila lured her to a job in Kuala Lumpur as a domestic helper. She was one of the seventeen young ladies recruited and given the promised of a job as a nanny and domestic helper.

Two weeks after arriving in KL, we received a call from her and she informed us that she was working as a waitress in a night club together with her companions, complaining that they were held in and barred in a secluded house after working in the evenings. She tried her best to contact the agent to complain why the job she and her fellow Filipinas were expecting was not given. She discovered later that the agent betrayed them, and had the suspicion that eventually, they would be forced to work as call girls.

Marieta, stricken by this dilemma, asked if we could mediate and help her. Together with her parents, we tried to find the agent and the agency that recruited them. Therefore, we networked with the media and the Philippine authorities, reporting what had happened to Marieta and the other Filipinas. We tried also to contact with local Pentecostals and Evangelicals churches to ask them to help and to report to the police authorities in KL. Some Christian NGOs in Malaysia who are closely working with human trafficking and vulnerable children joined us in this effort. Through the collective partnership of these organizations and the Malaysian government, they were safely returned to the Philippines. The mother of Marieta, with the help of the police authorities, filed charges against the agent and the agency.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Human Trafficking as a social problem has challenged various organizations to look into possible ways to prevent and stop the increasing numbers of victims in the Philippines. Government and justice experts have focused on how to prevent Filipinos from becoming victims of human trafficking. Social experts on the other hand provide social and public information that educate the masses on how they can identify cases of becoming victims of human trafficking. Human trafficking is indeed becoming a social ill with most of the victims being minors and innocent women trapped into it by the international syndicates of sexual slavery. The Philippine Constitution under section 3a of Republic Act No. 9208 define human trafficking as the;

recruitment, transportation, transfer or harboring, or receipt of persons with or without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders by means of threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power

or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person or, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation which includes at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude or the removal or sale of organs.<sup>2</sup>

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall also be considered as "trafficking in persons" even if it does not involve any of the means set forth in the preceding paragraph.

It was generally perceived that the depleting economic condition that started during the Marcos administration and the lack of employment opportunities have forced ten percent of the total population of Filipinos to seek job opportunities overseas. The Philippines is understood as one of the top five origins, destination and transit victims of human trafficking in Asia.<sup>3</sup> City Prosecutor Pajarito Revelas that;

The Philippines is identified generally as a source country from where victims of trafficking in persons are recruited and transported to other countries not only within the Asia and Pacific region but to other parts of the world. However, domestically, trafficking in persons is likewise thriving and is just as lucrative business.<sup>4</sup>

Human trafficking is one of the most syndicated crimes that generate billions of dollars and at front, attacking the very core of human being.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Human Right Report on Human Trafficking on Women and Children*, the major factors that forced women and children to be trafficked by illegal recruiters and syndicate were poverty, ignorance, and the increasing sex tourism in the country.<sup>6</sup>

United Nations urges members of the state, NGO's and the Civil Society to fasten the efforts of ending human trafficking calling it as the "appalling form of human rights abuse."

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<sup>2</sup> Republic Act No 9208 - Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, TWELFTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES Second Regular Session, Available at; [www.wcwonline.org/pdf/lawcompilation/PhilippinesRepublicActNo9208...](http://www.wcwonline.org/pdf/lawcompilation/PhilippinesRepublicActNo9208...) (Access, 02 May 2013).

<sup>3</sup>UNICEF, "Reversing the Trend: Child Trafficking in East and South-East Asia" (2009), [http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Unicef\\_EA\\_SEA\\_Trafficking\\_Report\\_Aug\\_2009\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Unicef_EA_SEA_Trafficking_Report_Aug_2009_low_res.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Darlene Reyes Pajarito, "Best Practices in the Protection, Prevention and Prosecution of Human Trafficking Cases in Zamboanga City," A Paper Presented at the 150<sup>th</sup> International Senior Seminar, UNAFEI, 2012 Available at: [www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS\\_No87/No87\\_14PA\\_Darlene.pdf](http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS_No87/No87_14PA_Darlene.pdf) (Accessed, May 2, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> A Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children available at; [www.protectionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Iran.pdf](http://www.protectionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Iran.pdf) (Accessed, April 24, 2013).

Human trafficking is a form of crime that denies individual dignity reducing them to mere objects by shamelessly exploiting the victims.<sup>7</sup> The basic causes of human trafficking are the desire to migrate for a better economic opportunity and security. The consequence however is opposite-greater economic dependency and insecurity which results in the loss of a young person's future. It was reported that in 2002, there were 7.58 million Filipinos as migrant workers and 1.6 million of them are believed to have been victims of human trafficking of which 53% of them are women and 25% were forced to work as prostitutes.<sup>8</sup>

According to the studies conducted by Celia Leonis and Donna Caparas of the National Police Commission, the majority of the victims of human trafficking are female adults and young and are either recruited legally or illegally. These victims are "willing travelers" driven by their desire to seek a better life overseas.<sup>9</sup> Offenders according to this study are mostly foreigners that have counterpart syndicates in the Philippines. These foreigners are natives of the countries of destination and owners of night clubs and bars where the victims will eventually deployed.<sup>10</sup> Studies also show that human trafficking is mostly done by organized crime groups that appear as recruiting agencies that offer job placement to the victims.<sup>11</sup> Government research also shows that these syndicates manufacture and sale fraudulent and fake travel documents such as passports, visas, stamps, and other identification documents.<sup>12</sup>

Given the facts above, the role of religion in addressing the social and ethical dilemmas faced by Filipinos overseas and victims of human trafficking is increasingly important. However, few studies have been done to provide the contribution and impact of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches to those working overseas. Gemma Cruz, a Catholic theologian specializing in the area of migration however observed that, religion is a means for oppressed and a tool for survival and liberation.<sup>13</sup> Cruz, however, criticizes the charismatic movement for the indifference

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<sup>7</sup> Human Trafficking.Org., "UN General Assembly President Calls for Redoubled Efforts to End Human Trafficking," News and Updates, April 04, 2012.

<sup>8</sup>Humantraffickingorg, "Advocates Unites for effective Implementation of Anti-Trafficking Law in Eastern Visayas," *Philippine Information Agency*, 08 January , 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Celia Leonis and Donna Caparas, "Trafficking in Human Beings from the Philippines: A Survey of Government Experts and Law Enforcement Case Files: Executive Summary" National Police Commission, a contracted project by the United Nations Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>13</sup> Gemma Tulud Cruz, Pilgrims in the Wilderness: Religion and Filipino Women in the Context of Migration, 4. While I agree to Cruz for using the Exodus paradigm as a way of liberalizing the struggle of DH in HK, she overlooked the fact that Israel were actually victims of racial and economic exploitation imposed by the Egyptians. She should used the oppressive structure of Egyptian government as an entry point for his discussion of DH in the context of oppressive structure. Instead, she argued that religion especially the charismatic movement become an instrument of deepening the oppression of the DHs in HK.

of their local churches with regards to the oppressive experiences of DHs and often uses their local churches to exploit migrants that hunger for religion.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Methodology

This study attempts to investigate the ministries of four faith based organizations serving among the victims of human trafficking and prostituted women in the local and international context. An in-depth interview was carried out with these organizations between the second quarter of this to understand the current issues and basic approaches in ministering to the victims. For the sake of confidentiality, I have named and described these organizations alphabetically. Organization A is a church-based organization that was started by a Christian medical doctor in Baguio City and is closely linked to the Pentecostal churches in the city. Organization A was started because of the increasing number of women and University students who were dragged into prostitution because of economic reasons. Organization A is closely working among the marginalized and prostituted women in the city of Pines, Baguio City.

Organization B is an established organization working in the national capital region (NCR) with a long history of involvement, networking and a wider influence among the prostituted women. Organization B started as an informal ministry, befriending the women working in bars in 1982 until it became a recognized Christian NGO that provides spiritual transformation, shelter and livelihood training for the prostituted women

Organization C is an international organization that can trace its roots from the ministry of Teen Challenge, a ministry that focuses on helping victims of drug addiction. Organization C is planted in the international context, deeply involved with prostituted women in the clubs and bars near the Twin Towers of Malaysia. Organization C seeks seriously the cases of abused and exploited women including those men and women's in drug rehabilitation. Organization C was birthed in 2007 in response to the massive needs of abused and exploited women in Malaysia. It reaches out to abused domestic workers, women in prostitution, women in situations of homelessness and women in crisis.

And Organization D is a mission based theological school with a social outreach to the most vulnerable students, often victims of human trafficking, in the universities of Yunnan, China. The organization was started by an American missionary and Asian missionaries to respond to the needs of the rural poor in Yunnan China. While the organization is not intended to tackle human trafficking per se, yet it extends its ministry to the victims of prostitution and prostituted women.

The measurement tools used for this study is a set of ten questions that describe the brief history, the issues of the victims, and approaches, challenges, and network of these organizations in fighting human trafficking. These questions are as follows:

- Who started the ministry of your organization? Can you tell us a brief history of your organization?
- What are the objectives, philosophy and current programs of your organization?

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 5.

- What are the issues that you encountered in ministering to the prostitutes or victims of human trafficking?
- What biblical basis to encourage you to minister to the victims of prostitution/human trafficking?
- Among the prostitutes that you ministered to in the past or at present, what drove these prostitutes to enter into prostitution? Please base your answer only from the women you ministered to?
- Why do you think it is important for faith-based organizations to minister to the victims of human trafficking and prostitutes? What possible contributions can they make? Why do you think only a few Christian churches pay attention to this kind of ministry?
- What dilemma have you experienced from other people through this ministry?
- Do you think it is necessary for your organization to assist the victims legally? Was there a situation that you were forced or challenged to file a case against those trafficker/pimps in behalf of these prostitutes?
- Do you think you need a legal assistance or protection of police authorities in dealing with the cases of the prostitutes?
- Why do you think it is necessary to collaborate and network with other agencies in tracking/advocating the needs of the victims?

#### **4. Findings and Results**

##### **Causes of Human Trafficking**

Organization A stated several factors that drove men and women to enter into prostitution and to become vulnerable to human trafficking. Organization A identifies three causes of human trafficking in its own context: illegal recruitment, sexual abuse, and money matters. Illegal recruiters often serve as pimps that deceive the victims by promising them jobs but they end up in clubs as waitresses and promo girls. This makes the victims vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment.

Organization B resonates on the other hand that human trafficking and prostitution are closely linked to poverty and the economic condition of the victims. While organization B acknowledges that the causes are complex which involves the physical, emotional, economic and mental dimensions, Organization B observes that victims are trapped into prostitution due to poverty and lack of employment opportunities in the country.

The issues and needs of the women we serve are varied and complex. On the personal level, the women we serve are from the poor – or the poorest of the poor – sector of society, and often their being women has compounded their experience of poverty in family and society.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Numbu, Interview on Human Trafficking, May 15, 2013 Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City.

Organization C, whose context of ministry is largely located in an international context, identifies the causes of human trafficking and prostitution with the painful experiences of the victims inside the family and the relationship they engaged in with other people. These traumatic experiences include deception and betrayal done by the recruiters/pimps, promising jobs somewhere, which eventually turned out to be forced labor and prostitution. Most of the victims are victims of sexual abuse from their early childhood from family members, friends or employers. Marital unfaithfulness of a husband, drug addiction, and economic survival of family members are other reasonable factors that drove the victims to fall prey to prostitution. One of the prostitutes that organization C has ministered to, reasoned out that, "I'd rather be in prostitution than share my husband with a second wife."

This observation is equally identified by Organization D whose context of ministry is focused on the migrant women from rural areas to the cities, whereas, the victims are forced to enter prostitution because of poverty and job opportunities. Prostitution is tempting for university students who lack finances to continue their studies. They are often victims of pimps/foreigners that offer money for sexual exchange.

### Potential of Faith Based Organizations

When asked what possible contributions faith based organizations can make, Organization A recognizes that rescuing victims of human trafficking or prostituted women is one of the focuses of the gospel, releasing the captives from prison. Jesus demonstrated this ministry of deliverance by offering forgiveness to those who were victimized by prostitution (John 8:1-8). Organization A believes that ministry is not only based on where more funds are given and where lesser effort is given.

For Organization B, Christian organizations have the potential to influence and attract those victims of human trafficking. As followers of Jesus Christ we can be a practical expression of Jesus Christ in our sin-warped world.

In the day of Jesus, exploited and marginalized, tax collectors and prostitutes ran to Jesus and dined with him. As Jesus-followers, we should be just as approachable and attractive to these groups today, and just as comfortable with them as Jesus was. The Church / Christian community has unique resources which no NGO or agency can fully offer the victims and survivors: redeemed community, spiritual ministry and encouragement, prayer support. If faith communities and faith-based organizations do not minister to these special people, then the only resource they will find is social work. Well done social work is important and good, but it is not enough.

Organization B believes that Christian witness can be by words and by deeds by demonstrating these following actions:

- Study the issue and become more informed
- Read books and articles on the issue
- Pray

- Donate to faith-based organizations engaging the issue
- Volunteer time at a local NGO working on the issue
- Cook and serve meals for women survivors
- Offer temporary housing for a woman
- Play with children of women while they are in a class or working
- Advocate on the issue with local politicians
- Do Christmas caroling and gift-giving in local bars
- Give beauty product gift packs to women in sauna baths
- Hand out chocolates to women in prostitution on the streets

Organization C strongly affirmed that ministries of faith-based organizations are unique and crucial with respect to bringing transformation to the victims of human trafficking. Humanitarian organizations and clinical psycho-therapists can provide temporary healing that helps the victims in their process of recovery, but spiritual input and deliverance done by faith based organizations are vital for true deliverance from those who have been oppressed. God has the final authority on healing and wholeness. The secular world takes principles and philosophies from the Bible and not vice versa.

Organization D believes that Christian worldview offers a paradigm that brings the victims to redemptive healing on the basis of what Christ did on the cross. Jesus through his redemption brings physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual healing (Isa. 53:6). To usher victims into a personal relationship with Jesus is a greater tendency to effect healing and wholeness to the victims than any other approach.

#### Mission Programs to the Victims

As to how these organizations minister to the victims of human trafficking and prostituted women, Organization A is offering alternative jobs opportunities to the victims and education connected to the government like TESDA providing the victims the necessary skills and development. If the victims lack education, the organization endorses them to enroll at Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the Department of Education, in order for the prostituted women to complete their Elementary or Secondary education. Reconciliation of the victims to their immediate families is an important ministry being practiced by the organization A. They provide intentional discipleship training that encourages victims to see the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation to family members, training that empowers them to break from illicit relationships and the importance of becoming a member in a local church.

Since the inception of Organization B, it has envisioned seeing women in transformed communities becoming whole and free in Christ towards prostitution-free societies. The organization aims “to build, model and empower communities that embrace vulnerable women and survivors of prostitution, enabling their transformation”. To actualize this vision statement, organization B is focused on five transformation programs; (1) women’s transformation and empowerment, (2) personal formation and capacity building, (3) community education and advocacy, (4) strategic collaboration and alliance building, and (5) resource development & management.

Challenged by the plight of abused and exploited women, Organization C organized a team ministry that rescues the prostituted women in the Red Light District of Kuala Lumpur in order

to provide intervention, employment and aftercare for women at risk of abuse and prostitution. Organization C facilitates a jewelry training program in a Drop In center in a Red Light District. The process by which Organization C brings these women to real transformation can be understood by their four initiatives. First, the ministry of intervention and assessment whereas the staff of the organization are able to locate women, refer them to partnering ministries or plug them into the Brickfields Training Program. Through conversations and time, staff and volunteers are able to assess the best type of intervention needed for each individual person.

Second, the importance of continuous outreach and mentoring ministries whereby volunteers and staff pursue relationships with women in situations of homelessness and prostitution. Through unconditional love and journey friendships and visits on weekly outreach, trust is developed between women at risk and volunteers. Though not every person in crisis is ready to face their issues, building bridges of relationship builds bridges and prepares a path for trusting relationships to be formed. Third, the importance of providing job opportunities whereas the prostituted women learned how to make jewelry at a local drop-in-center where the organization can sows seeds of self respect, love and friendship into women at risk. Through a supplemental income from jewelry production, the organization provides training and mentoring to women in crisis in a two day a week discipleship and jewelry training program.

Last, Organization C is involved in training volunteers and collaborating with local NGOs to broaden its effectiveness. Training volunteers through weekly outreach, bi-monthly training, yearly Women's Encounter Weekends and networking through ICAP (International Christian Alliance on Prostitution) among Southeast Asian ministries as well as local Malaysian organizations. Volunteers learn to see women in crisis from a new perspective with the heart and burden of God. This enables volunteers to love without agenda and strings attached, enabling the women in crisis to find a true friend.

Organization D fails to provide a concrete program that deals with the issue of the victims of human trafficking and prostituted women. Perhaps the main reason is that the organization does not deal specifically with this problem in the society but rather it provides training and workshops for those who come to faith in Christ. The organization extends their outreach only for those people who are victims of prostitution.

### Dilemmas

Asked what are the challenges and dilemmas they encountered in ministering to the prostituted women within and outside the organization, Organization A acknowledges that ministering to prostituted women involves great sacrifice and commitment. The fear of being threatened by the organized syndicates is another dilemma faced by faith -based organizations. The perception that prostituted women are immoral is often perceived by the congregation and therefore need to orient members when a local church is serious enough to deal with human trafficking. Organization A pointed out,

At first when I was housing "Little Girl" in the church, many were so hesitant. I have to defend for her during board meetings, until everyone has settled and accepted her. The church faced stigma when I started to join this ministry, so I have to do several ways to be able to orient the church until the whole church has embraced this ministry. Concerning dilemmas I have experienced from other people, it is when they expect this

"subject" to change overnight and expect much from them spiritually. People tend to forget that each one has his/her own pace of spiritual maturity and growth. What matters most is never to give up on them.<sup>16</sup>

This observation is quiet similar to Organization B;

There is a general reluctance of many people to become involved in this type of ministry, for a variety of reasons. Many donors and supporters also have an unrealistic idea of what the change process looks like, and expect that women will be "rescued" and "transformed" quickly and easily. So engaged involvement and sustained support have been very, very difficult to find.

#### Engagement, Networking and Corroboration

Asked whether they believe it is necessary for their organization to network and corroborate with NGOs, legal experts and police authorities, organization A believes that churches must be at the forefront of combating poverty and must network with legal experts and police authorities in fighting human trafficking. Organization A recalled instances where pimps were brought to a personal relationship with God through actual sharing the word of God. Organization A acknowledges that ministering to the victims requires legal knowledge and partnership with those in the authority.

While organization B acknowledges the importance of networking and corroboration, they themselves provide only paralegal assistance, especially when meeting the abuser in front of the barangay officials or when they feel the victims need legal assistance or other organizations that have the legal capacity to help the victims like the International Justice for Mission (IJM).

Organization C resonates that engagement and networking with the civil society especially those organizations that have different expertise is somehow necessary to enable faith-based organizations to fast tract and address the complex needs of the victims.

We network with other national organizations that have this expertise. We find it most helpful to network with organizations that have expertise in these areas. We prefer to refer our cases to Coalition against Modern Day Slavery in Asia (CAAMSA) and Tenaganita who have legal support to file cases with the labor department (Anti Trafficking in Persons (ATIP). We choose to refer cases only and not file cases ourselves.

Organization C however recognizes the importance of asking protection from police authorities but it requires trust and patience to find trusted police officers. Organization C is quick to suggest that it is better to network with local organizations.

It is a waste of time to reinvent the wheel when other organizations have expertise in areas we do not. I would rather focus on what we do best than spending time doing what others have done and perfected. There is a lot of synergy that is gained from

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with Medhen Belino, the Messiah Community Church, May 5, 2013, Taytay Rizal.

working with other organizations. You can accomplish twice as much work working together. We can also learn from each other and strengthen each other.

## 5. Theological Framework

Faith-based organizations affirm the validity and ability of the Bible to answer the deepest need of a human being. The Bible as the Word of God is not only perceived as a foundation of Christian living but it provides theological principles to issues involved in the society. The text interplays with our complex context in the society. Looking at the Biblical teaching on human trafficking, there at least five theological frameworks that we can build to provide a rationale of helping victims of human trafficking toward a spiritual transformation. It is from this framework that we can denounce those people that exploit the poor and vulnerable in exchange for economic benefits and material gain.

First, God stamped his image in man so that man May not exploit his fellow human being. All human beings have dignity because of the image of God in man. Man is unique from all the creation of God by virtue of that image that is in man. There is a dignity and sanctity of human life because of the image of God. The image of God in man is what separates human beings from all of creation. Although the whole created order is connected to each other, there is something that makes man special from all creation. Man is the master piece of God's creation. The book of Genesis describes the creation of man in a detailed fashion, in contrast to all creation. While the whole creation is equally important to God, there is something in man that is special, when he created Adam and Eve. What separates human beings from all creation? It is the Spirit of God that was breathed on human being. Man is both seen in the book of Genesis as a material and spiritual being. To exploit fellow human beings for selfish interest or gain is a direct assault to his creator.

Second, the Exodus experience demonstrates the fact that God is the God of justice that brings judgment for those that exploits the foreigners in the land. God is the God of justice that fights for those who are oppressed or trafficked by evil people. God's presence is with those who are sold into slavery and He personally vindicates them before those who have exploited them. Judgment came to Egypt because of its oppressive political and economic system and attitude toward foreigners. Force labor is evil in the sight of God (Ex. 1:11). Central to the Great Commandments to love God and to love our neighbor, men and women sold into sexual slavery are our neighbors. In giving the Torah in Sinai, He stipulated that aliens and strangers should not be mistreated but be protected in the community of God's people (Ex. 22:21). In the Old Testament times, slavery was a pervasive practice. Sources of slavery was caused by the results of war (2 Kings 5:2), or the selling of minors by their own families due to poverty and debts (2 Kings 4:1-7).<sup>17</sup> In some instance, voluntary and involuntary selling to servitude in exchange of food, shelter or silver due to impoverished circumstance was tolerated in ancient times.<sup>18</sup> God

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<sup>17</sup> Julie Waters, "The Intersection of Law, Theology and Human Trafficking in the Narrative of Joseph: Linking the Past to the Present," A Paper Presented at the University of Nebraska, Second Interdisciplinary Conference on Human Trafficking, September 2010. 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4.

warned us that exploiting the foreigners for that nation's advantage will be judged nationally as He demonstrated to the Egyptians. Although the economic progress of the Ancient Near East did not depend on slavery, slaves served as construction workers of temples, canals and roads. Privately owned slaves according to Mendelssohn were used in agriculture and industry.<sup>19</sup> He instructed that foreigners should be cared for. Ex. 23:9 Foreigners working in the other countries must not be exploited but they should receive proper and just wages from their labor. Israel as a holy nation must exemplify compassion among those strangers and aliens. Deut 15:11. Foreign woman should not be taken advantage of within her subordinate status in the society (Ex. 21:7-11, 26-32, 22:16-17 Deut 21:10-14; 22:13-30; 24:1-5. No one, however disabled, impoverished or powerless is to be oppressed and exploited. Deceiving foreigners in exchange for sexual intercourse is an abominable in the sight of God. Kidnapping done through human trafficking is an offense worthy of death (Ex. 21:16).

Third, prophetic-empowered ministry takes seriously the case of human trafficking in the public sphere. The Spirit of God repeatedly empowered leaders and judges of Israel as agents of liberalizing those victims of human trafficking imposed by foreign overlords. Force labor in exchange of economic benefits of stronger nation is evil and needs to be denounced and condemned. Prophetic spirit-filled ministry brings in the case of the weak and sexually exploited in the courts of the powerful in the society. Leaders that take advantage on the weak are evil and their actions dishonors God (2 Samuel 12: 1-11). Spirit-filled prophetic ministry publicly translates the witness of the Spirit in the public sphere toward the production of personal and communal well-being. Prophet Amos condemned the arrogance of the socially elite that sells the local people into slavery. Amos 2:6-7, Israel is condemned for the practice of human trafficking. Amos tells Israel:

This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back [my wrath]. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name.

Amos condemned human trafficking in his time and prophesied that judgment is coming to those that exploit people for personal gain. Prophet Joel prophesied that judgment is coming to those nations that "traded boys for prostitution and sold girls for drunkenness" (Joel 2: 3). Exploiting the poor for economic gain that will lead to slavery is not only injustice but it is an attack at the very core of human dignity and well being (Neh. 5: 1-9).

Fourth, Jesus charismatic ministry announces freedom and redemption of the poor and the oppressed in the society. At the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry, He announces His Spirit-anointed ministry by proclaiming good news and freedom for the oppressed and the captives. This is exemplified in the ministry of Jesus by not treating women caught in adultery as prostitutes but as victims of social disorders in the society. He let those victims of sexual exploitation feel that God cares for them. Christ's redemptive work at the cross includes physical, spiritual, and relational healing. Jesus promised healing and forgiveness for those who are victims of sexual slavery (Jan 8:1).

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 6. See, Isaac Mendelsohn, "Slavery in the Ancient Near East," *The Biblical Archaeologist* IX (1946), 82.

Fifth, the church as a recipient of charismatic empowering has a potential to become an agent of social change in the society. The church is the home of the poor and marginalized. At the outset, the Holy Spirit empowered the marginalized group in the society which consisted of the poor, the illiterate, former prostitutes, the beggars, and the aliens to be the proclaimed of good news in a corrupt society (Acts 2:1-14). The early church provided care for the marginalized women (Hebrew widows) and provided care and food in their own community Acts 6: 1-11. Individual Christians were instrumental for the provision of livelihood for the poor and the oppressed in the community. Paul instructed the Christians not to sell themselves to men to gain for money, food or redeem someone from cruel slave owners (1 Cor. 7:23). While Paul acknowledged that kidnapping and slave trading was a pervasive practice in the Ancient Near East, he listed them as sins of the people of his day.

## 6. Conclusion

Without doubt human trafficking is becoming the new face of modern slavery in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With these mounting cases of victims informed by social media and activists, faith-based organizations and Christian churches must be engaged in combating human trafficking in all its forms. Christian churches must be reminded of the rich history of social interventions by Christians against human slavery in the past. As to how Christian churches can foster participatory engagement, there are several recommended suggestions:

First, in partnership with social media and faith-based organizations that are in the forefront of fighting human slavery, local churches must serve as a center for social education for the masses, informing the members as well as the people in their respective communities to expose deceptions caused by illegal recruiters and travel agents that are sometimes used as agents between the victims of human trafficking and the organize syndicates. The church has a prophetic responsibility to the community providing precautionary warning when people are in danger. The church as a prophetic community is called by God to denounce systemic evils in the society. The church has the responsibility to teach the masses that human beings, whether poor or not, are created in the image of God, and therefore, human beings have dignity and self worth. In the same way, there is a need for Christian churches to rethink and redefine the purposes of their fellowship meetings, seminars, and conferences as to whether these educational meetings are contributing to the transformation of communities. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are known for their many conferences and seminars, but the question is whether these fellowships and teaching seminars tackle and discuss burning social issues in our times, or are they just a way of gathering converts and imposing teachings that do not produce the common good of the society.

Second, the church as a dispenser and reservoir of the healing power of the gospel must be translated for the healing of the whole person. Victims of human trafficking are spiritually and emotionally wounded people that need spiritual and psycho-emotional healing. Local churches must be reminded that Christians are the practical expression of the healing power of Jesus to those who are hurting and wounded by this sinful world. There are many practical ways where the local church can be an instrumental of the healing process for the victims like providing shelter for the victims, sponsoring a house fellowship where they find refuge and learn God

forgiveness, conducting skills and livelihood training, or by giving women empowerment seminars that inform them of their rights as citizens in the community.