

# **Christian Religious Education for Awakening and Living in the Spirit : As Inspired by John Wesley and John Sung**

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Recently I had a privilege of speaking at a World Methodist Chinese Leadership Conference in Singapore organized by World Methodist Evangelism Institute from Emory University Candler School of Theology. The presentation provoked a lot of discussion from the floor about curriculum and pedagogy for Christian Religious Education in Chinese context. I had raised the issue of a too-narrow definition of Christian religious education, such as children's ministry, or evangelism, or church school, which is a fragmenting of ministry and curriculum. More interestingly, while acknowledging the diverse models in Chinese churches, the discussion surfaced the revival model of Christian education. Some of the leaders can not see the need to expand the understanding of Christian Religious education beyond evangelism and proselytizing members.

It is in this context of Chinese churches, influenced by revival, mission, and even charismatic movements that I argue for a Spirit-centered education. This Christian Religious education for awaking and living in the Spirit draws from John Wesley and John Sung. It will not only speak to the Chinese church context but also continue and expand the heritage of the wealth of Chinese church tradition.

The body of this paper is presented in four parts: first, the need to explore Spirit-centered education in Chinese church context; second, insights from comparative study of the spiritual practices of John Sung and John Wesley; third, critical issues for a Spirit-centered education relating to the nurture of spiritual awakening in Chinese church context; and fourth, proposals for curriculum and pedagogy in that context.

## **I. The Need to explore Spirit-Centered education in Asia**

### 1) The Context of Christian Religious Education in Asia

As a means of introducing the Asian context of Christian Religious Education, I would like to offer my observation on Chinese traditional medicine and herbal remedies, as a metaphor for Christian Religious education in Chinese churches. When I returned to Singapore and Southeast Asia after more than 15 years in the United States, I observed two kinds of traditional medicines in the Chinese grocery stores and herbal halls. The first kind includes the variety of over-the-counter herbal remedies, like supplements and teas. The second kind consists of those Chinese medicines that are prescribed and measured in powders or capsules for the specific person. The advantages of the over-the-counter herbal remedies are their accessibility and affordable cost. The disadvantage is that due to the ease of access the remedies may not apply to the particular person, given the specific nature, lifestyle and environment of the person. However, while the prescribed medicine costs more, it is made for the individuals, and the physician can monitor the progress through regular check-ups, as well as encourage the western medicine as needed. More and more Singaporeans, though quite westernized, will use the best of both Eastern and Western medicine. More locals are using over-the-counter remedies for general symptoms and the prescription Chinese medicine for treating persistent symptoms.

The context of Christian Religious education in Chinese churches includes diverse models from the west and revival models influenced by the various movements. The shape of Christian Religious Education in Asia is highlighted by Mary Boys and evaluated by Hope S. Antone (2004). Mary Boys speaks of the term "expression" instead of "model", but I will use the models as found in Chinese context. I found that their list of models is also very common to Chinese churches. However, I would like to add the sixth model of Social Science as highlighted by Barbara Wilkerson since it has become a legacy with some of the churches and seminaries (Wilkerson, 1997, 50-54): 1) Evangelical-revivalist model – focus on conversion proselytisation; 2) Liberal Religious Education Model – on Social Gospel and experiential education, influenced by movements of liberalism in theology and progressive education; 3) Christian Education Model/Bible Education – is a reaction to the liberal religious education movement; coming along side the neo-orthodox theological movement, it sought to "correct" the excesses of theological liberalism and educational progressivism by focusing on the sole teaching of the Bible; 4) Catholic Education Model – faith education and ecumenism; Catholic education has been open to trends in such movements as progressivism, liberation theology, experimentalism, and ecumenism; 5) Ecumenical Education Model – ecumenical formation and faith Sharing. With growing concerns about advances in science and technology, conflict of ideologies, and the increasing awareness of other faiths, the ecumenism has further broadened into faith-ideology encounters, interfaith relations, inter-religious dialogues, justice, peace, and integrity of creation; 6) Social Science Model – it uses contemporary data and educational methods for instructing Christian living that is value or theology free; and thus can serve pluralistic and multicultural contexts.

The tendency in local church Christian education to just follow the global trends and adopt from the above six models is like buying the Chinese over-the-counter remedies. They may not suit or even revive the deadness in the particular context. However, these churches, influenced by revival movements, may find a Spirit-centered education, drawing on the John Wesley and John Sung like the prescribed Chinese medicine. This Chinese prescribed medicine is both tailored to the Chinese context and is also open to the best of the western medicine to bring life to Christian Religious education in its contexts. It will not only build but expand the rich heritage that is prominent in Chinese Churches through the influence of Wesley and Sung's revivals. Without starting from the particular context, heritage and preference, any recommendation of theory and models is like these herbal remedies, and may well kills the specific context.

## 2) The definition of Spirit-Centered Education

The Spirit-Centered Education theory aims at preparing people for spiritual awaking by the Holy Spirit and evoking their religious passions for living in the Spirit through mission, holistic living both as individuals and in the respective community. I believe that the insights of John Wesley's and John Sung's spiritual experience, even with two different historical and cultural contexts can uncover seeds for a Spirit-centered education grounded in spiritual practices.

Even though Chinese churches have a revival model they have neglected the nurture of revival experiences and the holiness which are central to both John Wesley and John Sung. The revival model misses the element of education and the life-long process of spiritual formation when it focuses only on evangelism.

Three strong beliefs undergird this paper:

- The first belief is that the Spirit plants many seeds for spiritual awakening. Reflecting on these religious experiences can be significant for shaping the theory and practice of Christian religious education.

- The second belief is that John Wesley and John Sung can inspire and guide Spirit-centered education. Their understandings of religious experiences inform Christian religious education.
- The third belief is that we need a holistic process for redesigning Christian religious education. This needs to be informed by historical and cultural contexts and aimed at preparing people for an awakening by the Holy Spirit. With such convictions, I move now to a comparison of Wesley's and Sung's understandings of religious experience and their contributions toward an integrated theory for teaching and living a dynamic Christian life.

## **II) Insights from comparative study of the spiritual practices of John Sung and John Wesley**

### **1) Their Common Qualifications for Spirit-centered education**

In exploring the heritage of John Sung and John Wesley, common features qualify them for reforming Christian practice. First, both had multiple experiences of spiritual awakening and living. Drawing from their lives, the one-time conversion model will not fit, for Christian religious education toward holiness is a life-long journey. Second, both men recognized that sin blocks spiritual awakening, and that repentance is needed to restore holiness. This is part of the life-long process toward Christlike holiness. Third, both attributed spiritual awakening to the grace of God. In that recognition, both believed that God alone plants the seeds for spiritual awakening; however, spiritual awakening can be nurtured through communal witness and disciplined living. Fourth, both perceived that the seeds for awakening people in the Spirit include spiritual practices of prayer (including confession), Scripture, witness, singing, and spiritual journal writing. Finally, both maintained that the chief end of spiritual awakening is to attain holiness of heart and life.

Given this convergence of John Sung's and John Wesley's spiritual awakenings, both shared a holiness model of Christian religious education. The cross-cultural study of their insights will uncover approaches for nurturing spiritual awakening and living which are two cores for Spirit-Centered education.

### **2) Spiritual Awakening and Living**

This section covers two areas. First, it offers definitions of spiritual awakening in order to bring in the wider context to dialogue with Wesley and Sung. Second, it compares the understandings of Wesley and Sung regarding spiritual awakening and living in the Spirit, making connections with Chinese religious experience. I will then explore critical issues to be integrated into curriculum and pedagogy for Christian religious education in both East and West in the next section.

#### **A) Definitions: Spiritual Awakening and Living**

Before we compare Sung and Wesley, we must define spiritual awakening in contemporary educational literature; then we will proceed to compare spiritual awakening from the perspectives of Sung and Wesley. Since Sung was a Chinese evangelist and Wesley an English priest, and both were shaped by the spirituality of the Hebrew Bible, a general comparison of the definitions of the spiritual awakening according to the Hebrew Bible will be helpful.

### *Awakening to silence*

Maria Harris acknowledges that Western spirituality shaped by the Hebrew Bible offers not only “awakening in the inner life, but also a call to awaken to other silences, the community and a loving and attentive Mystery, always ready to receive us human beings,” according to our own timing (Harris, 1989, *Dance of the Spirit*, 5). In this definition, we see that spiritual awakening is a broad term about animating people in their inner lives, and awakening them to silences, community, and to God. Harris explains that these spiritual awakenings can be triggered by tragic crises, unexpected conversations or even natural transitions, like the first day of school or the first day of a woman’s period, whereby one’s increased vulnerability pushes toward a deepened awareness of God. (Harris, 1989, 13-15). Built on this explanation, we see that all human experiences and environments have the capacity for spiritual awakenings. They are potential seeds for spiritual awakening that must not be neglected because the seeds can nourish deeper spiritual living.

There have been many descriptions of the broader implications of spiritual awakenings. Maria Harris points out several insights for understanding our awakening shaped by the Hebrew Bible. She lifts up three features of spiritual awakening: 1) spiritual awakening is not from one’s inner silence only, but also from the silences of the defenseless; 2) spiritual awakening is never totally private, never meant for individuals but is “situated in communities with others, especially communities of care”; 3) spiritual awakening is awakening to the ever loving presence of God and Mystery (Harris, 5). From these insights, we see that spiritual awakenings relate to our inner silence, to outside silence in the community and to our need for connection with God. Spiritual awakening does not imply a simple connotation of evangelization and God’s mission. Spiritual awakening implies a broader sense of awareness. It awakens one to listen to the missing voices, to ourselves, and to God, as well as to the outside silence in the community. Christian religious education cannot neglect the need to connect to the silence within our hearts, to the silence of the defenseless in the community, and to God. When we miss seeing and hearing other silences in the community, we do not see God’s face or respond to God’s call in the world, and our spiritual awakenings will run the danger of becoming private and separatist.

### *Transforming moments*

James Loder notes that transforming moments have four dimensions: the lived world, the self, the Void, and the Holy (Loder, 1981, 64-91). He describes the consequences of transforming moments: one finds that the world is “recomposed,” and one identifies the coherence and incoherence in solving the puzzles (Loder, 72-3). Loder further describes the awakening to self, as elaborated by Søren Kierkegaard’s thoughts, whereby one begins to reflect, relate, and perceive oneself as a spirit being (Loder, 73-9; Kierkegaard, 1954). The awakening to void as described by Loder is awareness of nothingness, “the implicit aim of conflict, absence, loneliness, and death” (Loder, 79). The fourth awakening is awakening to the Holy. Loder explains that this awakening is not just the experience of “the Divine Companion or the Presence of the Holy,” which remains Other; but one experiences how “serenity comes up out of anxiety, joy out of depression, hope out of hopelessness; when good is returned for evil, forgiveness replaces retaliation, and courage triumphs over fear, then we recognize the movement of something beyond personality and mental health” (Loder, 88). These four dimensions are transforming moments for spiritual awakening where one awakens to the lived world, to self, to the Void, and to the Holy.

Because spiritual awakening may occur many times and in many forms through a person’s life, the language of “spiritual awakening and living” is used in this paper to keep the fullness of the process in the forefront. The holistic nature of spirituality and education

was important to John Wesley and John Sung; it may be even more important today in light of the present situation and the critiques of Wesley and Sung. To pursue these questions further, we turn to a comparison of these two spiritual leaders from the past.

### B) Comparing Wesley and Sung

In comparing John Wesley and John Sung, I will reflect on their understandings of the Holy Spirit, as explored in my dissertation ( Yu, 2001, Chapters 4 and 5), and also on their models for spiritual revival and Christian education (2001, Chapters 6 and 7).

#### *The Understanding of the Holy Spirit*

For both Wesley and Sung, the understanding of the Holy Spirit leads to three stages of understanding: 1) God's Spirit awakens them from sleep; 2) the imperative need of spiritual guidance; and 3) means for the nurturing of spiritual awakening and living in the Spirit.

In the first stage, they saw spiritual awakening as the experience of God's presence, grace, calling and guidance. When people awaken to God's mighty presence and salvation, they also perceive their own lack of faith and knowledge for comprehending the mystery of God. In the second stage, both Wesley and Sung went through spiritual upheavals and frustrations. Wesley, for example, recognized his own lack of faith and fruits of faith. Sung's zeal led him to lose strength, openness, and clarity; Union Theological Seminary suspected him of madness and admitted him to a mental hospital. Both men witnessed supernatural experiences and healings, revealing to them that spiritual awakening takes many forms. Further, their experiences of spiritual awakening showed the need for guidance and Christian nurture. In the third stage, they saw that spiritual awakening needs to be nurtured. Wesley sought guidance from the Bible, Moravian friends, reason, prayer, disciplined living and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Sung sought guidance only from the Bible and prayer, and through his desire for witness.

As to the means for this awakening experience, both affirmed the importance of a number of spiritual practices: prayer, Scripture, witnessing and singing. Wesley, however, described a wider range of the means of grace: the ordinances of God, the Lord's Supper, and the providential means of grace such as bands, class meetings and visitation. Wesley provided a more solid structure for spiritual nurture and pastoral care, especially through visitation of the poor, sick, afflicted and members of the society. Sung provided a more narrow structure of spiritual nurture and pastoral care: prayer for the converts, the leaders, and the sick among Christians and new converts.

As for the nurture of Christians to live in the Spirit, both Wesley and Sung connected faith and love as means for maintaining holiness. However, Sung connected love with the saving of individual souls and less on a wide range of good works as elaborated by Wesley. For Wesley, holiness is not anti-nominanism. He stood against quietism, the assumption that one need not do anything unless specifically prompted by the Spirit; thus he correlated justification and sanctification. Outward as well as inward holiness are essential to spiritual life. He therefore valued all such activities as worship, sacraments, Scripture reading, and caring for the neighbor. Wesley's understanding of spiritual nurture was more inclusive than Sung.

For both Wesley and Sung, spiritual awakening leads not only to individual salvation and self-enjoyment, but also to relationship with Christ and the building up of the church. This awakening in Wesley also contributed to the building up of community, through good works, philanthropy, and protests against injustice; for Sung, the focus was revival. Further, Sung was not as organized as Wesley was, with regard to organizing the church. However,

both affirmed the need to actually nurture people for spiritual awakening, which meant helping them to live in the Spirit, integrating inward and outward holiness.

### **The limitation of Song and Wesley's revival model**

Neither Wesley nor Sung were immune from the malady of many evangelists and clergy. Although the movements they started led fullness of life for others, their personal language and experiences of spiritual awakenings were limited. In their public ministries, they stirred a passion for ministry but failed to invite people to holistic living. This is perhaps because they missed the intentional Spirit-centered education that nurtures holiness living in a life-long process and not just for personal or church revivals.

One of the best examples of this limitation is in family life. Sung's and Wesley's parents provided solid foundations for their spiritual awakening, and they themselves shepherded their respective parishes, but it was not expected that they would have happy Christian families. This issue existed for both Wesley and Sung, even though they were from different contexts and different eras. This is a matter for serious issue for many pastors' families. Sung's father, who was a Methodist pastor, struggled through poverty, even though he was a popular and successful pastor. Sung had family obligations--taking care of his siblings--all of his life. This reflects the hardship of Chinese pastors and the injustices of missionaries toward Chinese pastors in those times. Wesley's parents had many differences while he was growing up. The negative lesson in this is that pastors could teach others about family religion, but were often unable to care for their own families. In the case of Sung and Wesley themselves, they were both so much on fire for God that they neglected their families. Sung was home for his wife and five children only one or two months a year; only three girls survived. Wesley never resolved his problems of intimate relationships with women.

On a more positive note, the spiritual awakenings of John Wesley and John Sung reflect what Loder called awakening to the needs of the world. They were able to find ways to relate to God's mission, to sin, and to the Holy in the world. Loder's understanding implies mental health, however, which was somewhat lacking in both John Wesley and John Sung.

The commonality in the spiritual awakenings of John Wesley and John Sung reveals the contributions of both family religious upbringing and the social environment for spiritual awakening. The lives of John Sung and John Wesley show that family and church experiences can nurture spiritual awakening, but they may also hinder it when a partial or distorted teaching becomes the norm. In the case of Wesley, his strict spiritual disciplines may have been the factor that initially hindered him from a spontaneous and more holistic personal experience of the grace of God. Similarly, John Sung's childhood training and exposure to revivals initially also hindered him from understanding spiritual awakening that leads to holistic living. Their awakening experiences did not go far enough because they neglected to demonstrate the role of the family for nurturing that experience. Their lives reveal to us that spiritual awakening should not be assumed; both family and church have significant roles in nurturing spiritual awakening in the next generation.

### ***Spirit-centered Education***

The purpose of a Spirit-centered education as inspired by John Wesley and John Sung is to prepare people for a continuing life of holiness, arousing passion for mission and holistic living both as individuals and within the respective community. Both men experienced God's grace and became convinced that the human response to God's love is repentance and holy living. Wesley's model inspires a fuller framework and content for inward and outward

holiness and for spiritual nurture and pastoral care.

- First, Wesley integrated a greater range of the means of grace, including the Lord's Supper, prayer, fasting, Christian conference and visitation. Sung did not mention these practices as means of grace. Christians are not to stay solitary in prayers, but are to seek spiritual guidance from all ordinances of God, religious friends, and personal waiting upon the Lord through fasting.
- Second, Wesley's model provided a more solid structure of band and class meetings, societies, and conferences where Christians could be nurtured in various contexts.
- Third, Wesley elaborated outward holiness more than Sung. For Wesley, outward holiness meant caring for the community, including the sick, the poor, and the afflicted. Sung mostly rejected home visits, including home prayers for the sick. Sung also reflected more of his poor interpersonal relationships and his tendency to ignore others and allow his temper to explode with people around him. For Sung, outward holiness consisted largely of one's witness for Christ and living a life of love in the community. Sung thus limit Spirit education to just revival model for revivals in hearts and nurture of holiness are much assumed.

### ***Passion for mission***

Both Wesley and Sung were highly capable of drawing people into mission, by arousing a passion for mission. Wesley initiated a Methodist movement, and Sung stirred up fire for Christian missions. Both inspired many other preachers and revivalists. However, Wesley's logical, formal, and strict disciplines for spiritual revival attracted English hearts; and Sung's colorful, impromptu, and creative spiritual practices grasped Chinese hearts. Sung spoke to the Chinese experience, by using illustrations, objects, metaphors, witness, and especially the story method of connecting Bible stories to human stories. By this he nurtured a passion for telling God's story to the people.

Both Wesley and Sung were limited in preparing people for spiritual awakening and living. This affected their contributions to Christian religious education, or to some they can only see their contributions in revivals and evangelism. Wesley overemphasized strict discipline to bend the will of children, a practice that would create controversy and conflicts between children and parents today. In relation to children, he left little room for his theology of grace and for the working of the Holy Spirit. His Spirit-led model was often in tension with the human spirit when control is exercised. For Sung, making the revival normative for Christian education destroyed Christian hunger for solid nurture and also brought stagnation. Ongoing Christian living was neglected by expecting renewal without the conscious responsibility for spiritual nurture.

In short, both Wesley and Sung inspired a Spirit-centered education that prepared people for a continuing life of holiness, evoking passions for mission and holistic living, but the perception of revival model needs to be expanded. The test of Spirit-led or Spirit-filled holiness, however, is not perfection, but the fruit of the Spirit and Christian love in the community and larger society.

## **III. Critical Issues for Spirit-Centered Education**

### **1) Spiritual awakening and Chinese Christian education**

Why is it so significant to integrate spiritual awakening into the process of shaping Chinese Christian religious education? I will argue that awakening to the Holy Spirit is at the heart of Chinese Christian experience and Eastern spirituality. Maria Harris explains that

Eastern Spirituality is based on contemplation -- on waking up to the world around us, to our own spirituality and to silences in order to discover God, ourselves and others, and to discern how we are all interrelated (Harris, 1989, *Dance of the Spirit*, 6-7). Eastern spirituality grounds spiritual awakening in contemplation. Within this Eastern heritage, Sung emphasized more fully than did Wesley the dynamic of prayer. Though both Wesley and Sung focused on the significance of prayer, it was Sung who, with his Chinese experience of spirituality, placed greater emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit through visions, dreams and a healing ministry.

In relating spiritual awakening to Chinese experience, Kwok Pui-Lan is also helpful for she makes connections with women studying the Bible. She says, “When women study the Bible, we do not read from a written text. Instead, we share our stories, songs, and dreams. We sing, we dramatize, and we wait for the presence of the Holy Spirit” (Kwok, 1995, ix). Kwok observes those stories, songs, dreams, and the expectation of the visit from the Holy Spirit serve as means to spark spiritual awakenings for Chinese Christian women.

C. S. Song, another Taiwanese Presbyterian theologian, affirms the Spirit-movement in Asia. He indicates that identifying the movement of the Spirit in the lives of people is the main task of Christian theology in Asia. It is not only a Chinese interest, but also an Asian interest to identify the spiritual movement in our stories. He says,

We do not live in Asia as a world ‘free from the Spirit.’ As far as the Spirit is concerned, Asia has never been a vacuum – a space without the air (the Spirit) and a reality without the wind (the Spirit).---Doing theology must, then, begin with the invoking the Spirit who is already in us and around us—There is no “Spirit-proof” space in Asia. Nor is there a “Spirit-tight” place in our community not related to Christianity. Christian theology in Asia is, then, not only possible; it is necessary. To identify the movement of the Spirit of God in our work through stories of men, women and children, is the main task of Christian theology (Song, 1991,11-12).

In the above statement, Song proves Kwok’s claim that stories will spark spiritual awakening; and that Asian theology begins with invoking the Holy Spirit. The reason we need to aim at spiritual awakening as the purpose of Christian religious education is because “the Spirit is already in us and around us” in every moment of human living.

## 2. Story-Telling and Story-Listening as Spiritual Paths

Drawing from the inspiration of John Wesley and John Sung, the basic method for fostering spiritual awakening is the story-telling and story-listening method. Other methods of nurture will be discussed in the next section. In order for religious educators to determine what seeds God has planted in individuals and in the church through time, I believe that the story-telling and story-listening method should be employed.

From listening to stories of John Wesley and John Sung, I discover four types of stories to which religious educators need to pay attention.

- First are the everyday life stories, both positive and problematic, as in the wilderness stories of Wesley and Sung.
- Second are the stories of the Good News of Jesus Christ in Scripture, especially as told by people who have experienced this Good News and the works of the Holy Spirit.
- Third are the cultural stories of contemporary experiences, struggles, and witness (Wimberly, 1994, 20-21).
- Fourth are hidden stories that come to consciousness or ring in the hearts of people in the church.

This fourth type, the hidden stories, constitutes a secret pathway to connect one with God. When neglected, one loses these opportunities to be guided and blessed by the Holy Spirit. Individuals and churches lose their sense of passion for holistic living and mission. When one listens carefully, the story will direct one to spiritual awakenings. John Wesley was fascinated by accounts of supernatural experiences and personal experiences of the Holy Spirit. Sung was grasped by what God said to him in visions, which he shared in vivid illustrations.

Just as Ann Wimberly's story-linking method has four steps, this story-telling and story-listening also has steps. First, listening is the main approach for uncovering the voices coming of God, self and world. The sources, as suggested above, are Biblical stories, personal stories, cultural stories (including folk stories as advocated by C.S. Song), and hidden stories that may not be fully conscious (Song, 1999, 1984, 1986, 1981). For C. S. Song, cultural stories include folk tales, fairy stories, parables, and stories from unlimited Asian sources. C.S. Song includes a broader perspective of cultural stories than Sung.

The second step is to identify what those stories are telling us. This is a process whereby C.S. Song calls us to let the storytellers tell their own names from Asian perspectives (Song, 1984). In Pui-Lan Kwok's method of suspicion, this involves listening to the stories with important questions in mind: who owns the truth? who interprets the truth? and who constitutes the truth? (Kwok, 1995, 9-12). This step invites the listeners to hear the heritage, to interpret, and to seek hope for liberation and healing. The third step is to link the stories with personal stories, Biblical stories, and a larger story, as suggested by Anne Wimberly (Wimberly, 38-39). This process helps people to affirm and reform their faith as they make connection between biblical and other stories. The fourth step is engagement. This involves inviting the Holy Spirit to engage us in ethical decisions, further reflection, and the transformation of hearts and actions. This is a process that invites the Holy Spirit to be our teacher, our guide, and to empower us for transformation, spiritual and physical healing.

### *Examples*

To illustrate this method, I give two examples of how I help people to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and lead them toward greater sensitivity to living in the Spirit or for conversion. One example was a simple fellowship meeting in which we studied the gospel of Mark. I was not leading the group but just happened to be there. One newcomer, also a non-Christian, raised several questions of the gospel and marveled at the love of Christ. The group leader could not answer all his questions. She suggested having dialogue with him after the meeting. I asked a few questions to discern his interest and later invited him to accept Christ as his savior. The group was amazed how easy it was to lead one to Christ. I explained to them later that the method was basically listening, identifying his interest in asking God to help him, connecting with his desire to ask God to save him from his troubles, and inviting God to come to his heart. All the stories he told me were signs that God was already working in him. All I needed to do was to encourage him to welcome Christ and the Holy Spirit, who were already working in his life. This story-telling and story-listening method brought him to a spiritual awakening, awakening to God's presence, his desires, his troubles, and God's salvation.

Another example is from a woman who shared with me her extraordinary experience. She was a woman who struggled with her marriage, often involved in quarrels and blows with her husband. I had given her pastoral care and recommended her for professional counseling. One day, when I visited her husband who was just discharged from hospital, she told me that instead of praying for her husband, she kept hearing praise choruses in her mind. I asked her to describe the feeling of that experience and whether she could tell me what it

was about. She told me that she felt great and restored passions for her husband; and she felt it was the work of the Holy Spirit. I listened, helped her to identify the feelings, and prayed with her and her husband for healing. Their problems may still exist, but the listening helped her to affirm God's working in her; it also invited her for more sensitivity to the Spirit's guidance.

These two examples briefly illustrate the importance of story telling and story-listening. This method assumes that each story speaks the hearts and struggles of people and also the heart of God for people. With conscious listening to God's working in each story, we will uncover the seeds of spiritual awakening and important spiritual disciplines. Christian religious education needs to take people into this journey of being guided by the Holy Spirit. Only then can it revitalize the lives of individuals and churches; only then will it evoke genuine passions for holistic living and for mission.

### 3. Suggestions of Strategies:

The basic convictions of spiritual awakening affirm that God's Spirit invites people to renewal and transformation. Drawing from the inspiration of Wesley and Sung, the church needs to focus its educational ministry on awakening and nurturing people to live in the Spirit. The general elements in this process include the following:

1. **PRAYER:** Invite churches and mission boards to move prayerfully in nurturing spiritual awakenings and service to others. It subverts what modern culture teaches, to be "quick, ambitious, compulsive, productive, and protecting outward image" (Zweig & Wolf, 1997). Nurture for spiritual awakening is very similar to their shadow work. Their works inspires this list of directions. It employs all possible spiritual practices in committees or board meetings to nurture sensitivity to God's blessings and guidance. It aims at listening for and discerning God's call and mission, as well as the community's inner struggles, before planning programs.

2. **STORY:** Employ a story method to listen, to connect, to share witness stories, and to expand love for humanity in order to enhance visions of holistic living and missions.

3. **CONFESSION:** Invite the church to face sins and responsibilities. It takes several forms. First is daily confession. Second is to involve people in covenant groups for mutual confession and caring of souls. Third is to encourage openness to partnering with people of different races, cultures, genders, and traditions, and to share the gifts of the Holy Spirit together. Finally, the church needs to nurture mature Christians to be spiritual guides and mentors for the church and community.

4. **HOLISTIC EQUIPMENT:** Invite churches to be equipped for evangelism as well as spiritual nurture that awakens people to God's mission and holistic living.

5. **COURAGE:** Invite the people of God to be willing to be fools for Christ, and to let God's Spirit guide them so that they are open to take risks for mission and caring.

6. **MISSIONS:** Invite all Christians and pastors to be involved in missionary works at some time in their lives, like Wesley's involvement in the Georgia Mission and Sung's involvement in village evangelism and the itinerant seminary. Missionary service will sharpen their awareness to God's guidance and the love for God that leads to continuous spiritual awakening and living.

7. **SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:** The process assumes the nurture of spiritual directors, mentors for spirituality, and the process of spiritual direction within all aspects of ministry. It invites the people of God and the church to live in response to the Holy Spirit – to be consistent to invite the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, to trust God's Spirit for transformation, healing, guidance, and blessings. In short, it invites the church and mission boards to be intentional in nurturing spiritual awakening and sharing the

experience of God with others.

#### **IV. Proposals for Curriculum and pedagogy**

In our discussion above, the principal aim of Christian religious education is to prepare people for a continuing life of holiness, evoking passion for mission and holistic living. The next step is to design an educational plan to achieve that goal. The primary goal of this study is not to explore particular techniques, but to propose directions for curriculum and pedagogy.

##### 1) Expanding the definition of Curriculum

The content of curriculum has gone through major adaptations by contemporary theorists, in order to extend its meaning. From the original Latin verb *currere*, which means to run, curriculum means literally a course to run. Throughout the history of educational institutions, this notion has been specified by such phrases as a course of study, or the content or subject matter to be taught. Maria Harris extends the meaning of curriculum further by thinking of it as an “entire course and life of the Church”(Harris, 1989, Fashion Me a People, 55). Iris Cully sees curriculum as “all learning experiences” (Cully, 1984, 220). John Westerhoff identifies the power of socialization and enculturation as the “hidden curriculum”; and he claims that “the schooling-instructional paradigm no longer addresses the educational needs of both the small and large church”(Westerhoff, 1976, 16-19). Elliot W. Eisner, classifies curriculum into three forms: null, explicit and implicit curriculum; these basically cover all life experiences and a consideration of what is left out (Eisner, 1985, 87-107). Eisner spells out null curriculum as the content and methods that we do not teach; while implicit curriculum is the life experience that is not explicitly designed into the curriculum, like attitudes, energy or time spent on the educational design. Together, these are similar to Westerhoff’s hidden curriculum. All of these definitions seek to consider the totality of church life, learning experiences, and cultures as part of a holistic curriculum.

##### ***Accumulating Tradition***

In the context of Christian religious education, Mary-Elizabeth Moore develops an inclusive definition, that curriculum must include both present experiences and accumulated tradition in order for us to imagine the future (Moore, 1983, 177). In this definition, a curriculum for spiritual awakening will include the accumulated tradition of apostolic faith and the present experience of the witness of the Spirit; it is thus described as the “accumulating tradition; In this definition it invites the ongoing experience of the community to contribute to the tradition.”

Both Sung and Wesley witnessed to the power of accumulated tradition, particularly Biblical faith that germinated in their lives through their parents, their churches and their own experiences of God. The memorization of biblical texts, stories, prayers, and the experience of church life and spiritual disciplines all contributed to spiritual awakenings. Their lives witnessed to the fact that even spiritual awakenings were not birthed out of blue, but out of a love planted in their souls.

What kind of curriculum will be inspired by John Wesley and John Sung? As we discussed earlier, the purpose of Christian religious education is to nurture people for growth in Christlike holiness and to evoke their passions for mission. The context of the curriculum will be the church.

Wesley would perhaps utilize a more structured educational system for children, integrating the hard work and discipline of spiritual exercises and an intentional plan to teach

logic, reason, tradition and experience of the Holy Spirit. From his own example, he would perhaps require the teachers to write a spiritual journal, and plan for children to learn from nature through work in the garden as he prescribed for Kingswood school (Wesley, Works, 13: 283-02). His education would be very systematic and comprehensive, including a wide range of academic disciplines, but the ultimate goal of learning would be spiritual edification. Learning original languages, for example, would be to better understand the Bible. He would encourage children to be open to their own religious experiences and struggles, and he would arrange for spiritual guides.

Sung's educational system was actually practiced in his itinerant seminary, aimed at bringing the church to the field. He would have teachers with children and adults in the daytime; in the evenings, he would tell lots of stories of the Bible and hold revival meetings. This was very much his style of early ministry, which did involve more children. Later, he would take youth with him to imitate his witnessing in market places and homes. Sung would serve as a spiritual mentor. This concept of the itinerant seminary is an ideal for churches and seminaries to consider as part of their pastoral and religious educator training.

Both Sung and Wesley, in their educational systems, advocated a strong sense of mentorship. Children and youth were taught about God by having adults mentor them in care and love. Wesley's mentoring of class leaders and traveling preachers is an example. Sung's itinerant seminary is an example of mentoring about five people at a time. Wesley implemented this concept broadly within bands and classes meetings, and Sung mentored youth and children in his early ministry of home worship. The above illustrations of their approaches on accumulated tradition integrate the best of biblical traditions and the need for contemporary witness of the Holy Spirit in nurturing spiritual awakening.

***Lament: Teachers not living by the Spirit***

Both Sung and Wesley would lament, if they were alive, to see teachers and leaders who themselves have not had a spiritual awakening and are not living in the Spirit. With such teachers who are not sensitive to the continuous witness of the Holy Spirit, the curriculum would mean nothing and no lives would be changed. Sung and Wesley would work to inspire teachers and professors to learn from the Master, the Holy Spirit. They would urge teachers to take students to mission fields, engaging in life situations that could awaken them to the inner voice of God's calling for mission.

In conclusion, both Sung and Wesley tried to include the dialectical, dialogical and transformative dimensions of curriculum, combining the accumulated tradition of past wisdom and the present experience of the Holy Spirit. Wesley had a better organizational structure for the comprehensive curriculum. Sung integrated more cultural as well as personal stories in the curriculum, providing a wide spectrum of experiences for retelling the Bible stories in relation to Chinese experience. I suspect that, if they had been seminary teachers or deans, they would have sent their teachers and students out in the practical mission fields for a continual experience of holiness of heart and love. Some of the church's power struggles might be eliminated if, instead of trying to maintain their control, leaders would focus on God's mission and nurture a passion for spiritual awakenings and holy living.

In short, the expanded curriculum is not just the classroom teaching on the Bible, doctrines and religious instructions of Church life, but it has the following four features. First, the total congregational life constitutes the church's curriculum that teaches through fellowship, worship, formal teaching, preaching, service and mission (also Foster, 1994). Second, it includes the accumulated tradition of apostolic faith and the present experience of the witness of the Spirit as described above. Third, the church or ethnic culture is also the curriculum. The church culture that is hospitable to multiple cultures will teach multi-culturalism; the church culture that is mission orientated teaches

mission passion implicitly; and same with others. Fourth, curriculum has no limits but goes beyond church buildings. Christian religious education curriculum should be taught and implemented in homes, community, and mission fields.

## 2) Building up a Holistic Pedagogy

Pedagogy, as the definition of curriculum, also has many meanings. As Mary Elizabeth Moore points out, the simple combination of *pedin* and *agein* suggests that curriculum is the act of “leading people on a journey” or “leading across the earth”(Moore, 1994). In the light of Paulo Freire’s, “pedagogy of the oppressed,” pedagogy is a critical process for conscientization, practicing freedom and humanization (Freire, 1970). Given these diverse associations and the broad definitions of curriculum discussed earlier, we need a broad understanding of pedagogy as well. Moore indicates that pedagogy is “an act of walking with, sharing with, acting with, remembering with, and constructing meaning with people in a learning community” (Moore, 1994,3). This definition of pedagogy suggests that teaching is the art of meeting people in the intersections of their lives and exploring stories and wisdom together in the journey.

### ***Teaching as Meeting***

In Mary Elizabeth Moore’s definition of pedagogy, teaching as meeting has several comprehensive goals. These goals are:

First, teaching is meeting the Spirit of life, the transcendent. Second, teaching is providing opportunities to meet other persons, other cultures, and other parts of the environment. Third, teaching is the meeting of texts-texts of the biblical and historical traditions, texts of living communities, texts of artistic and cultural expression. Fourth, teaching is meeting oneself, the inner life. Fifth, teaching is meeting pain and conflict (Moore, 1994, 1-23).

I find these goals to be very compatible with Sung’s and Wesley’s pedagogies, which focused on meeting with the Holy Spirit, although Moore’s is more inclusive and holistic in relation to stories of other cultures, stories of women, and stories of pain.

In this kind of educational process, both Sung and Wesley affirmed the capacity of humans, initiated and led by the divine grace, especially after their repentance. What they would stress, however, is that, through repentance and a life of Holiness, one continues to interact with the Spirit, other persons, the biblical texts, inner voices, and the world of pain and struggle. Mutual interaction takes place between teachers and the learners. Both men believed that each learner could receive the full grace of the Spirit, as well as power to share grace with others; however, neither man developed a full pedagogy. Moore’s metaphor of teaching as “meeting” connects John Sung’s and John Wesley’s inspiration for Spirit-centered pedagogy; it also presents a more holistic pedagogy. Building on this idea, I can identify five meeting contexts in the models of Sung and Wesley as spiritual practices.

## 3) Contexts for curriculum and pedagogy

### **Meeting through Prayer**

Sung and Wesley showed that one of the main practices and activities each Christian has to encounter is to meet the Spirit through prayer practices. Prayer is the seed for spiritual awakening; in prayer we meet God as well as recognize our sins and struggles. For Wesley, prayer practice contributed to sanctification, as did actions to care for the world. Christians learn to be church through prayer when we intercede for each other. Wesley modeled prayer in his private life, and he wrote prayers and encouraged Christians to pray unceasingly for the church. One of the ways Wesley met other people’s struggles was through prayers for

deliverance during his visitations (Wesley, Works, 19:53-5). Wesley modeled “the stationary fasts” every Wednesday and Friday. He prayed and abstained from food before breaking the fast at 3.00 p.m. on those days, and he required his preachers to do the same (Heitzenrater, 44). For Wesley, prayer takes us to the will and heart of God.

Both Sung and Wesley emphasized prayers of confession, which were at the heart of their class and revival meetings. For Wesley, the content of the band meetings was confession. For Sung, every revival meeting began and ended with confession; and the witness that new converts shared was their confession. When this practice of confession was lost, the dynamics of the gatherings lost the transformative power whereby the grace of God took charge of their lives.

Sung went three steps further than Wesley. First, prayer provided “wings along with the Scripture” whereby it took individuals and the church to a meeting with God; it was the heartbeat of revivals (Sung, Hidden Manna, 1:15). Through prayer, the church becomes more united, more loving, more aware of the will of God, more humble, and the church will have power to witness and experience revivals (Sung, Diary, 314). Second, Sung taught Christians to pray the Bible in order to be more aware of the will of God and to live toward holiness (Sung, Hidden Manna, 1:1). Third, Sung encouraged people to pray from the Spirit, following a free style instead of the written prayers. Sung never wrote any prayers for people to recite. In a way, he encouraged the freedom and creativity of the Spirit to take the lead. In this free style of praying, prayer is a vision, and directions come from the Spirit. This divergence from Wesley speaks to the heart of most Chinese spirituality. The prayer movement is leading Chinese churches, especially in Mainland China and Southeast Asia, to believe that through prayer people experience God’s wonders in their lives.

### **Meeting through Scriptures**

Both Sung and Wesley saw themselves as one-book men. Sung took this more literally than did Wesley. In Sung’s later revivals he preached only the Bible, and he preached personal and new convert stories with lots of illustrations. Sung brought the Bible alive through stories, using it to bring people face to face with God. Wesley augmented his preaching with other readings to illuminate the inspiration of the Bible. Both made important connections between biblical witness and contemporary experience of the witness of the Spirit.

Both Sung and Wesley faced a literacy issue with their audiences. Few people read; fewer read the Bible. Wesley wanted the Methodists to be “Bible Christians” (Wesley, Letters, 4:299). He compensated for this discrepancy by compiling explanatory notes for both Old and New Testaments and made them available at a reasonable price. For Wesley the Bible helps us to be restored in the image of God; it confirms our faith and increases true wisdom. Sung compensated for the literacy problem by teaching leaders through a Bible institute and he told stories with lots of illustrations to help the audience remember major themes. Both worked on making the Bible accessible and connecting the Bible to Christian experiences.

Both Sung and Wesley applied simple methods for studying the Bible, using the Bible as a whole to witness and to explain related meanings within the Bible. They invited one part of the Bible to draw out the meaning of another part. They basically required Christians to be familiar with the texts in order to draw out deeper understandings. This method can be enriched further with other tools. However, this method encourages each Christian to build up their familiarity with the Scripture so they can relate other contexts and meanings. This method has its limitations when Christians only select certain texts and themes in the Bible to study. Unfortunately, Chinese churches tend to focus on a few themes of the Bible and dwell

on spiritualized meanings. This tendency of not engaging in in-depth hermeneutics limits Chinese spirituality in its ability to transcend its horizons or to view the Bible from a wider perspective that would include more cultural resources. This tendency will also limit individuals' and churches' imaginations to connect their cultural story to larger stories including the Biblical stories. Consequently, it will hinder their spiritual awakenings.

### **Meeting through Witness**

Both Sung and Wesley contributed greatly to the revivals through their practice of witnessing, especially in Bands, class-meetings and Sung's revival meetings. Through sharing witness stories, people met each other and they experienced one another's pain and sinfulness. Wesley provided a much better structure than Sung, with different kinds of bands, classes, societies, and lay speakers to practice sharing their faith. These groups also provided support groups for an accountable caring of souls. However, since this structure was based on confession and holiness of life, when confession is missing and leadership stops growing in faith, this structure also breaks down and the meeting turns into a social gathering. Both had created meeting places to nurture spiritual awakenings and lay leadership development through their witness. This provided great learning environments, especially for women.

Sung developed beyond Wesley by taking witness practices a few steps further. He required the new converts to witness before the congregation, which allowed the congregation to meet them. This action is provocative, since Chinese are very conscious of 'face' and pride. It would take a lot of courage to confess sins before the congregation, especially if a person's social status and education are higher than others in the congregation. Such witnessing reveals signs of the Spirit's work to empower one to transcend cultural pride. Sung published these witnesses to further encourage a passion to witness for Christ and to affirm new commitments and grow in holiness. He challenged the new converts to form evangelistic bands of three to five people to go into the community to witness. The change brought about was drastic in some cases where the whole village was converted, as in the Nanchang revival. This boldness spoke loudly for Chinese community, saying that Christ is for the Chinese.

Wesley's witness groups were largely limited to people witnessing privately within the bands and class meetings, which perhaps reflected the cultural privatization of religion. Moreover, due to the requirement of the formal teaching of lay preachers, only chosen lay preachers did traveling and preaching, whereas, for the Chinese, religion is never private but made up of public affairs, of community celebrations and participation. Sung demonstrated to the Chinese through this witness practice that, when you become a Christian and experience the working of the Holy Spirit, you stand before the church asking them to rejoice with you, and you tell the village of God's grace; and let God continue the rest of the mission work. When missionaries miss this dynamic of the Chinese experience, Christianity can not be planted in Chinese soil.

Sung credits the power of witness to the work of the Holy Spirit and to the community living a life of repentance and prayer. This practice is yet to be restored and nurture in Chinese churches. When this occurs, however, Chinese churches will grow and be revitalized.

### **Meeting through Singing**

In both Sung's and Wesley's revivals, music was an important medium for lifting hearts to listen to God, to their inner lives, and to the world. John Wesley had Charles Wesley write lively lyrics for Methodists to sing as new songs of salvation. Sung re-wrote lyrics to reflect the Chinese experience, and he used the choral works of many Chinese

musicians.

Wesley was restricted by his ties with the Church of England in terms of music styles. Wesley's hymns had evangelical tunes; but they were more wordy. On the contrary, since Sung's revivals used very simple choruses, many Chinese souls remembered the songs fifty years later. This heritage has made Chinese churches more open to contemporary praise music, whereas some traditional Methodist Churches are still not open to contemporary music and a free style of worship. Chinese churches that are open to such a practice of praise have experienced tremendous renewal.

### **Meeting through Spiritual Journaling**

Both Sung and Wesley were accustomed to self-examination through journal-writing. Each one kept a spiritual journal throughout their adult lives. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, Sung began writing his spiritual journal when he was 17 and continued it until his death at the age of 42. Wesley began keeping a spiritual journal when he received Holy Orders at the age of 22, and he continued until his death at age 88. Unfortunately, many of Sung's original journals are still hidden or lost in China.

These journals reflected their piety, sincerity, self-nurture and accountability. Their journals also revealed their struggles and spiritual awakenings. This practice can lead souls to discern their inner voices, God's Spirit, and temptations, and to find connections to God. Wesley found this practice to be so crucial, that he encouraged his preachers to keep spiritual journals. He gave them two reasons. One is to hold accountability to God and leaders above them, and also it is a means of spiritual growth (Schmidt, 2: pt. 1, 109-110). This spiritual journaling invites one to a constant quest and dialogue with self and God. This practice is obviously a learning process for consistent awaking and living in the Spirit.

### **Conclusions**

There are many seeds for germinating spiritual awakening and living in the Spirit. Spiritual awakening does not occur out of one heroic call for repentance only, nor is it just for some special chosen ones. Chinese churches can not depend solely on some occasional revival meeting or altar call. Nor can Chinese churches depend on the revival norm as the main teaching of the church. If it does, Chinese spiritual life is in danger of withering. Chinese churches will suffer from spiritual malnutrition, and lay ministry will not be empowered to discern God's vision for holistic living and the continuation of God's mission. Thus revival model of education can not be the only model for Christian Religious education in Chinese Church context.

From this cross-cultural study of John Sung and John Wesley, we see how their spiritual journeys were influenced by God's actions in their lives, and by their family upbringing, inner search, church/mission experience, historical and cultural contexts, and spiritual practices. Their lives prove two things. The first is that spiritual awakening and formation can be nurtured through an expanded curriculum of involvement of the whole life of the church, experiences of service and witness, and culture of perfect love. The second is also of interest for religious education theorists and practitioners. It is to build up a holistic pedagogy of meeting people in the contexts and practices of prayer, Scriptures, witness through story-telling and story-listening method, singing and spiritual journaling. This can help persons awaken to God's mission and call for holistic living. The lives of Wesley and Sung reveal that Christian religious education can awaken people to experience and live in the Spirit.

The purpose of Christian religious education is to prepare people to be awakened by the Holy Spirit for a continuing life of holiness, evoking their religious passions for missions

and holistic living. The implication for Chinese Churches is that there are many ways and sources to foster spiritual awakening. Chinese churches can not wait on revivalists to restore faith, but the churches need to expand their understanding of curriculum and building up pedagogy for spiritual nurture. Christian religious education is neither aimed just at evangelization nor just at evoking passions for Christ. If so, many will graduate after baptism and never begin a life-long process of spiritual formation. From our own rich heritage of John Sung and John Wesley, we can witness the fruit of Christian religious education. But there is a need to expand revival model of education through a Spirit-Centered education. They have modeled for us the possibility of spiritual awakenings for mission and holistic living.

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