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**LAWRENCE THE REH**

**BUDDHISM AND CATHOLICISM ON SOCIAL JUSTICE:  
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

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Professor Fr. Franz Gassner**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABFSU	All Burma Federation of Student Unions
B.C.E.	Before Common Era
Bsm.	Buddhism
BYLF	Burma's Youth Liberation Front
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CBCM	Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar
Cf.	<i>Confer</i> , compare
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
Dhp.	Dhammapada
DPPS	Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the <i>Sāsanā</i>
D.	Digha Nikaya (Th.); (tr. T.W. and C.A. F. Rhys Davids), <i>Dialogues of the Buddha</i> , 3 vols., London: PTS, 1899-1921. Also translated by M. Walshe, <i>Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> , London: Wisdom Publication, 1987, in one volume.
DOs	Diocesan Offices
Ed.	Edition, edited by; editor (pl. eds)
e.g.	<i>Exempli gratia</i> , for example
ets.	<i>Et cetera</i> , and other things
FFSS	Free Funeral Service Society
KMSS	Karuna Myanmar Social Services
NLD	National League for Democracy
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
q.v.	<i>(Quod vide)</i> which see.
Sk.	Sanskrit.
SNLD	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy

Trans.	Translator; translated by
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
USCB	U.S. Campaign for Burma
Vs.	Versus, against
YHWH	Yahweh

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## INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to know more about justice and social justice in both Buddhism and Catholicism. Undoubtedly the two religions have inspired millions of people in the long history of humanity. Until now there are many followers of both religions worldwide. “Over the past century, the number of Catholics around the globe has more than tripled, from an estimated 291 million in 1910 to nearly 1.1 billion as of 2010, according to a comprehensive demographic study by the Pew Research Center.”<sup>1</sup> Today Buddhism is found in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Tibet, China, Japan, Mongolia, Korea, Taiwan, in some parts of India, Pakistan and Nepal, and also in the Soviet Union. The global Buddhist population of today is over 500 million.<sup>2</sup> Though the world has been positively influenced by these two great world religions, it is appropriate to ask: why is there still so much injustice in our world? How does Catholicism and Buddhism understand individual and social justice and what do they teach their adherents about social justice? What do they do to help to implement social justice in practice? What could these two world religions do to better promote social justice in our world today?, especially in a country like Myanmar, where many are suffering from poverty, economic injustice, lack of recognition of human rights, for instance the basic right of citizenship.

Why did the researcher select these two religions for his investigation? Because he is a Burmese Catholic and the majority of the people in Myanmar are Buddhists. Buddhism in Myanmar follows the Theravada tradition and Buddhists make about 89

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<sup>1</sup> "Catholic World Population Center Shifts to South," *America* 208, no. 8 (2013): 6-7. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 4, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Demieville, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1972), XVI.

percent of the country's population, while Christians makes only 4 percent; about one percent of its 51 million people are Catholics.<sup>3</sup> The researcher intends to question these two religions on their respective understanding and teaching on justice and social justice because he is familiar with these two religions. Many times he asked himself the question although both religions are teaching ethics and good morals to the people in Myanmar, why is there still so much injustice within the society of Myanmar. The objective therefore of this investigation is to study these two religions and their respective understanding and concern for social justice. Convergences and divergences between the two religions regarding their understanding and teaching on social justice are clarified.

Regarding Buddhism, the study will center on Buddhist scriptures and what Buddhist scholars say on social justice. As sources from Buddhist scriptures the study will mainly rely on the teaching of Buddha from the *Dhamma*. The historical Buddha called the religion he founded *Dhamma-vinaya* (the doctrine and discipline). For providing a social structure supportive of the practice of the *Dhamma-vinaya*, he established the order of *Bhikkhus* (monks) and *Bhikkhunis* (nuns), or the *Sangha*, which continues until this day to pass on the teaching to the next generations.<sup>4</sup>

Today there is Buddhism all over the world, and there are different types of Buddhism with different traditions, but Buddha is their only teacher. There are two main branches of Buddhism, *Theravada* (The School of the Elders) and *Mahayana* (The Great Vehicle) Buddhism. Historically Theravada Buddhism dominated southern Asia,

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<sup>3</sup> "Burma—International Religious Freedom Report 2009", *U.S. Department of State*, (October 26<sup>th</sup> 2009) 10-26.

<sup>4</sup> "What is Theravada Buddhism?" (*Legacy Edition*), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/theravada.html> (accessed on 4/1/2015).

that is why this form is sometimes called *Southern Buddhism*, while Mahayana Buddhism migrated from India towards the northeast to China, Tibet, Japan, and Korea, and is therefore also known as *Northern Buddhism*.<sup>5</sup> Mahayana Buddhism includes the traditions of *Pure Land*, *Zen*, *Nichiren Buddhism*, *Tibetan Buddhism*, *Shingon*, and *Tiantai (Tendai)*. *Vajrayana* Buddhism is practiced mainly in Tibet, in Mongolia, and in adjacent parts of China and Russia. Some studies recognize Vajrayana as a third branch of Buddhism, with a body of teachings attributed to the Indian *Siddhas*<sup>6</sup>, while others classify it as being part of Mahayana.<sup>7</sup>

The present paper will focus on Theravada Buddhism, which is practiced primarily in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma (also known as Myanmar). Theravada Buddhists traditionally place the greatest importance on the historical Buddha himself and on his teachings, written down in the ancient scriptures of Pali.<sup>8</sup> Theravada, also known as the Doctrine of the Elders, is the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Tipitaka or Pali Canon of which scholars generally agree to contain the earliest surviving records of the teaching of the historical Buddha. Today Theravada Buddhists number well over 100 million worldwide and in recent decades Theravada has begun to take root also in the West.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Christmas Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (New York: The Citade Press, 1963), 181. Siddhas (Sk.), a list of eight-four Perfected Ones (*siddha*) common to the Buddhist and Shaivite tradition found in the Buddhism of Tibet. Their biographies are told in the Tibetan Canon, covering the seventh to the eleventh century. They have in common a dedication to the life of helping others, as taught by their various masters.

<sup>7</sup> Buddhism, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism> (accessed on 21/3/2015).

<sup>8</sup> Phili Wilkinson and Douglas Charing, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (London: Hardback, 2004), 68.

<sup>9</sup> “What is Theravada Buddhism?” (*Legacy Edition*), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/theravada.html> (accessed on 4/1/2015).

There was a conference on Buddhism and Social Justice on 23-25 April 2014, stating the following: “We define ‘justice’ as the provision of equal treatment, not equal outcomes, and therefore ‘social justice’ as equal treatment in the social sphere (in this world, in contrast to how equalities promised for an after-life are to be considered). We therefore investigate Buddhist attitudes towards, and practices concerning, fairness of treatment, equality and inequality.”<sup>10</sup> The conference highlights the tension between historical reality and scripturally expressed ideas in Buddhism. The main message draws a picture of a Buddhism today simultaneously part of and structured and challenged by its modern social environments.<sup>11</sup> Generally, justice is seen in Buddhism more situated at the individual (micro meso) and community (meso) level and not so much reflected on the structural or social and political level of societies (macro level).

With regards to Catholicism, the study will mainly examine the teachings on justice in the Bible and on social justice in some Church Documents, especially of Vatican II, of John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and lastly Pope Francis. The focus will be mainly on the meaning of justice and its implications for social justice. As expressed by Fausto Gomez, “Justice means to give to each person his due, that is his rights - his right to sufficient life-good (economic rights), to absolute dignity (cultural rights), to socio-political participation (political rights).”<sup>12</sup> Fausto Gomez continues to elaborate, “Justice is truly social justice, that is, a social virtue.”<sup>13</sup> “For

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<sup>10</sup> *Buddhism and Social Justice a Conference: 23-25 April 2014*, <http://www.buddhismandsocialjustice.com/VICI%20project%20Description.pdf> (accessed on 30/9/2014).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Fausto Gomez, *Peace and Peacemaking* (Manila, Philippines: UST Press, 1990), 23.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

God's people, justice is a right relationship with God and with others."<sup>14</sup> "Thomas Aquinas's defined justice as a habit whereby one renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will (ST 2-2.58.1)."<sup>15</sup> "The Christian tradition calls justice, along with prudence, temperance, and fortitude, one of the four cardinal (Lat. "hinge") virtues, because right human conduct revolves on them."<sup>16</sup>

There are two forms of justice; attributive justice and proportional justice. Justice leaves to every man what is his own by right and attributes to him what really is called attributive justice. It includes one's personal rights, like for property which one has acquired, for one's honour and merited reputation, for one's discoveries, for the impartial acknowledgement of one's qualifications.<sup>17</sup>

Proportional Justice is justice that renders to every man what is his due by right, what he does not yet own but what he is entitled to receive as a remuneration, compensation or benefit, or what he is also obliged to accept as a burden in the service of the community. The proportion of goods or burdens due to a person is usually rendered according to the principles of equality in exchange, distribution and contribution.<sup>18</sup>

Proportional justice is still subdivided into contributive or legal justice, distributive justice, commutative justice, and social justice. Social justice is a rather

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<sup>14</sup> William J. Collinge, *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (London: Plymouth, 2012), 236.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>16</sup> Gerald O, Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philippines: Quezon, 2001), 129.

<sup>17</sup> Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1997), 232.

<sup>18</sup> Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 232.

recent concept and has been accepted in Catholic moral teaching since Pius XI (*Quadragesimo Anno 1931*). The concept of social justice is by some understood to be merely another expression for legal justice and they equate the two. For others the term comprises legal and distributive justice in one. And others consider social justice as a different kind of proportionate justice, distinct from other forms.<sup>19</sup> Social justice in this paper is taken together as these three kinds of justice. Contributive or legal justice, distributive justice and commutative justice.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter *CCC*) teaches that a “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”<sup>20</sup> The pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops, *Economic Justice for all (EJA) 1986* says, “Social justice implies that persons have a duty to be active and productive participate in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way (71).”<sup>21</sup>

This study will center on social justice, which includes contributive or legal justice, distributive justice, and commutative justice. Social justice in the Catholic interpretation refers to the welfare of social groups especially the weak and poor in a society. It demands, for instance, proportionate share for all partners in the fruits of their economic cooperation, for example there should be a reasonable and appropriate share between the part of workers and the part of employers. Social justice demands a

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>20</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1928.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from: Collinge, *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*, 237.

proportionate and equitable distribution of the wealth of a nation among the different groups and regions of its society. Social justice demands a balancing of wealth between stronger and weaker sectors of a society. Social justice also imposes obligations upon nations in their mutual relations. It binds the economically advanced countries to assist nations in poverty and misery, so that they can live in a manner worthy of human beings. Social justice demands from nations to contribute to the global common good according to their share in the economic process.<sup>22</sup>

This paper focuses on the relevance of social justice because today there is corruption in many countries with grave consequences for everyone, so that not everyone receives his or her due share, especially the weak and needy. If there is no social justice in a society, the poor will become poorer and poorer while the rich will become richer and richer. Today there is a severe lack of global social justice in our world and that is the reason why there are people dying of hunger when at the same time so many people have too much and waste even what they have. For instance, Myanmar has enough own natural resources and land, but many citizens have to live along the country borders, or prefer even to migrate to foreign countries, due to their experience of a lack of social justice and peace in their home country. This is also the reason why the ongoing civil war in Myanmar could not be terminated, because every party affirms that they do not get what they deserve, that means social justice is lacking for them. The question is why this is happening to a country like Myanmar, with an 89 percent Buddhist population? The main purpose of this paper is to clarify how Buddhists and Catholics in Myanmar understand justice and social justice and what they do or can contribute to its promotion.

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<sup>22</sup> Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 235.

## CHAPTER ONE: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN BUDDHISM

According to the author Bhikkhu Bodhi<sup>23</sup>, there is somehow an understanding of justice in a general sense in Buddhism, because Buddha himself, after his enlightenment, did not remain silent and did not remain isolated in the forest, but he came back into the world to teach and to explain his insights to them, to show to all people the way of release from their sufferings and to teach all people the way to happiness. He wanted to relate his insights and experience to all people and this can be seen as a form of justice. In the course of his teaching mission, the historical Buddha associated with people from all walks of life. Thus the teachings of the Buddha is not only for monks and nuns but it is for all people in the world, because his teaching can be practiced by all and can benefit all.<sup>24</sup>

The teaching of Buddha leads to three types of benefits; there is the benefit for the present life, the benefit for the future life, and finally this leads to the ultimate benefit of the ultimate good of human existence which is seen in the liberation from all suffering and reaching *Nirvana*.<sup>25</sup> The Buddha also had his views on the role of kingship: the role of a king was to serve his people by ensuring order and prosperity for them.<sup>26</sup> Buddha was also concerned somehow about what we call today as social justice

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<sup>23</sup> In his 1981 Ten-Lecture "The Buddha's Teaching As It Is," which is available at <http://www.bodhimonastery.net/courses/TenLectures/TenLectures.html>, accessed on 7/3/2015. Bodhi recorded these lectures at the prompting of Bhante Gunaratana. Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American Theravada Buddhist monk, ordained in Sri Lanka and currently teaching in the New York/New Jersey area. He was appointed the second president of the Buddhist Publication Society and has edited and authored several publications grounded in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114.

in the society at his time, when he sums up conditions and developments in the following way:

Thus, from the not giving of property to the needy, poverty became rife, from the growth of poverty, the taking of what was not given increased, from the increase of theft, the use of weapons increased, from the increased use of weapons, the taking of life increased and from the taking of life, people's life span decreased, their beauty decreased. (D.III.68)<sup>27</sup>

The Buddha devoted 45 untiring years, day and night, of his life to the teaching of the *Dhamma* to the beings of the Three Worlds the world of *Brahmas*<sup>28</sup>, the world of *Devas*<sup>29</sup> and the world of *Human Beings*, in order to promote their worldly happiness, prosperity and finally their liberation from the rounds of rebirth.<sup>30</sup> The Buddhist people consider the Buddha as the True Light who appeared and taught the *Dhamma*. There are many people gaining all kinds of benefits from the practice of the *Dhamma*. Buddhists in Myanmar say to practice *Dhamma* is a golden opportunity for them.<sup>31</sup> The teaching of Buddhism is related somehow to justice, because the teaching of Buddha is concerned with human beings, especially with their daily life and struggles.

The ultimate and highest aim of the *Dhamma* is the liberation from the rounds of birth and death. According to the teaching of Buddhism, all life in the world is overflowed with some sorrows and is incomplete and unsatisfactory. Everything is entirely

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<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>28</sup> Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism*, 48. See, According to a popular dictionary of Buddhism, *Brahma (Sk)* is "one aspect of the triune God-head of Hinduism, with Vishnu and Shiva. But in the Buddhist Scriptures the word is used as an adjective meaning holy or God-like, as in the Brahma-viharas.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. See, the word *deva (Sk)* means "Shining One. Celestial beings, good, bad or indifferent in nature.

<sup>30</sup> Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sāsana (DPPS), *How to Live as a Good Buddhist*, trans. U Han Htay and U Chit Tin (Yangon: Dept. of the Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, 2002), iii.

<sup>31</sup>DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, iv.

impermanent, and everything involves sufferings.<sup>32</sup> Buddha is the one who shows people how to liberate themselves from sufferings. Buddha's most important teachings is concerned with basic truths and advice about how his followers should live. In Buddhist scriptures, the teaching of Buddha contain a large number of references to the social, political, and religious conditions of life.

#### **A. Buddhist Scriptures on Human Life and Justice**

What do the scriptures of Buddhism say about social justice? There is not only one scripture of Buddhism, "Buddhism has a vast number of scriptures, but no one text is accepted as authentic and authoritative by every school of Buddhism. Instead, each school of Buddhism has its own ideas about which scriptures are important. In Buddhism, however, it is understood that the scriptures are teachings of the historical Buddha -- a human being -- or other enlightened masters."<sup>33</sup> The teachings of Buddhist scriptures contain directions for practice, or how to realize enlightenment for oneself. What is important is to understand and practice what the texts are teaching, not just to believe in them.<sup>34</sup> The teaching contained in the Buddhist scriptures do not only enrich one's Spirituality, but it also demands to put this teaching into practice.

What types of Buddhist scriptures can be distinguished? After Buddha's death his teaching continued to be passed on orally within monastic communities. By 250 BCE the Sangha had systematically been established and compiled Buddha's teachings

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<sup>32</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, "The Buddha's Teaching As It Is The fundamental teachings of Early Buddhism," <http://www.bodhimonastery.net/courses/TenLectures/TenLectures.html> (accessed on 7/3/2015).

<sup>33</sup> Barbara O'Brien, *Buddhist Scriptures: An Overview* *Understanding the Perplexing Variety of Buddhist Scriptures*, in <http://buddhism.about.com/od/sacredbuddhisttexts/a/buddhist-scriptures.htm/> (accessed on 12/10/2014).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

into three divisions: the *Vinaya Pitaka* (the *Basket of Discipline* with the texts concerning the rules and customs of the Sangha), the *Sutta Pitaka* (the *Basket of Discourses* with the sermons and utterances by the Buddha and his close disciples), and the *Bhidhamma Pitaka* (the *Basket of special/higher Doctrines* with a detailed psycho-philosophical analysis of the *Dhamma*). These three divisions of Buddhist Teaching together are called the *Tipitaka*, the “Three Baskets.” They account for the complete body of classical Theravada literature.<sup>35</sup>

The study of this paper will rely only on the teaching of Buddha in the text called the *Abhidharma* (Sanskrit) or *Abhidhamma* (Pali). Rve. Fr. Cherdchai Lertjitlekha, O.S.Cam., Ph.D., published the book *Buddhist Panna: A Study of Theravada Buddhist Ethics in Dialogue with Christian Morality* which was written as his doctoral thesis. Fr. Lertjitlekha considers that the *Dhamma* has several levels of meanings.<sup>36</sup> The Pali word *Dhamma* (Sanskrit *Dharma*) stems from the root *dhr* which

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<sup>35</sup> “What is Theravada Buddhism?” *Access to insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/theravada.html> (accessed on 4/3/2014).

<sup>36</sup> Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism*, 65. *Dhamma* (P.) *Dharma* (Sk.) The Pali form is generally used by the Theravada School, the Sanskrit by the M.School. *Dharma*, in a sense of ‘the course of conduct right for a man at this particular stage of evolution’, is now well known in the West through its use in Theosophical literature. The Sk. Form comes from the Aryan root ‘dhr’, to uphold, sustain, support, and has been rendered in English as system, doctrine, religion, virtue, moral quality, righteousness, duty, law, standard, norm, ideal, truth, form, condition, cause, thing and cosmic order; it may mean any of these according to the context. We may trace its basic meaning in the Eng. Form, that which supports, that which gives state or condition to the orderly arrangement of parts which makes a thing what it is; from which comes Eng. ‘good form’, conduct to any given occasion. Technical definitions come under five headings:

- (a) *Dhamma*—Doctrine. Any teaching set forth as a formulated system; the guiding principles accepted or followed by a man; as applied to Bsm. the Teachings of the Buddha. (See Buddhism.)
- (b) Right, Righteous conduct or righteousness, Law, Justice. (See *Samma*.)
- (c) Condition. Cause or causal antecedent. Cause and effect being practically identical, *Dhamma* is here viewed from its causal side, as in (d) it is viewed from the aspect of effect.
- (d) Phenomenon. *Dhamma* as effect. It is used in this sense in the first verse of Dhp. ‘All *dhammas* (phenomena) are mind created’; and in the famous formula *sabbe dhamma anatta* the whole of the phenomenal world is *anatta*, etc. application of the word *Dhamma* to phenomena indicates orderly nature of existence; the universe is an expression of Law.
- (e) Ultimate Reality. In Mayana *Dharma* is sometimes synonymous with Tathata (q.v.) or Ultimate Reality. (See *Dharma-Kaya*.)

means *to hold, to support*, that which forms a foundation and upholds = constitution. Western scholars usually translate it as *law, truth, and doctrine*, while most Buddhist scholars admit that *Dhamma* is the central religious philosophical concept both in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions.<sup>37</sup> The teaching of Buddha is also called the *Dhamma*. The Buddhists in Myanmar find *Dhamma* to be a good guide in understanding and practicing the teachings of Buddha *Dhamma*, because the *Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sāsana (DPPS)* has published a book entitled *How to live as a Good Buddhist* in the language of Myanmar.<sup>38</sup> The English version of this book has been translated by U Han Htay and U Chit Tin from the Burmese original. The sayings of Buddha in the *Dhamma* will be mainly taken from this book.

## 1. The Daily Life of a Buddhist

Buddha taught and gave directions to his followers how to live their daily lives based on the *Dhamma*. Everyday a Buddhist must rise with:

A thought of Loving-Kindness (*Mettā*) (ကရုဏာ), paying homage to the Triple Gem<sup>39</sup>, Veneration and wish, taking three refuges and five moral precepts, taking eight moral precepts, taking nine moral precepts, *Ajivatthamaka Sila* precepts, offering alms-food, water, flowers and lights, sending thoughts of universal loving kindness.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cherdchai Lertjitlekha, *Buddhist Panna: A Study of Theravada Buddhist Ethics in Dialogue with Christian Morality* (Bangkok: Saengtham College Press, 1998), 66.

<sup>38</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, vi.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9. A Buddhist takes refuge in Three Incomparable Gems to guide his noble conduct. It is known as “Saranagamana” in Pali. It means going to or approaching the three Greatest Gems to have a Right Path and Right Conduct of *Nirvana*. The three Gems are: a) the Gem of the Buddha, b) the Gem of the *Dhamma* and c) the Gem of the Samgha.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

There are basic responsibilities for a Buddhist that he or she has to follow in everyday life. The point here is to live your everyday life with *piety, morality, charity, and loving-kindness*. This is not an easy task and it is not the case that all the Buddhists can or do follow it. When one somehow practices these attitudes every day, he or she is not only contributing towards inner peace but also towards outer peace in the community and home country. Ultimately also the whole world will somehow benefit from such good, righteous persons of living as a true Buddhists.<sup>41</sup>

We can not mention all the daily tasks of a Buddhist, except some, for example, *Rise with a Thought of Loving-kindness (Mettā) (တရုဏ္ဏ)*, *universal love*: a Buddhist devotee then will have ample time to cultivate *Mettā*, Universal Love or Boundless Love, as soon as he or she arises from the bed, saying: “May all living beings be well and happy!” three times, to live in sound morality and nobility.<sup>42</sup> The benefits from this practice are: looking and knowing others in good light, all the world will be suffused and covered with your good, you remember and practice a civilized way of life, behaving as a good person in reality every day, as the Buddha exhorts daily, you now remember wholesome deeds with mindfulness and diligence. So you get many *Mangala (မင်္ဂလာ)* Blessings by acquiring a good mind and living good attitudes.<sup>43</sup> If one really expresses love for all living beings he or she will not commit any form of injustice towards them.

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<sup>41</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 115.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

I mention here the Nine Moral Precepts because the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts and the Ajivatthamaka Sila Precepts are similar and are already included in the Nine Precepts. These Nine Moral Precepts are:

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures);
2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given);
3. *Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual activity);
4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech);
5. *Suramerayamajja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which leads to carelessness.)
6. *Vikalabhajana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at the forbidden time (i.e., after noon));
7. *Nacca-gita-vadita-visukkadassanamala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanathana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics);
8. *Uccasayana-mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place);
9. *Mettasahagatena cetasa sabbapana bhutesu pharitva viharami* (I do establish the practice of cultivating loving-kindness on all living beings);<sup>44</sup>

All these Precepts are taught and practiced to form a good Buddhist. For instance, *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* (I observe the precept of abstaining from taking what is not given by the owner), this Precept teaches that one must receive what belongs to him or her. Buddha also taught to promote the practice of *loving-kindness* in the world.

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<sup>44</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 126.

## 2. Social Duties for All Human Beings

The teaching of Buddha contains social duties for all human beings with directions for all human beings to follow. These social duties for all human beings are portrayed by the Buddha as follows:

*The Four Acts of Defilement:* they means that all human beings have to avoid killing, stealing, telling lies and committing adultery. These acts of human beings are called the four evil acts of defilement. *Four Factors Instigated by Evil Acts:* if one does not led astray by these four factors, namely, partiality, anger, ignorance and fear, then he does not commit evil.<sup>45</sup> *Six Practices Causing Ruin of Wealth:* taking intoxicants, going out late at night, frequenting entertainments, gambling, bad friends and laziness leads one to the loss of wealth. *False Friends:* false friends are persons who only take from one and do not give in return (*annadatthuhara*). Like a person who makes empty promises (*vaciparama*), a person who flatters (*anuppiyabhani*), a person who is an associate in activities that leads to a loss of wealth (*apayasahaya*). A true friend must give generously, being pleasant and courteous in speech, being helpful, treating friends as he treats himself, and have to be faithful to his words and promises.<sup>46</sup> *The Social relation of the Master and the Servant, the Employer and the Employee:* the Master must give servants food and remuneration and assign their work suitably, looking after them in sickness, sharing with them choice food, granting them leave at time. The Buddha also mentions the duties for sons and daughters, duties for parents, duties for husbands and wives, duties for pupils and teachers.<sup>47</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi states that,

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-162.

<sup>46</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 129-162.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

All these practices, explained by the Buddha, presuppose that the society is sustained by a network of interlocking relationships that bring coherence and consistency to the social order when its members fulfill their reciprocal duties and responsibilities in a spirit of kindness, sympathy, and good will.... Thus, for early Buddhism, the social stability and security necessary for human happiness and fulfillment are achieved, not through aggressive and potentially disruptive demands for 'rights' posed by competing groups, but by the renunciation of self-interests and the development of a sincere, large-hearted concern for the welfare of others and the good of the greater whole.<sup>48</sup>

Though it may seem that there is no explicit saying on social justice in the scriptures of Buddhism, the teaching of Buddha is good for human beings, so this goodness must influence the person and the person must contribute to more justice and peace in life. According to Buddha's teachings, one practices right actions because that practice leads to the cessation of suffering. If one has right views, then one knows that there is no independent foundation that supports right actions, including the action of respecting the "rights"—or, rather, the interests—of others.<sup>49</sup> When we attain enlightenment we will have fulfilled our own wishes, and we can fulfill the wishes of all other living beings; we will have liberated ourselves permanently from the sufferings of this life and countless future lives. And we can directly benefit each and every living being every day.<sup>50</sup> To be able to help other people one has to have inner peace in his or her life. All human beings have to have a good spirit in order to create a better society that is why Buddhism has the Buddhist's scriptures. The most important issue for a human being is to have a good spirit, if a person lives a good spiritual life he or she will not commit any injustice against humans or other living beings.

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<sup>48</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Sigalovada Sutta*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigalovada\\_Sutta#cite\\_note-12](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigalovada_Sutta#cite_note-12) (accessed on 12/3/2015).

<sup>49</sup> Damien V. Keown, Charles S. Prebish, Wayne R. Husted, eds. *Buddhism and Human Rights* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), 65.

<sup>50</sup> Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Modern Buddhism: The Path of Compassion and Wisdom* (New York: Tharpa Publication, 2011), 26.

According to Buddha, as long as a human person is affected by the Five Poisons of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance and doubt, he or she will not be able to live in peace and to bring peace to other human beings, to the community and to the wider society. “Each person thinks by himself and whether he puts his thoughts to action or not, he is bound to leave traces in his mind. His speech and action will also leave imprints in other people’s minds depending on how they take to them.”<sup>51</sup> Susan Kong continues to emphasize: “One must realize that the future is in our own hands. If opportunities exist right now, one must make the most use by doing good deeds, to leave impressions on others and to foster a good relationship with others. Then the future will be filled with blessings and happiness.”<sup>52</sup> According to the Conference on Buddhism and Social Justice (23-25 April 2014), “Behind common expectations about Buddhism and social justice we often find an implicit assumption that since Buddhism is ‘good,’ and teaches ways to (spiritual) liberation, the Buddhist ideology must also attack, and Buddhist institutions work to oppose, the evils of (social and economic) bondage.”<sup>53</sup> But how can this be understood and how does this actually work? Does Buddhism have a clear concept of social justice? To get here a clearer understanding we have first to look how man is understood in Buddhism.

## **B. Anthropology and Philosophy of Man in Buddhism**

In Buddhism human life is a precious thing, therefore Buddha’s main teaching was the *Dhamma*. Human life is precious, because rare is the birth of a human being.

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<sup>51</sup> Susan Kong, *Budhidharma’s Teaching* (Hong Kong: Tung Lin Kok Yuen, June 2001), 172.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>53</sup> *Buddhism and Social Justice a Conference: 23-25 April 2014*, <http://www.buddhismandsocialjustice.com/VICI%20project%20Description.pdf/> (accessed on 30/10/2014).

Therefore a thinking person should understand and use his or her life in a way that is worthy.<sup>54</sup>

What is man in Buddhism? In Buddhism, humans can realize suffering and its causes without simultaneously being crushed by suffering, because they themselves can find a way towards liberation or tread a path shown to them. Humans are the living beings most capable of attaining liberation,<sup>55</sup> and the Buddha is the one who showed the way to liberate himself from all sufferings. For Buddhism, the purpose of understanding the preciousness of human life is to encourage to understand the real meaning of human life and not to waste it in meaningless activities. Human life is very precious and meaningful, but only if we use it to attain permanent liberation and to reach the supreme condition or happiness of enlightenment.<sup>56</sup> To reach individual enlightenment is therefore the real meaning and goal of human life in Buddhism. The most important issue for a human being in Buddhism is the attainment of enlightenment. The anthropological meaning of man in Buddhism is that a human being has to live a life which is meaningful. While one is still alive, he or she has to live a life in happiness. When one has peace in his or her inner self, he or she can bring peace to other people as well. This is the meaning of a human being in Buddhism, to be a human is to be good and do good to other people, not only to other human beings but also to do good to other creatures. Buddha told the people that their lives were part of a repeating cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

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<sup>54</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, ix.

<sup>55</sup> Ernst Steinkellner, "Man In Buddhism," *Buddhism Questioning Christianity*, ed. Andreas Bsteh (Moedling: St Gabriel Publications, 2010): 245- 256.

<sup>56</sup> Gyatso, *Modern Buddhism*, 25.

The Buddha summed up the problems that most humans have to endure in the famous Four Noble Truths about suffering.<sup>57</sup> What are these Four Noble Truths? They are:

1. *Dukkha*
2. *Smudaya*, the arising or origin of *Dukkha*,
3. *Nirodha*, the cessation of *Dukkha*,
4. *Magga*, the way leading to the cessation of *Dukkha*.<sup>58</sup>

It seems that, human life in Buddhism is all about suffering and how to end suffering, because the Buddha says: “Life involves suffering.” He continues saying that:

I am the cause of my own suffering. Now ‘it is true that the death of a loved one, poverty, unrequited love, hunger cause pain. Pain is woven into the very fabric of the human condition. Even the Buddha could not escape pain. I dislike this pain, I want it to cease, I feel it is so unfair. I forever dwell one-problem-removed from divine bliss! But still ‘tis I and I alone who causes my suffering for ‘tis I and I alone who reacts to the inevitable pain and malaise and discontent of human life. Pain visits all but suffering comes not to those who welcome its arrival.<sup>59</sup>

Based on the paragraph above, does Buddha deny happiness in this life? The word *Dukkha* is found in the Four Noble Truths. Walpola Rahula writes: “The Pali word *Dukkha* means ‘suffering’, ‘pain’, ‘sorrow’ or ‘misery’, as opposed to the word *Sukha*

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<sup>57</sup> Phili Wilkinson and Douglas Charing, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (London: Hardback, 2004), 64.

<sup>58</sup> Walpola Rahula, *The Four Noble Truths* (Somerville, MA, USA: The Buddhist Merit and Wisdom Service, 2006), 20. Walpola Rahula is a Buddhist monk and writer, who received a traditional monastic training and education in Sri Lanka. He held eminent positions in one of the leading monastics institutes in the United States, the Washington Vihara (*Pirivena*) and served as head of Vidyodaya University. He is author of *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (2003).

<sup>59</sup> Ian McCrorie, *The Moon Appears When the Water Is Still: Reflections of the Dhamma* (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti, 2003), 9.

meaning ‘happiness’, ‘comfort’ or ‘ease’.”<sup>60</sup> Buddha does not deny happiness in life.<sup>61</sup> Because “Buddhism teaches that suffering is one of the truths of human life, and that understanding it is the first step towards a life free from suffering.”<sup>62</sup> This is the same as what Buddha says about himself above, “Suffering comes from the ‘I.’ ‘I’ am the source of desire, ‘I’ am greedy, and ‘I’ am selfish. When we only think about ourselves, there is suffering.”<sup>63</sup> Rahula states that,

Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. If anything at all, it is realistic, for it takes a view of life and of the world. It looks at things objectively (*yathabbutam*). It does not falsely lull you into living in a fool’s paradise, nor does it frighten and agonize you with all kinds of imaginary fears and sins. It tells you exactly and objectively what you are and what the world around you is, and shows you the way to perfect freedom, peace, tranquility and happiness.<sup>64</sup>

Buddhism respects the life of all other creatures. Buddhists are forbidden to kill animals. The death of a human being is not the end of his or her life, it is the transformation towards a new life. What the researcher has experienced and saw, in the country of Myanmar, when a Buddhist dies his or her relatives have to say a prayer for him or her so that he or she may liberate himself or herself freely from this earthly life to enter a better stage of life. When a human being is still alive he or she has to do good in order to merit and gain a better life in the next life.

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<sup>60</sup> Rahula, *The Four Noble Truths*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21. According to Rahula, Dukkha, - is generally as ‘The Noble Truth of Suffering’, and it is interpreted to mean that life according to Buddhism is nothing but suffering and pain. Both translation and interpretation are highly unsatisfactory and misleading according to Rahula. It is because of this limited, free and easy translation, and its superficial interpretation, that many people have been misled into regarding Buddhism as pessimistic.

<sup>62</sup> Master Hsing Yun, *Life: Politics, Human Rights, and What the Buddha Said About Life* (Los Angeles: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2011), 14.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Rahula, *The Four Noble Truths*, 21-22.

There are five Aggregates (*Skandhas* in Sanskrit) used to analyze a person in Buddhism:

1. Form – the body (*Rupa* in Sanskrit).
2. Primary Consciousness or Perception – the five sense consciousness (smell, touch, taste, seeing and hearing) and mental consciousness, in other words, direct perception (*Samyna* in Sanskrit).
3. Feeling – refers only to the mental separation of perceptions into pleasant, unpleasant and neutral (*Vedara* in Sanskrit).
4. Recognition, Consciousness, Discrimination or Distinguishing Awareness – in many ways similar to the discriminating intellect which makes us realize the differences between a chair and a flower (*Virjana* in Sanskrit).
5. Compositional Factors, Volition – these are all other remaining mental processes, in general thoughts (*Samsakara* in Sanskrit).<sup>65</sup>

For Dennis V. Tubo, it “is interesting to see that four out of five aggregates are related to the mind. The reason for this that in Buddhism, the point is how to obtain liberation from human suffering, like old age, death, sickness and other forms of suffering. In order to get away from suffering, it is their idea that man must learn to cut off the radix of suffering which is craving.”<sup>66</sup> In Buddhism when one liberates oneself from human suffering it is exactly the step when one attains the state called *Nirvana*, because the purpose of human life in Buddhism is to attain *Nirvana*. But what is the meaning of *Nirvana*? According to Ven. S. Dhammika,

It is a dimension transcending time and space and thus is difficult to talk about or even think about. Words and thoughts are only suited to describe the time-space dimension. But because *Nirvana* is beyond time, there is no movement and so no aging or dying. Thus *Nirvana* is eternal. Because it is beyond space, there is no causation, no boundary, no concept of self and not-self and thus *Nirvana* is infinite. The Buddha also assures us that *Nirvana* is an experience of great happiness.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Tubo, *Philosophy of Man*, 52.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>67</sup> Ven. S. Dhammika, *Good Question Good Answer* (Singapore: Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society, 1991), 17.

The goal of human life in Buddhism is to reach *Nirvana*. The most important issue for a human being is his or her *karma* which means “action”, because in Buddhism the human beings are living in a circle. They are living within a circle with no beginning and no ending, which is called *Wheel of Life*.<sup>68</sup> If a human being is living a virtuous life, in the next life he or she will gain a better life. “The gentle, loving type of person tends to be reborn in a heaven realm or as a human being who has a predominance of pleasant experiences. The anxious, worried or extremely cruel type of person tends to be reborn in hell realm or as a human being who has a predominance of painful experiences. The person who develops obsessive craving, fierce longings, and burning ambitions that can never be satisfied tends to be reborn as a hungry ghost or as a human being frustrated by longing and wanting.”<sup>69</sup> In this life people can change their negative habits in order to gain a better life in the next. “The whole of the Buddhist life is a training to purify and free the mind. For example, if being patient and kind was a pronounced part of your character in your last life, such tendencies will re-emerge in the present life. If they are strengthened and developed in the present life, they will re-emerge even stronger and more pronounced in the future life.”<sup>70</sup>

### C. Buddhistic Scholars Teaching on Social Justice

What is Buddhism in the modern world today teaching about Social Justice? Buddhism is the practice of Buddha’s teachings, also called *Dhamma*. By practicing Buddha’s teachings, living beings should be permanently protected from suffering.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> Gyatso, *Modern Buddhism*, 4.

As with other major world religions, the history of Buddhism has long been characterized by an ongoing tension between attempts to preserve traditional ideals and modes of practice and the need to adapt to changing social and cultural conditions.<sup>72</sup> Buddhist scholars today are trying to promote Buddhist teaching of social justice in the world. The world is filled with injustices, particularly inflicted on the weak who are suffering. According to modern buddhistic scholars, what is the role of Buddhism in modern societies? In the following the researcher selected four scholars from Theravada Buddhism, who are Ajahn Chah, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, Bhikkhu Bodhi and Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso, to discuss their respective views on social justice. The researcher will study how their sayings reflect social justice and he will also refer to writings of others scholars.

*Chah Subhaddo, Phra Ajaan* (1918-1992), Ajahn Chah was born in 1918 in a village in the northeastern part of Thailand. He was a meditation teacher in his own right, sharing his realization of the *Dhamma* with those who sought it. Ajahn Chah's simple yet profound teaching style had a special appeal to Westerners, and in 1975 he established the Wat Pah Nanachat, a special training monastery for the growing number of Westerners who sought to practice with him. In 1979 the first of several branch monasteries in Europe was established in Sussex, England, by his senior Western disciples, among them Ajahn Sumedho, who is presently senior incumbent at the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, England.<sup>73</sup> Based on his teaching, a Buddhist has to live in the world according to *Dhamma*. He or she has to live in this world according to

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<sup>72</sup> Steven Heine, Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>73</sup> "Thai Forest Traditions: selected teachers," *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/index.html>.

the truth which comes from the teaching of *Dhamma*.<sup>74</sup> Ajahn Chah recommends that a Buddhist is obliged to speak the truth and live the truth that means for example, he or she must not speak in such a way as to exalt himself and herself improperly. The true Buddhist does not speak like that, he always tells the truth, according to the way things are. Every Buddhist should live according to the *Dhamma* and practice it in daily life. It is not necessary to become a monk in order to practice the *Dhamma*. Ajahn Chah mentions, if you really understand the practice of *Dhamma*, then no matter what position or profession you hold in life, be it a teacher, a doctor, a civil servant or whatever, you can practice the *Dhamma* every minute of the day.<sup>75</sup> If one is really practicing the *Dhamma*, he or she will be a person that promotes peace in this world. Ajahn Chah also expresses that people do not search for truth, they study simply to find the necessary knowledge to make a living, to raise families and to look after themselves. They work or study for a livelihood, and only look for the kind of knowledge used to make a living that is why they experience a lot more confusion and suffering. He also says if you try to live simply, practicing the *Dhamma* and living peacefully, people say, you are weird and anti-social. They say you're obstructing progress in the society. They even can intimidate you. This is how the world is today described by Ajahn Chah.<sup>76</sup> Because of this mentality of human beings in the world, there are still millions of starving people; and several millions are dying every day having no access to a decent medical care. Ajahn Chah says:

Though the Buddha discovered the truth, the way things are, and then he set out to declare it. The truth is constantly true, whether a Buddha arises in the world or not. Searching for peace within the world you stretch the cart wheel

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<sup>74</sup> Ajahn Chah, *Living in the World with Dhamma*, in [http://ajahnchah.org/book/Living\\_in\\_World\\_with.php](http://ajahnchah.org/book/Living_in_World_with.php) (accessed on 18/3/2015).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

tracks endlessly behind you. As long as you follow the world there is no stopping, no rest. If you simply stop following it, the cart comes to rest, the wheels no longer turn. Following the world turns the wheels ceaselessly. Creating bad *karma* is like this. As long as you follow the old ways there is no stopping. If you stop there is stopping. This is how we practice the *Dhamma*.<sup>77</sup>

To bring social justice to the world depends on each person, if one has a bad *karma*, he or she has to change it because there is a way how one can change his *karma*. It is possible for a human being to change his or her *karma*.

The *Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw*, U Sobhana Mahathera, was one of the most eminent meditation masters of modern times and a leader in the contemporary resurgence of Vipassana meditation. Born near the town Shwebo in Burma in 1904, he was ordained as a novice monk at the age of twelve and received the full ordination as a *bhikkhu* at the age of twenty. Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw also received Burma's highest scholastic honor, the title of *Agga Maha Pandita*<sup>78</sup>, awarded to him in 1952. He is the author of numerous works on both meditation and Buddhist scriptures in his native Burmese language. His discourses on the Buddhist *suttas* have been translated into English and are published by the Buddha *Sasananuggaha* Association.<sup>79</sup> According to him, all human behavior resulting from the practice, of loving-kindness, in deed, in word, and in thought, shall be rendered memorable throughout one's life. Where love, compassion, and respect pervades human society, there shall one find enduring unity. If there is no love, compassion, and no respect for human beings the world will never be a peaceful society. What the world needs today is loving kindness and respect for

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> "Agga Maha Pandita," in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agga\\_Maha\\_Pandita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agga_Maha_Pandita) (accessed on 31/5/2015). See Agga Maha Pandita (Burmese: အဂ္ဂမဟာပဏ္ဍိတ, pronounced: [ʔɛʔgə məhà pàndīʔə]) is an honorific title used in Theravada Buddhism in reference to Buddhists, usually monks, who are considered to be unusually wise, noble, and enlightened.

<sup>79</sup> "Thoughts on the Dhamma", by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, selected from his discourses. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/wheel298.html>.

all. Acts of charity, inspired by loving-kindness, sustain in the human memory, generating love and respect among mankind, thus laying foundations for the unity of the whole world. Especially for Buddhists, in order to be able to promote a just society, one has to put knowledge into practice.<sup>80</sup>

Here I should mention once again *Bhikkhu Bodhi* (Jeffrey Block), Ph.D., who is an American Buddhist monk and Pali scholar. After completing his university studies in philosophy at the Claremont Graduate School, he traveled to Sri Lanka, where he received the full ordination in 1973 under the late Ven. Ananda Maitreya. He served as editor of the Buddhist Publication Society (Sri Lanka) from 1984-1988 and has been its President since 1988.<sup>81</sup> His seminal translations *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 1995), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000), and *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2012) are highly regarded by Buddhist scholars and practitioners worldwide. He is currently the President of the Sangha Council of the Bodhi Monastery (USA) and the chairman of the Yin Shun Foundation.<sup>82</sup> In 1998, Bhikkhu Bodhi released an essay related to social justice, “Giving Dignity to Life”, which was published by the *Buddhist Publication Society*<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> "Contributing Authors and Translators: Biographical Notes", edited by Access to Insight. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 17 December 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/index.html>.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> “Giving Dignity to Life”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 5 June 2010, [http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay\\_38.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_38.html). Note: The Buddhist Publication Society (BPS) is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for people of all creeds. Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is — a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

In this essay he states that the *Dhamma* can help to recover the lost sense of dignity and thereby give new meaning to human life. There are two ways for this to achieve: first it can help us by justifying our claim to innate dignity, and second, by showing us what we must do to actualize our potential dignity. In the perception of Buddhism the inner freedom allows us to change ourselves and hereby to change the world, this depends on each human being. Buddha's teaching is the *ariyadhamma*, the noble doctrine, and its purpose is to change human beings from *ignorant worldlings* into noble wise sages.<sup>84</sup> This change does not come about through mere faith and devotion but by treading the Buddhist path. In Buddhism to live with dignity means to be one's own master: to conduct one's affairs on the basis of one's own free choices instead of being pushed around by forces beyond one's control. It means the one who is liberated, who has reached the pinnacle of spiritual autonomy, means release from the dictates of greed, hatred, and delusion. When one is released from this greed, hatred, and delusion, he or she will have the right view, right conduct in body, speech, and mind towards others.<sup>85</sup>

The second essay is entitled "The Guardians of the World". In this essay Bhikkhu Bodhi mentions that when one lives in the security of ones own well-being and happiness, the goodness of one affects the lives of others for the better, because all lives of human beings are thoroughly relational and interconnected. In order to heal the world, inner peace in every human being is particularly urgent needed today.<sup>86</sup> When the people in our world do not live moral values, the consequences are exactly the problems we face today: respecting no national boundaries, rising crime rates,

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, "The Guardians of the World," *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 5 June 2010, [http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay\\_23.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_23.html).

spreading of drug addiction, ecological devastation, child labor, prostitution, smuggling, pornography, and the decline of the family as the unit of loving trust and moral education. This is why the teaching of Buddha is important for human beings as tools to cultivate within themselves the moral values. Cultivating within ourselves the qualities of moral shame and fear of wrongdoing, we not only accelerate our own progress along the path to liberation, but we also contribute our share towards improvements of the world.<sup>87</sup>

Bhikkhu Bodhi third essay is entitled “A Buddhist Response to Contemporary Dilemmas of Human Existence”, which was also published by the *Buddhist Publication Society* in 1994. But what does he mean by “Contemporary Dilemmas of Human Existence?”<sup>88</sup> He does not explicitly refer to the momentous social and political problems of our time: global poverty, ethnic hostilities, overpopulation, exploitation the spread of AIDS, the suppression of human rights. He recognizes fully well that these problems are of major concern for contemporary religions, which have the sincere responsibility of serving as the voice of conscience to the world which is only too prone to forsake all sense of conscience in blind pursuit of self-interests and profit.<sup>89</sup> The root problem, according to Bhikkhu Bodhi, lies at the level of consciousness. This means that any viable solution must be framed in terms of a transformation of human consciousness. This requires to acquire a more accurate grasp of the human situation in its full depth and breadth, and a turning of the mind and heart into a new direction, a direction commensurate with the new understanding, one that brings light and peace

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, “A Buddhist Response to Contemporary Dilemmas of Human Existence,” *access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 5, June 2010, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/response.html>.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

rather than strife and distress.<sup>90</sup> This is the reason why he stresses the religious dimension in his reflections. He believes that the religious crisis of modern humanity is intimately connected to these diverse social and political tragedies at many levels. For instance, sickness of the human soul, the sickness and craving as karmic backlashes of the three root defilements pinpointed by Buddhism: greed, hatred and delusion which have become so rampant today. These human problems can be successfully healed only by re-orienting our lives towards the Ultimate Reality and Supreme Good. Therefore, the process of healing necessarily takes on a religious dimension.<sup>91</sup> But what does he understand with the word “religion”, or “Ultimate Reality”, and “Supreme good”. These are important points for further dialogue and clarifications and studies.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, who is a Theravada Buddhist, points out in the following the tasks of contemporary religion today according to his point of view. Regarding a Christian point of view he leaves it to their own perspective of faith.

For him, there are five tasks for religion today to accomplish: 1) To build a Philosophical Bridge, 2) Guidelines for Conduct, 3) Diagnosis of the Human Condition, 4) A Practical Method of Training, and lastly 5) The Preservation of the Human Community.<sup>92</sup>

Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso gave a talk on the topic related to human rights in Buddhism during his trip to Malaysia and Singapore. It is not crucial for him to tell people what they already know but to challenge them to find a deeper, more accurate

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<sup>90</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, “A Buddhist Response to Contemporary Dilemmas of Human Existence,” *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 5, June 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/response.html>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

way of looking at life. To talk about human rights is very important and necessary, but he was amused by the human right stating that ‘everyone is born equal’. That might be so according to Christianity or Judaism, but this view is certainly not correct according to Buddhism. For Buddhism human beings are not born equal, because some people are born tall, some people are born small, some people are born intelligent and some people are born stupid. His point is that all people come into this world with their *karma* from their past lives. Therefore, for a Buddhist the principle of equality at birth does not make sense.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso does also not agree with the western idea of human rights within the whole context and idea of human freedom. The western world celebrates this idea of freedom, and we think we live today in the so-called free world. He criticized that governments and societies are trying to enshrine the idea of freedom into different societies but he believes that they do not really know what this word means. What does freedom mean for him? He argues that by applying the law of *kamma* to the idea of human rights and freedom, some issues do not make sense. He understands what he has seen in the world that people want to live their freedom of desire, they want to be free to express their desire and to follow their desires at whatever cost. Then he goes on to explain the idea of freedom in Buddhism. What Buddhism celebrates is not the freedom *of* desire, but the freedom *from* desire.<sup>94</sup> This is the striking difference that he sees between the freedom understood and lived in the western world and freedom understood in Buddhism. One would live a very happy life when he or she is free from all that wanting, free from all feelings of lacking something, the feeling that something in life, somewhere in my body, somehow in my mind, there

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<sup>93</sup> Ajahn Brahmavamso, *Human Rights in Buddhism* (Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre, 9th June 2000). [http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books4/Simply\\_this\\_Moment/8.Human-Rights-in-Buddhism.pdf](http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books4/Simply_this_Moment/8.Human-Rights-in-Buddhism.pdf) (accessed on 19/3/2015).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

is something missing. To wish no more goes against the grain of modern society. The modern world today wants to have more wishes and creates even new wishes. Freedom in it means to have more choices and to earn more money to answer new wishes and choices. That is why human desires make the world to become unjust in any society. In Buddhism the best human being is the one who wishes for no more wishes. A Buddhist declaration of Human Rights would look very differently compared to the human rights that people celebrate today in the world. When pursuing Human Rights and freedom we have to be very mindful and have to have loving kindness, compassion, and practice sensitivity towards the people and all living beings.<sup>95</sup>

It seems that religion for Buddhism means to help people and to guide them on their way, because there is no creator in their belief system. In Buddhism each person has his or her own responsibility regarding the liberation from suffering. The idea of religion in Buddhism is to help the people in their spiritual life. That is why, it may be a faulty behavior for them when a Buddhist monk gets involved into politics, especially in the case of a violent situation.

Here I would like to add my personal experience when I was growing up with Buddhist families in Myanmar. When we were young, we used to play together with our Buddhist friends at school. I learnt from them that they are not allowed to kill animals, even not a small ant. However, it is hard for me to get to understand, and harder to accept, what the Military Junta did in Myanmar: shooting down monks in 2007, especially when realizing that these military leaders are of Myanmar and are Buddhists. Therefore, there is an inconsistency between Buddhistic theory (spirituality, religion)

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

and political practice. I have to further reflect on the roots causes of this inconsistency in Buddhism.

## CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CATHOLICISM

The two world religions of Buddhism and Catholicism express important teachings on values, human life and virtues. Catholic social teaching underlines that, man and woman are made in the image of God, and that all men and women have equal dignity and rights. “It is in Christ, the image of the invisible God, that man has been created in the image and likeness of the Creator.”<sup>96</sup> For Catholicism, it is relevant that the “respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it.”<sup>97</sup> To every right corresponds a respective duty. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the human being. “In this world, however, the Christian is obliged to work for the anticipation of the Kingdom on earth, if he wants to enter the eternal Kingdom of heaven. The anticipation of God’s Kingdom of justice, love and peace is attained through involvement in the dynamic process of human promotion and liberation.”<sup>98</sup> The teaching of the Church is always also concerned with the society. As Stratford Caldecott states, “the social teaching of the Church is that part of her moral theology which is concerned with social, political and economic charity and justice.”<sup>99</sup>

In this world, what is a Catholic asked to do? For Catholicism, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel or, in other words, of the church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. CCC, 1701.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. CCC, 1930.

<sup>98</sup> Fausto Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity* (Manila: UST Press, 1988), 248.

<sup>99</sup> Stratford Caldecott, *Catholic Social Teaching* (London: CTS, 2001), 5.

situation.”<sup>100</sup> The mission of the Church and her vocation is “the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation, centered on Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Man-for-others. It is, then, evangelization which includes two main kinds of activities, namely, religious (kerygmatic and sacramental) and social (political) activities.”<sup>101</sup> “The Christian is asked by his humanity and his faith to fight injustice and promote justice for the sake of justice; this is a basic social value.”<sup>102</sup> Mark Searle states critically that “matters of charity and social justice have appeared to be at best appendages to the really important business of saving one’s soul or even as means to that higher end.”<sup>103</sup> The teaching of Christ “goes so far as to require the forgiveness of offenses. He extends the commandment of love, which is that of the New Law, to all enemies.”<sup>104</sup> This opens windows for developments of human relationships in a society which have also an impact on the understanding of social justice.

#### **A. Biblical Account of Justice**

The researcher considers first justice in the Old Testament and second in the New Testament. Proverbs express clearly: “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,” to “defend the rights of the poor and needy (Prov. 31:8-9).” In the Old Testament, “God wanted people to behave in a certain way, and the people had to obey if they wanted to receive the blessings of the chosen people.”<sup>105</sup> The OT reflects

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<sup>100</sup> Collinge, *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*, 238.

<sup>101</sup> Fausto Gomez, *Social Ethics: Doctrine and Life* (Manila: UST Press, 1991), 73.

<sup>102</sup> Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 153.

<sup>103</sup> Mark Searle, *Liturgy and Social Justice* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1980), 14.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. CCC, 1933.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas M. Martin, *What Should I Teach?* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 140.

intensely on justice: “for the Israelites, the God they faced was pictured as a just and consistent God. Israel may have been fickle, but not the ever forgiving God. The fabric of society for Israel was also fortunate in that the commands generally linked service of God and justice to neighbor, particularly the weaker members of the community.”<sup>106</sup> The Israelites must treat other persons with Justice because their God is a God of Justice. As God says, “I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth” (Jer 9:24), “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream” (Am 5:24). An important text from the book of Isaiah states:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your indicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday (Isa 58: 6-10).<sup>107</sup>

The Old Testament teaches that God YHWH is a God who sees injustice committed and liberates the oppressed,<sup>108</sup> God says, “I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment” (Ex 6:6). The bible

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>107</sup> See also Ex 23: 3,9; Job 5: 15-17; Jer 21: 12, 22: 3, 22:3, Prov 1: 1-17, 14: 31, 19: 17, 22: 16, 29: 7, 24: 11,28: 27, 29: 7, 31:9, Mic 6:8, Ps 82:3, 146: 5-9, Zech 7: 9-10, Ezek 16:49-50, 22: 29, Lev 19: 10,15, 23: 22, Deut 1: 16-17, 15: 7-11, 16: 20, Am 5: 11-15,21-24, Isa 2: 3-4 ).

<sup>108</sup> Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 30.

proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Justice, and of the Messiah, the Liberator of the oppressed;<sup>109</sup>

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his month, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked (Isa 11:1-4).

The God YHWH in the OT is a God who takes side and helps the needy and the poor. In the book of Job, Job trusts in God and God did not abandon him as the book professes:

When the ear heard, it commended me, and when the eye saw, it approved; because I delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper. The blessing of the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous (Job 29:11-17).

Through the OT we find outstanding models of justice, such as “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9), “Abraham and he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6), and also Daniel and Job (Ezek 14:14, 20).<sup>110</sup> According to Thomas M. Martin, “the New Testament, like the Old, is religious, relational, and developmental in its moral stance. Both are theocentric in tone, and both link service of God to service of neighbor.”<sup>111</sup> The NT also reflects issues of daily life and justice. “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets (Mt 7:12).” The Gospel of Matthew says;

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 31.

<sup>111</sup> Martin, *What Should I Teach?*, 142.

You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give anyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (5: 38-45).<sup>112</sup>

The demand of this Gospel message is about the value of surpassing of love, which is a difficult task and demanded by the followers of Jesus Christ. It lies in the human nature to love only those who love one, especially the members of one's own family and group. But what the New Testament really teaches is to love everyone equally, even to love your enemies, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5: 44)." The love of Christians extends to all, especially to the needy, and the Son of God shows utmost solidarity himself with the needy by identifying himself with them.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king answers them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Mt 25:35-40).

Jesus expresses in this passage also the every equality of all human beings in their dignity. He express his solidarity with the poor and suffering in the greatest way possible. What we do to our fellow suffering humans, we do to Jesus himself. In the poor and needy we encounter Jesus Christ himself. This is also the experience and

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<sup>112</sup> These verses of New Testament are also telling about Social justice: Mt 5 3-12, 5: 46-47, 7:4, 11: 28; Mk 10: 43-45; Lk 4: 18-19, 10: 30-37, 11: 39-42, 18: 1-8; Jn 13: 1-38; Rom 10: 12, 12: 15-18; Gal 3: 28, 5: 22-24; 1 Tim 5: 1-25; Jas 1: 27, 2: 1-7, 4: 1-3, 5: 1-5.

practice of many Christian friends and religious brothers and sisters, who followed Jesus by serving the poor and who made a deep impact on the historical development in many countries, e.g. in establishing hospitals, schools, orphanages etc.

The justice of Jesus in the N.T is a compassionate and surpassing justice,<sup>113</sup> as expressed in the story of the Laborers in the Vineyard, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat” (Mt 20:12). The reality and justice of the kingdom of God goes beyond of worldly measures and understanding.

## **B. Christian Anthropology and Community**

The purpose of life for Christians is to learn to love one another as Jesus has loved and to reach the goal of life, the community with God in heaven, who is a personal God, and who is “love” as the New Testament testifies (1 John 4:8). Josef Pieper verifies that “The Christian ought to be another Christ; he and she ought to be perfect like the father of Jesus Christ.”<sup>114</sup>

Central for a Christian is the development of virtues and thus a proper education. The three theological virtues faith, hope, love, and the four cardinal virtues are crucial in this regard. Following Thomas Aquinas, Josef Pieper expresses the Christian idea of man therefore in seven theses based on the three theological virtues (faith, hope, love) and the four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Bravery, Moderation). Also the sequence (order, hierarchy) of these seven virtues has a deep meaning and relevance.

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<sup>113</sup> Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 32.

<sup>114</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustin’s Press, 2011), 5.

1. The Christian is a person, who, in his *faith*, is aware of the reality of the Trinitarian, living God.
2. The Christian looks forward in *hope* to the ultimate fulfillment of his being in eternal life, in community with the Saints, Angels, and God.
3. The Christian with the Theological Virtue of *love* turns to God, who is love and his fellow human beings, affirming them with a love that is far stronger than any natural love.
4. The Christian is *prudent*, i.e. he does not let his view of reality be clouded by what the will dictates without reference to the truth about the real situation. Christians are open to reality as it is.
5. The Christian is *just*, i.e. he is able to live the truth “with the other”; he sees that he is one member among other members of the Church, of the population, and of the all-embracing community of living beings and of nature, the creation of God.
6. The Christian is *brave*, i.e. he is prepared to be harmed and even to accept death, if necessary for the truth and for the realization of justice.
7. The Christian is *moderate*, i.e. he does not allow his desire for possessions and enjoyment to become destructive and repugnant to his being.<sup>115</sup>

In the Christian anthropological understanding, every human being desires to love. If there is no love, life has no meaning. God created Human beings out of his love. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, no. 27), the most basic or fundamental issue of human beings is their desire to love. God created Human beings because He loves them and he wanted to share his love with them. According to the *Catechism* (CCC, no. 31), Christians can come to know God with a twofold point of departure: such as in the physical world, and in the human person. In the *Catechism* (CCC, no. 32), there are five ways to be able to come to know God. St. Paul clarified that a human being can come to know God through creation and reason. According to St. Augustine, by looking at all the beauty in the world and in the universe one can come to know God through all these things, because God is the most beautiful One and He is the One, who created everything. Creation means that all creatures are fundamentally related to God the creator. God the creator is different from creatures, but both are deeply related.

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

The anthropological meaning for Christian is that male and female, are made in the image of God, because they were created by God, and they were together created as the image of God. God created human being “as man and woman” to be fruitful and multiply. Thus, a basic social reality belongs to human beings. It is the will of God that He created human beings to take care of the earth as responsible stewards. For a Christian, “human life is a gift, and God is the giver. God alone is the principal author and source of human life.”<sup>116</sup> Christians are not merely objects thrown into existence, determined by others and outside influences. They did not choose to be born, someone chose for them. God created human beings as rational and relational social beings. Man is rational, free and called to live in community with one another and with the personal, loving and triune God. To be a human being for a Christian means to be embodied, which means man have a body and a soul. The soul signifies the living and spiritual principle in man. With soul and body men and women share in the dignity to be created in “the image of God”. The soul is created to be immortal but the body is mortal, but awaits the resurrection of the flesh as *Gaudium et Spes* # 14 express:

Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator. For this reason man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. Nevertheless, wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorifies God in his body and forbid it to serve the evil inclinations of his heart.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Jose Mario B. Maximiano, *Human Life is Beautiful: The Catholic Teaching on Abortion* (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1992), 23.

<sup>117</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, #14.

Human beings are created in the image of God. Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and the perfect man for a Christian is *Christ*, He who is the true image of the invisible God, (Col. 1:15), who is Himself the perfect man.<sup>118</sup>

According to Edward P. DeBerri, the Catholic Church teaches that human beings are called to live related to God and in union with all other people. The love of God and the love of the neighbor are inseparable from one another. Humans are social beings by definition and nature and develop healthily only in community and society. From the family and community, a human person learns and inherits talents and skills. At the same time, each person is the principle, subject and end of society. Without persons there is no society. Only a person can bring social change. All human beings are called to participate in promoting the common good of the community and society, because each person is deeply related to the community.<sup>119</sup> “From the very beginnings of the Catholic social tradition through its latest utterances, all of humanity, every man, woman and child is understood to be part of one family under God. Human dignity is the foundation of all rights, privileges and responsibilities. Divisions of the one human community into we/they, while useful for developing identity and cultures, must not be allowed to become divisions for privilege or conflict.”<sup>120</sup> If all human beings are called to become one family in this world, and if this is fully realized, then there will not be any injustice done to anyone anymore.

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, # 22.

<sup>119</sup> Edward P. DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 113.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

### C. Catholic Social Teaching on Social Justice

The sources of Catholic Social Teaching can be found in “Natural Law, Revelation, Tradition and experience and insight from other traditions.”<sup>121</sup> From the beginning it was part of the Church’s teaching, her concept of man and life in society, and, especially Christian morality, which she worked out according to the needs of the different ages.<sup>122</sup> The beginning of the explicit Church’s Social Teaching of the Catholic Church in the modern period dates back to 1891, when Pope Leo XII published his Encyclical Letter, *On the Condition of Labor (Rerum Novarum)*.<sup>123</sup>

What do the Church documents say on Social Justice? In the following the researcher will analyze the specific teaching of the Church on Social Justice. Documents of the Church will be mainly taken from Vatican II, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and finally Pope Francis.

Theologians point out that, “Hundreds of millions of people today suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger, and destruction of their families. Drugs, violence, corruption, crime, and environmental devastation are wide spread. Many people on our planet live in fear.”<sup>124</sup> Many people are living today in fear and yearning desperately to live in safety. What can the Church contribute to bring change in this situation? Definitely the world needs the teaching of the Church, “By no human law can the personal dignity and liberty of man be so aptly safeguarded as by the gospel of Christ

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<sup>121</sup> Caldecott, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 4.

<sup>122</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work *Laborem Exercens* (Pasay City: The Daughters of St. Paul, 1989), 11.

<sup>123</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Brennan R. Hill, Paul Knitter & Willliam Madges, *Faith Religion & Theology* (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1997), 102.

which has been entrusted to the Church.”<sup>125</sup> The #40 of *Gaudium et Spes* states clearly: “The Church serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family.”<sup>126</sup>

On May 15, 1961 Pope John XXIII released the encyclical letter *Mater et magistra*, which he wrote to continue the tradition of *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).<sup>127</sup> Pope John XXIII applied in his encyclical the principles of Catholic social teaching on the new challenges of his time.<sup>128</sup> He writes in *Mater et magistra* that the Social teaching “rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution (No. 219).”<sup>129</sup> All human beings are equal and there is no difference between the powerful and the weak. He also refers to the growing gap between the rich and the poor in countries and in the world (No. 48).<sup>130</sup> In the number 192, he defines that “the only possible solution to this question is one which envisages the social and economic progress both of individuals and of the whole of human society, and which respects and promotes true human values.”<sup>131</sup> Pope John XXIII called for a renewed commitment to protect the human dignity and the inviolable worth of every individual human life. Human dignity and its protection has to be the basis of all worldwide sharing of knowledge, capital and labour

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<sup>125</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium Et Spes*, # 41.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, # 40.

<sup>127</sup> William T. Ditewig, "Mater et Magistra," *Priest* 68, no, 10 (2012): 34-39. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 23, 2015).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1961), 56.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

(No.192). The economy exists to serve man and society, and not the other way round, meaning, that it is not only for the benefit of some but for all. He underlines that, “Economic progress must be accompanied by a corresponding social progress (No. 73), and the economic prosperity of a nation is not so much its total assets in terms of wealth and property, as the equitable division and distribution of this wealth (No. 74).”<sup>132</sup> For this justice is crucial and indispensable. Politicians have the duty to apply just principles in a society when distributing opportunities, resources etc. The Church has especially the duty to care for the spiritual welfare of a society. According to John XXIII, the Church’s must first care for the souls, how she can sanctify people and help them to share in the gifts of heaven. But she concerns herself too with the exigencies of man’s daily life, with his livelihood and education, and his general temporal welfare and prosperity (No. 3).<sup>133</sup>

The concept of social justice has been part of the currency of Catholic teaching. The world needs justice and the teachings of the Church on social justice are extensive and central. Roland Minnerath admits that *Pacem in Terris* (1963) can be considered as an epochal point of reference in the history of the social doctrine of the Church.”<sup>134</sup> This Encyclical of Pope John XXIII came to light in a changing world, one experiencing unprecedented economic and social developments, and general optimism, at least in the West. The hard postwar years were over and colonialism was ending in the South. The Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* is full of the yearning for more freedom, a better life, and the hope for peace. Yet peace was far from guaranteed in the early sixties. In addressing

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<sup>132</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, 23-24.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Roland Minnerath, "Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* no, 1 (2015): 33. *Project MUSE*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 23, 2015).

the world's hopes, the movement that merged into Vatican II is already at work in *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>135</sup> In his Encyclical John XXIII addressed that “we see that every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which he is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his own.”<sup>136</sup> From the time of John XXIII onwards the teaching of the Catholic Church focused especially on global social justice. The concern of John XXIII was especially for the growing disparity between rich and poor within countries and between countries. He said that Christ entrusted to the Church the responsibility for shaping values and just institutions in our world.<sup>137</sup>

The concern for global social justice got even stronger with Pope Paul VI, who released 1967 his important encyclical letter *The Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)* which specifically responded to the cries of the world's poor and hungry and addressed the structural dimensions of global injustice. He spoke for the right of all people and peoples for integral human development, he appealed to both rich and poor nations to work together in a spirit of solidarity to establish an order of justice and bring about the renewal of the global temporal order. He even set up the *Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace*.<sup>138</sup> The purpose of this Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace is to bring “to the whole of God's people the full knowledge of the

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem In Terris* (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1963), 9-10.

<sup>137</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 7.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

part expected of them at the present time, so as to further the progress of poorer peoples, to encourage social justice among nations, to offer to less developed nations the means whereby they can further their own progress (No. 5).”<sup>139</sup> Nowadays, there are countless men and women who are ravished by hunger, countless numbers of children are undernourished and even die every day. Paul VI therefore writes that it is not enough to eliminate hunger, nor even to reduce poverty.<sup>140</sup> He demands to build “a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man (No. 47).”<sup>141</sup> There must be freedom among men and women; there must not be different shares for poor and rich. Every man and woman must experience the same equal freedom and have access to the means to live a life in true human dignity. All men and women must work together in solidarity to bring about social justice in our world. Paul VI argues that it is necessary to put the teaching of the Council into practice and effect.<sup>142</sup>

The second document of Paul VI was *A Call to Action (Octogesima Adveniens, 1971)*, which He wrote on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of *On the Condition of Labor* or *Rerum Noverum (1891)*. Here Paul VI acknowledges the difficulties inherent in establishing a just social order and he stressed the role of local Christian communities in meeting this high goal.<sup>143</sup> “It is up to the Christian communities to

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<sup>139</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967), 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 9.

analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church (No. 4).”<sup>144</sup> In *Octogesima Adveniens* Paul VI insists that God calls Christians and communities to be both *hearers* and *doers* of the word. Christians who are truly faithful to the Gospel will be engaged in an ongoing “incarnational” process which involves three separate moments:<sup>145</sup>

1. Evaluation and analysis of their contemporary situation.
2. Prayer, discernment, and reflection, bringing the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church to bear on the situation.
3. Pastoral action which fights injustices and works for the transformation of the society, thus laboring towards making the reign of God a reality.<sup>146</sup>

Paul VI stresses that all Christians have to bear witness to the teaching of the Gospel and its social implications, locally and globally. What they hear and understand from the Gospel they have to put into practice, especially to fight against injustice in any form in our global world. “Today the principal fact that we must all recognize is that the social question has become worldwide,”<sup>147</sup> Pope Paul VI admits. Therefore, all over the world, where the poor are, the Church must be there as well. The Church sends her missionaries especially to the needy of the globe. Paul VI emphasizes that the “missionaries have built not only churches but also hostels and hospitals, schools and

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<sup>144</sup> Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html) (accessed on 7/4/2015).

<sup>145</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 9.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *The Great Social Problem: Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI ‘Populorum Progressio’* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1967), 5.

universities,”<sup>148</sup> in order to give witness that the Good News transforms the cultures and social life.

In his *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975)* Pope Paul VI emphasized that the preaching of the Gospel would be incomplete if it would not take human rights, the issue of family life, the life in the society, peace, justice, and authentic development into account. Christians must practice what they preach. According to Edward P. DeBerri, Pope Paul VI defends that liberation is both spiritual and temporal and the plan of Redemption includes combating injustice.<sup>149</sup> “The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answer to his questions and the energy for his commitment of human solidarity” (No. 3). It would be futile and meaningless if the preaching of the Christian message is not put into practice. Christians have to promote a just social order when they want to be truly followers of Christ, because the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ is meant for the salvation of all humans, which does not exclude anybody, and includes all dimension of life and of the world.

Pope John Paul II emphasized the link between the Gospel and social justice in his first Encyclical Letter, *Redeemer of Humankind (Redemptor Hominis, 1979)*. He stated that when we put man at the center of our reflections then we will see contemporary man and society in need of redemption.<sup>150</sup> This is different from

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>149</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 10.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Buddhism, where man can transform and liberate himself. If we do not pay attention to the people, especially to the needy, we will never see that there is a need for the other people, we will always see first the need of ourselves. That is why, in the world today, there are many poor people, and the poor become poorer and poorer and the rich people become richer and richer. When the rich people do not consider the poor people they will always become richer and richer. Pope John Paul II in *Rich in Mercy (Dives in Misericordiae, 1980)* presented mercy as social love demonstrating its close link to justice.<sup>151</sup> All Christians are called to practice mercy towards others as God the Father has mercy for them. “Man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but that he is also called to practice mercy towards others (No.14).”<sup>152</sup> Christian Men and women are not only called to receive and experience the mercy of God, but they are also called to be merciful in practice towards others. When a person practices mercy towards others, he or she will always receive mercy in return from others as well and from God. The Gospel proclaims: “Do to others as you would want them do to you (Lk 6:31).” John Paul II writes about the role of mercy in life: “An act of merciful love is really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same times receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us (No.14).”<sup>153</sup> For John Paul II the “Evangelical process is not just a spiritual transformation realized once and for all, it is a whole life-style, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation (No.14).”<sup>154</sup> The Gospel permeates the whole life of the individual as well as the social life of communities and societies.

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia* (Homebush NSW: St. Paul Publication, 1980), 65.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>154</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 66.

Pope John Paul II released as next important social teaching 1981 the Encyclical *On Human Work (Laborem Excercens)*. In this letter John Paul II “criticized an economism which would reduce humans to mere instruments of production. He called the workers’ struggle for justice the dynamic element in contemporary society, emphasizing the need for greater solidarity around the world.”<sup>155</sup> He emphasized that the task of the Church is always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work and to overcome situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to guide and to make sure that there is an authentic progress by man and society.<sup>156</sup> The modern economy must respect the dignity of the workers, he provides “this circumstance constitutes in itself the most eloquent ‘Gospel of work’, showing that the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person (No.6).”<sup>157</sup> He encouraged the workers to show solidarity wherever they are, “and the ‘poor’ appear under various forms; they appear in various places and at various times; in many cases they appear as a result of the violation of the dignity of human work: either because the opportunities for work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment, or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family (No.8).”<sup>158</sup>

Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *One Hundred Years (Centessimus Annus, 1991)*, responds “It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style

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<sup>155</sup> DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 10.

<sup>156</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work *Laborem Excercens* (Pasay City: The Daughters of St. Paul, 1989), 7.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards ‘having’ rather than ‘being’, and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself (No. 36).”<sup>159</sup> Pope John Paul II was a strong supporter for justice and human rights, and also of the preferential option for the poor. In his 1995 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, he urged for “a serious commitment to foster on the Continent conditions of greater social justice and good government, in order thereby to prepare the ground for peace (No. 117).”<sup>160</sup> He also mentioned the mission of the Church to the modern world, in *Ecclesia in America (1999)*. He taught that “by her social doctrine the Church makes an effective contribution to the issues presented by the current globalized economy. Her moral vision in this area rests on the threefold cornerstone of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity. The globalized economy must be analyzed in the light of the principles of social justice, respecting the preferential option for the poor who must be allowed to participate and take their place in the society and economy, and the requirements of the international common good (No. 55).”<sup>161</sup> The social doctrine of the Church reminds governments especially to protect the individual dignity of every human person in our world.<sup>162</sup> In the same year, Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia (1999)*. “The Church always needs to have an exact understanding of

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<sup>159</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on One Hundred Years of *Rerum Novarum: Centesimus Annus* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html) (accessed on 30/3/2015).

<sup>160</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html) (accessed on 31/3/2015).

<sup>161</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_22011999\\_ecclesia-in-america.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html) (accessed on 31/3/2015).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

the political situation in the different countries where she seeks to fulfil her mission (No. 8).<sup>163</sup> He remarks that people seem helpless to defend themselves against corrupt politicians, judiciary officials, administrators and bureaucrats.<sup>164</sup> However “there is a growing awareness throughout Asia of people's capacity to change unjust structures. There are new demands for greater social justice, for more participation in government and economic life, for equal opportunities in education and for a just share in the resources of the nation.”<sup>165</sup> What all Christians have to be more aware of and to promote whole heartily is that the “Cooperation in areas of charity and social justice is a clear sign of Christian fraternity (No. 23).”<sup>166</sup> The Christians have to learn to love and to seek and live unity and have to live a clear commitment to social justice (Cf. the order of virtues on p.36):

The Church regards the social apostolate as an integral part of her evangelizing mission to speak a word of hope to the world; and her commitment in this regard is seen in her contribution to human development, her promotion of human rights, the defense of human life and dignity, social justice and protection of the environment. It is certain that commitment to social justice and peace is an integral part of the Church's mission in the world. Yet her mission does not depend upon political power. The Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end (No. 26).<sup>167</sup>

In *Ecclesia in Europa* 2003 Pope John Paul II wrote that the Church's social teaching “is aimed at defending and promoting the dignity of the human person, which

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<sup>163</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_06111999\\_ecclesia-in-asia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html) (accessed on 1/4/2015).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001) [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20011122\\_ecclesia-in-oceania.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20011122_ecclesia-in-oceania.html) in (accessed on 1/4/2015).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

is the basis not only of economic and political life, but also of social justice and peace (No. 98).”<sup>168</sup> His final Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Gregis* (2003) emphasizes that “the globalized economy must be analyzed in the light of the principles of social justice, respecting the preferential option for the poor, who must be allowed to take their place in such an economy, and the requirements of the international common good (No. 69).”<sup>169</sup> These are some relevant aspects of the teaching of John Paul II on social justice.

For Pope Benedict XVI, the topic of social justice is also a very important concern. In his first Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) from 2006 he claims that “the pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community's goods (No. 26).”<sup>170</sup> In his first Encyclical, Benedict expresses the requirement of all the faithful of the Church to take their proper role in works of justice and in seeking social justice, “Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew (No. 28).”<sup>171</sup> In a society, that lacks human and spiritual values, the economic process will turn out to become destructive for man and the environment.

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<sup>168</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20030628\\_ecclesia-in-europa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html) (accessed on 1/4/2015).

<sup>169</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20031016\\_pastores-gregis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20031016_pastores-gregis.html) (accessed on 1/4/2015).

<sup>170</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *on Deus Caritas est: God is Love* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005) in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.ht](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.ht) (accessed on 30/3/2015).

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

Benedict XVI issued his Social Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) on 29 June 2009, which addresses also social challenges in an increasingly globalized world e.g, the growing gap between the poor and the rich and the urgent need of better global political institutions to guaranty social justice on the global level. “The world’s wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase. In rich countries, new sectors of society are succumbing to poverty and new forms of poverty are emerging. In poorer areas some groups enjoy a sort of ‘superdevelopment’ of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation (No. 22).”<sup>172</sup> He expresses the conviction that an economy that is autonomous and must be “shielded from influences of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way (No. 34).”<sup>173</sup> An economy cut off from basic values and morality is doomed to fail. Therefore, the economy must be seen deeply connected with the society and its values and any economy is in dire need of sound moral values and virtuous people in order to fulfill its functions for the society.

According to Pope Francis the Church should be poor and should work for the poor and needy, “How I would love a Church which is poor and for the poor (No. 198).”<sup>174</sup> He continues emphasizing: “None of us can think we are exempt from concerns for the poor and for social justice (No. 201).”<sup>175</sup> We all are called to be an instrument of God for the poor, “Each individual Christian and every community is

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<sup>172</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth *Caritas in Veritate* (Pasay, Daughters of St. Paul, 2009), 33-34.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>174</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) (Vatican Press, 2013), 156.

<sup>175</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 158.

called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor (No. 187).”<sup>176</sup> There is no meaning if a Church or a community is established without helping other human beings, “Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down (No.207).”<sup>177</sup> And also the government must take on responsibility for all citizens, “People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens (No. 220).”<sup>178</sup> As God loves us, we also ought to love others in the same manner, “God shows the poor his first mercy. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians. This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us (No.198).”<sup>179</sup> The values of the Good News (Gospel) have for him a very strong social dimension and implication.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines states, “Action on behalf of justice is to be pursued as a sign of Christian witnessing to Christ and His teaching.”<sup>180</sup> The Council continues saying, “The social apostolate is to be constantly given solid religious grounding through catechesis and organic linking with worship.”<sup>181</sup> The Catholic Church promotes Social Justice in the world today in its teaching. For example, “Catholic Relief Services committed an additional \$1.5 million to programs

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>180</sup> *Acts and Decrees of Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Makati, Metro Manila: Secretariat Second Plenary Council of the Philippines Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1991), 30.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

aimed at countering Ebola in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea in November, 2014. The money is being used to train health workers, ensure safe and dignified burials, develop and implement prevention awareness campaigns, maintain local Catholic health facilities and provide food to those in need.”<sup>182</sup> When world leaders met in Australia in Nov. 2014 to look at ways to improve the global economy, Pope Francis asked them “not to forget that many lives are at stake behind their discussions and decisions.”<sup>183</sup> He personally visited the young people in prison or the victims hit by the Typhoon Haiyan on Jan, 2015 in Tacloban, Philippines. The option for the poor needs concrete practical steps for its realization and Pope Francis is a honest witness to it. The renewal of the social life is based on personal courage and commitment.

To sum up, the commitment to promote social justice belongs to the core values and essential nature of a Christian and the Church, and social justice is a main message with concrete practical implications for every Christian. The equal human dignity of all people since creation and the experienced solidarity of God through his self-communication in his Son Jesus Christ are main drivers for all Christians to promote greater social justice as cove value and sign that the kingdom of God is near.

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<sup>182</sup> "Survey Shows Church Decline," *America* 211, no. 17 (December 2014): 9-10, *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 4, 2015).

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

## **CHAPTER THREE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND CATHOLICISM ON SOCIAL JUSTICE**

In this Chapter I will try to clarify some similarities and differences between Buddhism and Catholicism regarding their teaching and practice on justice and social justice. The Catholic Church is open for dialogue and for the good found in other religions as expressed in the important declaration *Nostra Aetate* in Vatican Council II. “Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in this religion.”<sup>184</sup> The Catholic Church is open for the good in other religious traditions, although it continues to profess Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life,” (John 14:6).

### **A. Similarities between Buddhism and Catholicism**

Buddhists are “deeply moral and spiritual people.”<sup>185</sup> Both Catholicism and Buddhism are not only concerned about the spirituality of their believers but also about the society, although in a different way. One may think that Buddhism is only engaged in the personal transformation, but it is not. “Buddhism is not only for personal transformation but also for social transformation.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Vatican Council II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2. Quoted from: Williams, *Buddhism*, 36.

<sup>185</sup> Damien Keown, *Buddhist Ethics: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 25-26.

<sup>186</sup> Elizabeth J. Harris. *What Buddhists Believe* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 1998), 100.

## 1. Importance of *Karma* and Virtues Ethics

In Buddhism law of *karma* is seen as a natural law inherent in the nature of things. It is not operated by a God, and indeed the gods are themselves under its sway. Good and bad rebirths are not, therefore, seen as ‘rewards’ and ‘punishments’ by a god but as simply the natural results of certain kinds of action.<sup>187</sup> As mentioned before, the goal of human life in Buddhism is to be liberated from suffering and to reach *Nirvana*. The most important element (point) for a human being is his or her *karma*, because in Buddhism human beings are living in a circle. They are living within a circle with no beginning and no ending. If a human being is living a good life, in the next life he or she will gain a better life.<sup>188</sup> The gentle, loving type of person tends to be reborn in a heavenly realm or as a human being who has a predominance of pleasant experiences. The anxious, worried or extremely cruel type of person tends to be reborn in the hellish realm or as a human being who has a predominance of painful experiences. The person who develops obsessive craving, fierce longings, and burning ambitions, who can never be satisfied, tends to be reborn as a hungry ghost or as a human being frustrated by longing and wanting.<sup>189</sup> In this life human beings can change their negative habits in order to gain a better life in the next life.

Buddhism is first and foremost a path of self-transformation that seeks the elimination of negative states (vices) and their replacement by positive or wholesome ones (virtues). This is the way one becomes a Buddha. The transformation of the ‘man in the street’ into a Buddha comes about through the cultivation of particular virtues (paradigmatically wisdom and compassion) leading step by step to the goal of complete self-realization known as *Nirvana*.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>188</sup> Dhammika, *Good Question Good Answer*, 34.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Keown, *Buddhist Ethics*, 25.

Buddhism promotes a most virtuous and perfect education directed by the Buddha towards all sentient beings in the universe. Buddhism favors an education in wisdom and understanding of life and the Universe. The teaching of the Buddha covers infinite lifetimes.<sup>191</sup> The good Buddhists will never do injustice to other people, because the goal of Buddhist education is “not to indulge themselves in the Five Poisons of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance and doubt which is to form virtuous people.”<sup>192</sup>

One goal of Buddhist education is not different from Catholics, because the greatest commandment in Catholicism is *Love*. As St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude” (13:4). For sure everyone can agree with this statement: a person with true love will never do injustice to other human beings. That is why, a true Catholic faithful and a true Buddhist will not do injustice to others. The teaching of both Catholicism and Buddhism is to promote virtues among their members, because both the teaching of Jesus Christ and the teaching of Buddha are concerned about the goodness of all human beings. The Buddha, before he preached to the people, went into the forest for enlightenment as well as Jesus Christ went to the desert for forty days and forty nights. The two of them did not keep their insights to themselves and remain isolated in the forest and desert, but both returned to the world to start their mission and to teach the people the true way.

In Christian teaching also, every Christian to be able to gain eternal life, everyone has to do good, each one needs to do good action as well. What has Christian to do in order to gain a perfect Christian life? “Perfection in Christian life: charity unites

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<sup>191</sup> Chin Kung, *Buddhism: The Awakening of Compassion and Wisdom* (Hong Kong: Buddhist Education Foundation, 2007), 1.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

us to God, the ultimate goal of man; so perfection of Christian life consists primarily in the love of charity, and secondarily in the other virtues (see the hierarchy of virtues on p.36). Absolute perfection of love involves not only the whole of the lover but the whole of what is loved, so that God, to be loved perfectly, must be loved to the full extent he could be.”<sup>193</sup> Though the Christians do not use the word *Karma* but the action of each Christian is necessary for being a good Christian but God’s grace comes always before and our life is based on his love and grace, which goes beyond the human. The CCC deals with virtues: “Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human beings for communion with divine love.”<sup>194</sup> But in Christianity there is in addition grace and infused virtues or theological virtues. They are a free gift from God: faith, hope, and love. This dimension of grace goes beyond the natural karmic dimension of human actions.

## 2. The Relevance of *Dhamma*, Natural Law, and Scripture

In the Buddhist scriptures there are the teachings for the daily life of a Buddhist. In the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha taught his followers how to live their lives according to the *Dhamma*. As mentioned before, each Buddhist must live a life with a thought of loving-kindness, taking five moral precepts, taking eight moral precepts, taking nine moral precepts, offering alms-food, water, flowers and light

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<sup>193</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae a Concise Translation*, eds. Timothy McDermott (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1989), 454.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. CCC, 1804.

sending thoughts of universal loving kindness. The true Buddhists must live every day in his life with *piety, morality, charity, loving-kindness*.<sup>195</sup>

Similarly and even stronger, according to the biblical scriptural account, Jesus said to the young rich man, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mk 10:21). What Jesus means here is similar or analogical as Buddha taught his followers: Jesus asked the young rich man to leave behind all his properties and to follow him. This means one must live a life with charity and loving-kindness to be the true disciples of Him.

The *Dhamma* with the five precepts of Buddhism is in an analogical way somehow similar to the second part of the Ten Commandments of Catholicism. These five precepts are:

1. I observe the Precept of Abstaining from killing any living beings.
2. I observe the Precept of Abstaining from taking what is not given by the owner.
3. I observe the Precept of Abstaining from committing sexual misconduct.
4. I observe the Precept of Abstaining from telling lies.
5. I observe the Precept of Abstaining from taking any intoxicant or drug that ceases forgetfulness.<sup>196</sup>

These five precepts of Buddhism are similar to the second part of the Ten Commandments Catholicism, especially considering number five to ten.

1. You shall not murder.
2. You shall not commit adultery.
3. You shall not steal.
4. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
5. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Ex 20:13-17).

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<sup>195</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 115.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

The *Dhamma* contains also a teaching for sons and daughters which is comparable with the Fourth Commandments. The five kinds of duties for sons and daughters in the *Dhamma* are:

1. Support the parents in turn;
2. Manage affairs on their behalf;
3. Maintain the honour and tradition of the family;
4. Make yourself worthy of the inheritance;
5. And furthermore, offer alms on behalf of the departed parents.<sup>197</sup>

This teaching of the *Dhamma* for sons and daughters is similar to the Fourth of the Ten Commandments, as written in the book of Exodus, “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex 20:12). The difference of the biblical command is that its goal is mentioned as overall wellbeing and social security and the giver of life and land, which is in biblical terms a personal God. The letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians also proscribes the duties of sons and daughters to their parents, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, this the first commandment with a promise: so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Eph 6:1-3). The phrase “in the Lord” refers to the deep spiritual dimension of Christian life. The five kinds of duties for the husband according to the *Dhamma* are:

1. Being courteous;
2. Showing respect;
3. Being faithful to her;
4. Giving her control and authority over domestic matters;
5. Providing her with clothing and ornaments.<sup>198</sup>

In the teaching of Buddhism, there are clear duties for husbands and wives. In a analogical manner the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians writes:

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<sup>197</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 150.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the Church, because we are member of the body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh (Eph 5: 25-31).

What is said in addition and beyond the *Dhamma* in Buddhism, the Christian understanding has a strong spiritual and religious dimension (“just as Christ loved”) and also a strong communal dimension. This means the daily life in the family (husband, wife, and children) is for a Christian deeply connected with the bigger community of all believers, the family of Jesus, called the Church. The followers of Christ are doing everything as a member of a bigger community or body, the Church.

There are five kinds of duties for the wife from the *Dhamma*:

1. She discharges well her various duties
2. She is hospitable and generous
3. She is faithful to her husband
4. She manages well
5. She is skilled and industrious.<sup>199</sup>

St. Paul also mentions the duties of the wives towards their husbands in his letter to the Ephesians, “Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are in the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the Church, the body of which his is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to obey their husbands” (Eph 5: 22-24). We can see here again the deep spiritual and communal dimension of the Christian relationships and house rule.

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<sup>199</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 154.

Not only in today's world, but also in the time of both the Buddha and Jesus, there were slaves and masters. That is why, there are teaching for slaves and masters in the *Dhamma* and in the Bible. In the teaching of Buddhism the Master "ought to give food and remuneration for the slaves, assigning them suitable work; looking after them in sickness; sharing with them choice food; and granting them leave at times."<sup>200</sup> And slaves "ought to rise before the master, sleep after them, take only what is given, perform their duties well, and uphold his good name and fame."<sup>201</sup>

Slaves and masters are also mentioned in the Bible, for example in the letter of St. Paul to Ephesians:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not the men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free. And, master, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality (Eph 6: 5-9).

Both the teaching in the scriptures of Buddhism and Catholic are concerned about the goodness of human beings.

### **3. Loving Kindness, Awareness, and Respect for Life**

Both the teaching of Buddhism and Catholicism speak of love and respect for life. As mentioned on page 12 to 13, a Buddhist must *Rise with a Thought of Loving-kindness (Mettā), universal love*: a Buddhist devotee then will have ample time to cultivate *Mettā*, Universal Love or Boundless Love, as soon as he or she arises from the bed, saying: "May all living beings be well and happy!" The benefits from this

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

saying and attitude are: looking at and knowing others in a good light, and the whole world will be suffused and covered with goodness, you remember and practice a civilized way of life, behaving as a good real person every day, as the Buddha exhorts daily, you now remember wholesome deeds with mindfulness and diligence. So you get many *Mangala* Blessings by having a good mind and attitude.<sup>202</sup> Loving kindness in Buddhism is highly emphasized:

Metta in the Buddha's teaching finds its place as the first of four kinds of contemplation designed to develop a sound pacific relationship to other living beings. The four are: *metta*, which will be rendered henceforward by "loving-kindness," *karuna*, which is "compassion" or "pity," *mudita* which is "gladness at others' success," and *upekkha*, which is "on looking equanimity." These four are called Divine Abidings (brahma-vihara), perhaps because whoever can maintain any one of them in being, for even a moment has lived for that moment as do the Highest Gods (the Brahma Deva).<sup>203</sup>

In Buddha's teaching, these four Divine Abidings, the "greatest of all worldly merits," if practiced alone, without insight into the true nature of existence, can lead to rebirth in the highest heavens.<sup>204</sup> Similarly for Christians every human being desires to love. If there is no love, life has no meaning for them. Jesus said, "Love is the greatest commandment." God created Human beings out of his love. According to the *Catechism* (CCC, no. 27) the most basic or fundamental issue of human beings is their desire to love. God created Human beings because He loves them. Christians ought to love one another as Christ loves them. The remaining question now is about the reality of this love, how this love is understood and how it is experienced. "God so much loved the world that He gave his only Son." Buddhism and Christianity differ in the content and way of this love.

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<sup>202</sup> DPPS, *Good Buddhist*, 94.

<sup>203</sup> "The Practice of Loving-Kindness (Metta): As Taught by the Buddha in the Pali Canon", compiled and translated by Ñānamoli Thera. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/wheel007.html> (accessed on 4/6/2015).

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4. Spirit and God as Mystery

Buddhism does not believe in a creator God but Buddhists believe that there are spirits. Buddhism “do not deny the existence of good and evil spirits. There are visible and invisible beings or spirits in the same way as there are visible and invisible lights. One cannot deny the existence of such spirits just because one is unable to see them with one's naked eyes. They too exist in the same world where we live.”<sup>205</sup> It is a mystery to talk about spirit for Buddhist as it is a mystery for Catholic to talk about God.

For Catholic there is God, Holy Trinity. God is the Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Spirit. And these three are not three gods, but are one God.<sup>206</sup> It is a mystery to talk about God, Catholicism believe that:

The mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creator of all things; the mystery of Christ, Word incarnate, who was born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered, died and rose again for our salvation; the mystery of the Holy Spirit, present in the Church and sanctifying and guiding it until the coming of Christ, our Saviour and Judge, in Glory; the mystery of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, in which the Virgin Mary has the highest place (DCG, No. 43).<sup>207</sup>

Human beings can not fully know God, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, “Litter in the way of mystery has been revealed to us, and that which Scripture teaches us is revealed to us in the form of obscure images and words, so that only the studious

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<sup>205</sup> K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera, “What Buddhists Believe,” *BuddhaSasana Home Page English Section* in <http://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbeliev/306.htm> (accessed on 2/5/2015).

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Light of Faith: the Compendium of Theology* (New Hampshire, Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>207</sup> DCG (1971): Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, General Catechetical Directory, *Ad normam decreti* (11 April 1971), 553.

may succeed, with difficulty, in grasping some of it, while other believers may venerate the mystery in a veiled form.”<sup>208</sup>

## **B. Differences of Buddhism and Catholicism**

### **1. Non-self vs. Personalism-Eternal Self**

In Buddhism there is no self (*anatta*), the Buddha denied the existence of the soul, physical things and the body around us cannot be self, rather form it is not-Self. Postulating a Self leads to desires and suffering.<sup>209</sup> “Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of such Soul, Self, or *Atman*. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief.”<sup>210</sup> Human beings are involved in: feelings, perceptions, other mental events like intentions, and even consciousness itself. Each of these categories of events consists of events that are not-Self. Since they are not Self, human beings should become dispassionate towards them, let them go, cut at the very root any craving from them.<sup>211</sup> Other scholars look at this issue differently. For Buddha “one has a self, but no eternal Self.”<sup>212</sup> “One is that there is indeed no eternal Self, and that is the path the Buddha eventually took.”<sup>213</sup> There is no immortal soul that manifests in a succession of bodies, but in terms of the relative truth by which we are normally guided, there is a being that

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<sup>208</sup> Gilles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas* (Florida, Naples: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2003), 80.

<sup>209</sup> Williams, *Buddhism*, 18.

<sup>210</sup> Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 51.

<sup>211</sup> Williams, *Buddhism*, 19.

<sup>212</sup> Michael Carrithers, *The Buddha: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

is reborn.<sup>214</sup> Buddhism is more about “moral responsibility, reality of the moral agent as depository of inner strength, and freedom of moral decision.”<sup>215</sup> In Buddhism, our idea of a personal God and the Soul are false and empty,<sup>216</sup> because ultimately leading to unwanted desires and suffering.

For Christian “man and woman is a relational being in dialogue with God, others, and the created world.”<sup>217</sup> Man and women have to have faith, hope and love. And also they have to be prudent, just, brave and moderate.<sup>218</sup> Christians believe in Jesus as the savior of humanity. The soul is immortal but the body is mortal, but awaits the resurrection of the flesh. There is eternal salvation in heaven.

## 2. Self-Liberation vs. Salvation

Buddhist belief that Buddha is not a god of salvation. Buddha is not a god to be prayed to for favors or mercy, and salvation rests entirely on each person and his or her engagement in self-discipline and self-transformation. Pagodas are only magical places where wishes can be granted.<sup>219</sup> Buddhists believe in reincarnation, they claim that there is no chronological first beginning to the series of past lives. All of us have been reincarnated in an infinite number of times and cycles. No go is needed, either to start the series off there was no first beginning or to explain why there is anything at all

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<sup>214</sup> M. O’C. Walshe, “Buddhism and Death,” Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.Accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/walshe/whell261.html>.

<sup>215</sup> Lertjitlekha, *Buddhist Panna*, 157.

<sup>216</sup> Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 52.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>218</sup> Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man*, 7.

<sup>219</sup> Khin Win, *The Influence of Theravada Buddhism on Myanmar Society*.

rather than nothing. There are just things, and always have been things.<sup>220</sup> Everything is simply the result of its own natural causes – the tree from the seed, the baby from their parents, and so on to infinity.<sup>221</sup> There is no liberator for Buddhists, as mentioned on page 18, because they believe that humans can find their own way towards liberation or tread a path shown to them. Humans are the living beings most capable of attaining liberation. The attainment of individual enlightenment is therefore the real meaning of human life in Buddhism. Life and death are merely a part of a cycle, and life does not end. Death is a link in a chain, it is rebirth or the transformation towards a new life depending on the *Karma*.<sup>222</sup> It transforms to any of “hell, the animal realm, the ghostly world, the titans, human beings, and the heavenly realm.”<sup>223</sup> For Buddhism, only when one liberates oneself from human suffering one reaches *Nirvana*. To attain this, one should let go of his or her desires, cravings and attachments, and try to dispel his or her ignorance. Buddhism is ultimately about the mind and the individual experience of self-transformation.

The most important rule for human beings in Buddhism is the *karma*: if one lives a good life in this world it is sure to gain a better rebirth and higher life in the next. It depended on each human being how he or she lives his or her life in this world.

For Catholics all human beings are created in the image of God, and all men and women are equal in dignity and basic human rights. In Christ one can come to know the invisible God, because Christ was the son of God, “Are you, then, the Son of God? He said to them, you say that I am” (Lk 22:70). Catholics believe that Jesus is the

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. Williams, *Buddhism*, 3.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>222</sup> Steinkellner, “Man In Buddhism,” 245-246.

<sup>223</sup> Keown, *Buddhist Ethics*, 45.

liberator, Jesus saved them from sins. All Christians believe that Jesus is still alive in their midst, because Jesus says “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20). They also hold that Christians ought to be another Christ, because Jesus says “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Mt 25:45). A true Christians ought to see Christ in the other person, especially the weak and poor. The purpose of life for Christians is to learn to love one another as Jesus has loved them. Christians affirm that God created human beings out of love, so they ought to love one another as God does. The anthropological meaning of man for Christians is that men and women are created in the image and likeness of God, and they believe that there is a resurrection after death. Life is a precious gift, and God is the ultimate giver of all life. But his love and power goes beyond this life. The life of human beings comes from God, human beings have body and souls. The soul is immortal but the body is mortal in the Christian belief and Catholics believe in the resurrection of the flesh. In the Catholic faith, salvation is not only about the individual mind but about the whole human person with body and soul and all relationships and communities, inclusive the whole creation.

### **3. Ignorance vs. Sin (Redemption)**

In Buddhism human beings are suffering because of their craving. This has to do with the mind. The origin of suffering is said to be craving. The purpose of Buddhism is to overcome suffering, and the cause of this suffering is understood to be mental.<sup>224</sup> We crave things that are impermanent, that are certain to perish. When they do perish (ourselves and our loved ones included), we suffer. Thus, what is even more fundamental than craving in bringing about suffering is ignorance: ignorance of the way

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<sup>224</sup> Williams, *Buddhism*, 12.

things really are as represented in the Four Noble Truths, crucially, failing to recognize the nature of things as impermanent and suffering.<sup>225</sup> Human beings are suffering because of the ignorance of the world as impermanent and suffering. The Buddha is the one who did not ignore this fact and so he overcome suffering and then reached *Nirvana*. If one ignores to do good, he or she cannot become liberated from suffering. For Buddhism one suffers because of his or her ignorance. Whereas in Catholicism one suffers because of his or her sin, saying no to God and His will.

For Catholics, one cannot gain eternal life if he or she is sinful, but sins can be forgiven by God through the Church in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the mediator between God the Father and human beings, He is the savior and all human beings can be saved through Jesus Christ if they accept him. That is why, the Church has the sacrament of reconciliation. In Catholic teaching there is the sin of nature (original sin) and personal sin.<sup>226</sup> The sin of a person is a personal sin, and the sin of nature is the sin, in which all human beings (with the exception of Jesus and Mary) share by the very fact of possessing human nature, which is also called the original sin. It does not mean that human nature is sinful itself. It was created by good God, but became tainted by sin through the free and sinful choice of human beings.<sup>227</sup> On the one hand, the sacrament of reconciliation leads to forgiveness of personal sins committed after baptism. The original sin is overcome in each person through baptism itself.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>226</sup> David M. Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, eds. John D. Laurance, Series (Collegeville: The Order of St. Benedict, 2001), 4.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4. Individual liberation vs. Relevance of Community for Salvation

It depends on each individual human being to reach *Nirvana*, which is the only goal in Buddhism. If one does not have a good *Karma*, he or she can not gain enlightenment. As mentioned before, the goal of human life in Buddhism is to reach Nirvana. The most important issue for a human being is his or her *karma*, because in Buddhism human beings are living in a circle of rebirths. They are living within a circle with no beginning and no ending, which is called *Wheel of Life*. If a human being is living a life with a good *karma*, in the next life he or she will gain a better life. According to *Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso*, for Buddhism human beings are not all born equal, some people are born tall, some people are born small. Some people are born intelligent, some people are born unwise. The point is they all come into this world with their *karma* from their past lives. So for a Buddhist that principle of equality at birth does not make sense. The *karma* of a human being has nothing to do with community. “Human world as it is seen by the Buddha: an individual’s concern with the events of his own mind and body, his concern with his face-to-face personal relations with others, and his concern with the welfare of all sentient beings.”<sup>229</sup>

On the contrary for Christians the communion with God and one’s neighbour is indispensable. Christianity proves its identity by the mark of the commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbour.<sup>230</sup> It is meaningless if a Christian says he or she loves Jesus without loving his or her neighbors. For Christian, “One is and becomes ‘person’ together with others; human dignity and human rights have their overall space,

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<sup>229</sup> Carrithers, *The Buddha*, 96.

<sup>230</sup> Karl-Heinz Neufeld, “Many Members but One Body: On Community as the Way of Christian Salvation,” *Christian Faith in Dialogue with Buddhism*, eds. Andreas Bsteh (Modling: St. Gabriel Publications, 2010), 149-171, 151.

meaning, and function in community. To that extent ‘person,’ by definition, is not limited to the isolated individual, not to substance in itself, which is perhaps still distinguished by intelligence and reason, but reveals itself as a being in existential togetherness and not otherwise; it is not itself without others, without difference.”<sup>231</sup> Karl- Heinz Neufeld also mentions the writing of Paul that “a lively communion of members, each having their own individual character, different from one another and with different tasks to fulfill. These differences also allow different assessments, which raises questions concerning their cooperation. There may be equal rights for every member in view of the life of the body, because the later needs every individual part and all of them together.”<sup>232</sup>

## **5. Micro Level (Individual Justice) vs. Macro Level (Political, Social Justice)**

Buddhism emphasizes more on the micro level. For example, Cambodia suffered the Khmer Rouge auto-genocide, in which between one million to over two million people (out of a population of seven million) were killed. In order to recover from the chaos and the corruption, lawlessness, and climate of impunity that has followed the leaders of the Cambodian Buddhist Sangha decided that the people needed instruction in fundamental moral principles specifically the Five Lay Precepts and human rights.<sup>233</sup> A recent survey demonstrated that Cambodians overwhelmingly believed that the return and resurgence of Buddhism in Cambodia was the single most important cultural factor in promoting human rights in that country. Other studies have

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<sup>231</sup> Neufeld, “Many Members but One Body,”152.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>233</sup> Sallie B. King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 141.

shown that, for Cambodians, to promote human rights is simply to promote morality.<sup>234</sup> Another example, in 1988 and 2007 the street protests led by Buddhist monks in Myanmar. Monks and Nuns involved in the protests because of their most fundamental motivation is compassion for the suffering of the people.<sup>235</sup> The first premise of Buddhism is that suffering, both mundane and spiritual, is a problem that should be eliminated, and Buddhism is conceived as a set of methods and tools to do so.<sup>236</sup> Burmese Buddhist monks and nuns showed the government of Myanmar their compassion for the people. According to Michael Carrithers, “the Buddha taught that human individuals are not be seen as isolated from each other, but as conjoined to each other in a weighty and consequential relationship. This is consistent with another modern view, a growing awareness that individuals are not to be understood in isolation, but as being inextricably involved in a social context.”<sup>237</sup>

Catholic teaching emphasizes both the micro and the macro level. Catholic social teaching (CST) focus individual virtues e.g. individual justice and social ethics (e.g. social justice). According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, “Social institutions do not of themselves guarantee, as if automatically, the common good; the internal renewal of the Christian spirit must precede the commitment to improve society”<sup>238</sup> (No.552). CST for the modern world was developed through

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<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Carrithers, *Buddha*, 95.

<sup>238</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, D.C: USCCB Publishing, 2004), 240.

encyclicals and letters written by the popes.<sup>239</sup> The Catholic Church is more focused on the care of family, community and also political justice, because “how we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.”<sup>240</sup> According to Catholicism a society should promote human rights and protect the poor and vulnerable, including children. Whereas in Buddhism the focus is more limited to the micro level of individual people who work for social justice as Michael Carrithers summarizes:

There is another kind of modernity, however, which the Buddha did not have, and that is an overriding preoccupation with the political dimension of human affairs. For the most part the Buddha’s discourses define three areas of concern which, between them, make up the human world as it is seen by the Buddha: an individual’s concern with the events of his own mind and body, his concern with his face-to-face personal relations with others, and his concern with the welfare of all sentient beings. For these three areas, the psychic, the socially very small-scale, and the universal collectivity of all beings, he was willing to lay down both the way things are and the way they should be. But these descriptions and prescriptions say little about how men do and should behave as members of political collectivities, and how political collectivities should be organized. Certainly this relative indifference to the specifics of political affairs must have contributed to the ease with which the Buddha’s teaching has been relevant in very different political climates.<sup>241</sup>

## 6. Cyclic world view vs. World as being Created

The teaching of religions is for the goodness of human beings but each still has a different content and way of teaching. Buddhism is often seen as an eco-friendly religion with an expanded moral horizon encompassing not just human beings but also animals and the environment. It is generally thought to have a more enlightened attitude

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<sup>239</sup> Jill Bradley-Levine and Kari A. Carr, "Critical Theory and Catholic Social Teaching: A Research Framework for Catholic Schools," *Journal Of Catholic Education* 18, no. 3 (March 2015): 27-43. Education Source, EBSCOhost (accessed June 6, 2015).

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Carrithers, *Buddha*, 95-96.

towards nature than Christianity, which has traditionally taught that mankind is the divinely appointed steward of creation holding authority over the natural order.<sup>242</sup> For Buddhism, there never was a time in the past when there was nothing.<sup>243</sup> Yet the Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1).

In Buddhism, “there is no belief in a divine creator. Instead, there is the core principle of causality, while the universe is regarded as beginningless. Without a creator figure, in whom to ground inner values and the ethical life, Buddhism instead ground ethics in the idea of karma.”<sup>244</sup> Buddhism is all about the mind, not God.<sup>245</sup> Buddhism expresses “a world view or faith in which the world is seen as a negative value or as mere appearance, as place of entanglement in suffering. This seems to be the case in Buddhism, where, in order to overcome suffering, human beings pursue the path of interiorization, of separation from the world, of breaking free from all things.”<sup>246</sup>

Whereas in the Catholic tradition, “ethics is ultimately grounded in some understanding of God as creator and as the absolute ground of all that is. From the Catholic point of view, the entire universe is part of a divine creation and plan. And since God is infinite love or infinite compassion, loving others is part of loving and

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<sup>242</sup> Damien Keown, *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>243</sup> Paul Williams, *Buddhism: From a Catholic Perspective* (London: CTS Publication, 2012), 12.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>246</sup> Heinrich Fries, *Fundamental Theology*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 209.

serving God.”<sup>247</sup> For Christians “only in faith that knows of the creation of the world by a sovereign, free, and transcendent God; that puts God and world apart from each other; that sets the world free in its own domain and qualifies it as finite world.”<sup>248</sup> God the creator, and his creation are clearly distinct in Catholicism. The world and humans are set free and released to take up responsibility in relative freedom. Although the creator and creation are clearly distinct from each other, they are deeply related towards each other, as St. Paul expresses, “ Yet he is not far from any one of us, for in him, we live and move, and have our being” (Act 17:27-28).

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<sup>247</sup> Dalai Lama XIV Bstan-zin-rgya-mtsho, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 14.

<sup>248</sup> Fries, *Fundamental Theology*, 208.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MYANMAR TODAY

Both Buddhism and Catholicism teach the virtue of justice. The question in this chapter is what do they do to promote justice in Myanmar? It seems that they have a different approach, the Buddhists side is more involved in the political aspects but Catholics are more working with the poor. Both Buddhists and Catholics work for social justice. Most of the religious leaders who are working for peace in the country or promotes democratic rights are Buddhists but the Catholic Church is always working for the poor and the needy.

Human rights are at the forefront of the struggle in Myanmar. For instance, in 1988 the streets of Rangoon were filled with tens of thousands of students and Buddhist monks demanding democracy and human rights.<sup>249</sup> Thousands of people were killed by the government in a crackdown over the protests. Aung San Suu Kyi, who has expressively declared her belief in engaged Buddhism, is the head of the National League for Democracy, which represents the Burmese people's demands for democracy and human rights.<sup>250</sup>

The Buddhists in Myanmar know that their lives should be governed by the three principles of Buddhism: *Thila*, *Dana*, and *B'wana*: morality, charity and awareness. They believe that having an unstinting goodwill *Cedana* towards others in thought, word and deed, brings merit, what is conveniently called luck of fate *Kan*, which is derived from the *Pali* word Action *Kamma*, so they understand that what

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<sup>249</sup> King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, 142.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

happens to them is directly caused by their own actions.<sup>251</sup> That is why, good Buddhists try to live good in order to gain a better rebirth. Because of this belief there are some Organization of Buddhists Social Workers in Myanmar today. For instance we have some leaders who work for social justice in Myanmar, they are *Min Ko Naing, Hkun Htun Oo, Kyaw Thu, Dr. Cynthia Maung, Aung Din* and *Aung San Suu Kyi*.

*Min Ko Naing* was born on 18 October 1962, in Mudon, Mon State, Myanmar. He studied in Rangoon Arts & Sciences at the University. He is the President of the University Student Union of Burma (Myanmar) and a leading activist and dissident for democracy. He has spent most of the years since 1988 imprisoned by the state for his opposition activities. The *New York Times* described him as Burma's most influential opposition figure after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>252</sup> He is the leader of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society in Myanmar. During the past two decades, Min Ko Naing has received numerous international awards for his courage, conviction, and dedication to nonviolence and democracy. These awards include the 2009 Gwangju Prize for Human Rights; the 2005 Civic Courage Prize, which he shared with Anna Politkovskaya and Munir Said Thailib; the 2000 Homo Homini Award from People in Need; and the 1999 John Humphrey Freedom Award, which he shared with Dr. Cynthia Maung.<sup>253</sup>

*Hkun Htun Oo* is a leading politician from the Burma's Shan State and Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) Party. Following

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<sup>251</sup> Khin Win Thanegi, "The Influence of Theravada Buddhism on Myanmar Society," Bavaria: University of Passau, in [www.Phil.Uni-passau-de/Fileadmin/group-upload/45/pdf/conferences/paper-mathanegi.pdf](http://www.Phil.Uni-passau-de/Fileadmin/group-upload/45/pdf/conferences/paper-mathanegi.pdf), (accessed on 11/3/2015).

<sup>252</sup> Min Ko Naing, *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Min\\_Ko\\_Naing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Min_Ko_Naing) (accessed on 19/4/2015).

<sup>253</sup> Julie Finley, "2012 Democracy Award: National Endowment for Democracy," *The Embassy of the Czech Republic*, in <http://www.ned.org/node/2377> (accessed on 19/4/2015).

the 8888 Uprising, he ran in the 1990 parliamentary elections as the head of the SNLD, which won 23 seats, the second highest number of any party after the National League for Democracy (NLD). After the military government annulled the results, Hkun Htun Oo continued to work for democratic change within the country, for which he was arrested in 2005 and given a 93-year prison term for treason, defamation, and inciting dissatisfaction towards the government.<sup>254</sup> Amnesty International recognized him as a prisoner of conscience, and in December 2008, he was awarded the honorary Italian citizenship by the mayor of Monza. In March 2011, the United Nationalities Alliance, a group representing several minorities in Burma, awarded him the Nationalities Hero Prize for his “dedication and struggle for ethnic groups and national reconciliation.” He was released from prison in a presidential amnesty on January 13, 2012.<sup>255</sup>

*Kyaw Thu* established a society called *Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS)*. It was founded on 1 January 2000. U Kyaw Thu said, “My work at the organisation has taught me a lot. As an actor, I used to crave publicity and chase money and fame, but now I want nothing but to help those in need.”<sup>256</sup> Since 2001, this society has provided free funeral services to more than 110,000 people across Burma. In addition, FFSS operates a free clinic for the poor, supports scholarships, organizes vocational and computer trainings, and helps to meet the health needs of former political prisoners. A leading man of the Burmese Cinema scene in the 1980s and 1990s, Kyaw Thu gradually turned his attention to charity and social work, and by serving as volunteer president of FFSS, became one of the most prominent members of Burma’s civil society. In 2007,

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<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Cherry Thein, “Free Funeral Service Society overcomes stigma,” MyanmarTime, 2012. in <https://www.facebook.com/MaeTaoClinic/photos/a.144640118891624.22043.142846872404282/658550670833897/?type=1&fref=nf> (accessed on 19/4/2015).

he and his wife were arrested after publicly supporting the Saffron Revolution, after which he was banned from the film industry. After his release, Kyaw Thu and the FFSS played a vital role in the rescue and fundraising efforts following the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, which devastated Burma's Irrawaddy Delta and cost over 130,000 lives in May 2008.<sup>257</sup>

*Dr. Cynthia Maung* is an ethnic Karen medical doctor and founder of the Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot, Thailand, on the Thai-Burmese border. Since 1988, Maung has been building and running a thriving medical clinic on the treacherous Thailand-Burma border, providing badly needed health care for 70,000 people a year and facing down one of the most oppressive dictatorships in the world to do it.<sup>258</sup> She founded this clinic soon after fleeing to Thailand in the aftermath of the 8888 Uprising. This clinic and her staff of over 700 people provided medical services for refugees, migrant workers and orphans. The clinic receives patients daily, treating such conditions as malaria, respiratory disease and diarrhea, as well as gunshot wounds and land mine injuries.<sup>259</sup> Dr. Cynthia and the Mae Tao Clinic have received numerous international awards, including from the Taiwan Foundation for Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award, the Ramon Magsaysay Award, the John Humphrey Freedom Award, the Jonathan Mann Health and Human Rights Award, Catalonia's International Prize, which she won

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<sup>257</sup> Yasmin, "Award winning actor and humanitarian Kyaw Thu visits MTC," *Mae Tao Clinic*, in <http://maetaoclinic.org/1806/award-winning-actor-and-humanitarian-kyaw-thu-visits-mtc/> (accessed on 19/4/2015).

<sup>258</sup> Jeffrey Kluger and Bryan Walsh, "Cynthia Maung," *Time International (South Pacific Edition)* no. 44 (November 7, 2005): 50-51. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed May 26, 2015).

<sup>259</sup> Julie Finley, "2012 Democracy Award: National Endowment for Democracy," *The Embassy of the Czech Republic*, in <http://www.ned.org/node/2377> (accessed on 19/4/2015).

in conjunction with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and most recently, the Freedom to Creative Leadership for Women Award.<sup>260</sup>

*Aung Din* served over four years behind bars as a political prisoner in Burma after helping to organize the country's nationwide pro-democracy uprising in 1988 as Vice-Chairperson of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), the largest national student organization, outlawed by the regime. He also served as Vice-Chairman of Burma's Youth Liberation Front (BYLF), and as Cabinet Secretary of the Parallel Government, which was founded by former Prime Minister U Nu during the peak of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising.<sup>261</sup> Amnesty International recognized him as a prisoner of conscience in 1989, and its worldwide chapters campaigned for his release. In 2003, he co-founded the Washington, DC-based U.S. Campaign for Burma (USCB), an umbrella group, gathering Burmese dissidents in exile and American activists, where he now serves as executive director.<sup>262</sup>

For many people, *Aung San Suu Kyi's* name is synonymous with the struggle for democracy in Burma (Myanmar). She is respected and admired for her courage and perseverance in the struggle for human rights and basic freedoms in a country where 'fear is a habit' and military misrule treats too many of its own citizens as enemies.<sup>263</sup> She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. She has continued to teach

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<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Lang, Hazel J. 2006. "The Courage of Aung San Suu Kyi," *Overland no.* 183: 61-66. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 28, 2015).

nonviolence, following in the footsteps of such leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King.

The teaching of Theravada Buddhists and example and the practice of people, like Aung San Suu Kyi, Min Ko Naing, Hkun Htun Oo, Kyaw Thu, Dr. Cynthia Maung, Aung Din, *and* their leadership, have brought Burma (Myanmar) to a better situation.

Similarly the Catholic Church in Myanmar is doing a great work regarding the promotion of charity and social justice in Myanmar. Across the country, where people are homeless and helpless, the Church is there, ready to help. As Archbishop Bo, who recently became the first Cardinal in Myanmar, expresses: “We know that everybody, every citizen, every Christian and every Catholic will have to contribute to the building of the nation.”<sup>264</sup> Catholic run the organization called *Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) - Caritas Myanmar*. Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) is a faith based social network at the service of the Catholic Church of Myanmar. Inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, especially the “Option for the Poor,” KMSS has been established and mandated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) as its social arm to serve the poor and the needy. The specific areas of the Church's mission give attention to a holistic form of human development, promotion of Justice and Peace, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance and emergency relief services.<sup>265</sup> KMSS is organized with a National Office (KMSS-National Office)

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<sup>264</sup> *Catholic News: Myanmar Church has Role to Play in Nation Building* (MARCH 24, 2013, Vol 63, No 06) in [http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8554:myanmar-church-has-role-to-play-in-nation-building&catid=333:march-24-2013-vol-63-no-06&Itemid=473](http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8554:myanmar-church-has-role-to-play-in-nation-building&catid=333:march-24-2013-vol-63-no-06&Itemid=473) (accessed on 28/4/2015).

<sup>265</sup> *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM): Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) - Caritas Myanmar* in <http://www.catholicmyanmar.org/Directory/commissions/caritas-myanmar> (accessed on 22/4/2015).

located in Yangon, and 16 Diocesan Offices (DOs). The National Office was established in 2001.<sup>266</sup>

In 2008 Cyclone Nargis caused the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar, in which many people lost their lives. Burma's isolationist regime refused to open its borders for international aid organizations, but the Catholic Church was already there on the ground and put to work its network of solidarity and helped through its parishes and religious orders.<sup>267</sup> We can always experience the Church engaged for the needy in some parts of Myanmar, especially in remote areas, though there can be some difficulty with the government. In the year 2008 many people died because of the Cyclone Nargis. In those tragedies the Church was able to save many lives of people. "Many of these people would now be dead if it had not been for the work of the church," archbishop of Mandalay, Paul Zingtung Grawng, told a gathering of Caritas Internationalis in Rome. "Church workers went immediately into the worst hit villages to rescue people and bring them to safety. We are able to provide food, shelter and medicine to people in camps in churches."<sup>268</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2008 marked the three month anniversary of cyclone Nargis. And despite the difficulties, Caritas' immediate response, through the Church and other partners in Myanmar, has saved many lives and brought urgent relief to 82,700 children, women and men.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *National Catholic Reporter: Burma Light and Hope Amid Brutality* (July 24, 2010), in <http://ncronline.org/news/global/burma-light-and-hope-amid-brutality> (accessed on 28/4/2015).

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> Tim O'Connor, *Caritas making a difference three months after Myanmar cyclone* in <http://www.caritas.org/2008/11/caritas-making-a-difference-three-months-after-myanmar-cyclone/> (accessed on 28/4/2015).

Along the country, Parishes and monasteries have started boarding schools in the cities to provide education in rural areas. With the help of the Church there are many children able to study, because most of the poor families can not support their children with the necessary education fee, so they ask their children to study in boarding schools, with the help of the Church. The researcher himself was studying in a boarding school from high school till he finished his University in Myanmar.

As the civil war is going on between the Kachin and the Myanmar government, there are many refugees fleeing from violence. Also in this situation the Church is helping the needy, as a priest from Myitkyina states: “The churches are open to receive refugees, Caritas has been mobilized and all dioceses are organizing aid for the Diocese of Myitkyina, affected by the conflict. The news is fragmentary, but we know that the suffering of civilians and displaced persons continue to rise, with over 10,000 in number. All this is made more difficult by the rainy season.”<sup>270</sup> Myitkyina Bishop Francis Daw Tang has also launched an appeal to the people, stating: “The Church is ready to help you, our churches and the faithful will welcome you with open arms, to dry your tears and console you.”<sup>271</sup>

The goodness of human beings can contribute to justice and peace in the society, “he who has understanding and great wisdom does not think of harming himself or another, nor of harming both alike. He rather thinks of his own welfare, of that of others, of that of both, and of the welfare of the whole world. In that way one shows

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<sup>270</sup> *Catholic News: Church groups struggle to help Kachin refugees fleeing Myanmar violence* (July 17, 2011, Vol 61, No 14) in [http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6375:church-groups-struggle-to-help-kachin-refugees-fleeing-myanmar-violence&catid=278:july-17-2011-vol-61-no-14&Itemid=473](http://catholicnews.sg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6375:church-groups-struggle-to-help-kachin-refugees-fleeing-myanmar-violence&catid=278:july-17-2011-vol-61-no-14&Itemid=473) (accessed on 22/4/2015).

<sup>271</sup> *Catholic News: Church groups struggle to help Kachin refugees fleeing Myanmar violence* (July 17, 2011, Vol 61, No 14).

understanding and great wisdom.”<sup>272</sup> For example there were Buddhist – Muslim clashes in 2012 in Myanmar in the northern Rakhine state, which borders to Bangladesh. These clashes occurred between the ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. This problem did not come about by the actions of good Buddhists and good Muslims. It started with a small group,

The escalation of violence in June between Rakhine and Rohingya in Rakhine state initially started with a rape, robbery and murder of a Rakhine young woman by three Muslim youths in Yanbe township on 28 May (2008) and the subsequent killing of 10 Muslim males in a passenger bus in Taung gup township on 3 June. Following the two incidents, riots broke out between the two communities in three different townships in Sittwe, Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Angry rioters on both sides torched and destroyed homes, shops, guest houses, and engaged in a killing spree. According to the Myanmar’s government’s report released in July, 77 people from both communities were killed and 109 people were injured. A total of 4822 homes, 17 mosques, 15 monasteries and three schools were burnt down.<sup>273</sup>

Muslims are not only living in the Rakhine state, they are living all across Myanmar. Not all Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar are involved in this conflict. The good people try to cease this problem but the immature people involved are not easy to stop, there is even a Buddhist monk name Ashin Wirathun, who calls himself this *Burmese Bin Laden*, who is anti-Muslim. For me it is hard to imagine that the Buddhist monk is involved and is against the minority of other human beings and speaks against them. The good Buddhist should not speak against other human beings, and even should not kill animals.

Myanmar first cardinal, Charles Maung Bo, during a Reuters interview in his office at Yangon January 6, 2015, “called for mutual understanding and urged the

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<sup>272</sup> Ken Jones, “Buddhism and Social Action: An Exploration,” *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013.

<sup>273</sup> Nehginpao Kipgen, "Conflict in Rakhine State in Myanmar: Rohingya Muslims' Conundrum," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no. 2 (June 2013): 298-310. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 27, 2015).

government to do more to curb hate speech by radical monks.”<sup>274</sup> To be able to help the world demands from both Buddhism and Catholicism a united care and concern for all people.

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<sup>274</sup> Jared Ferrie, “Myanmar’s new Catholic cardinal warns against religious extremism,” eds. Clarence Fernandez, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/06/us-myanmar-religion-idUSKBN0KF10020150106> (accessed on 28/5/2015).

## CONCLUSION

After reflecting briefly on the teachings of Catholicism and Buddhism on social justice, the researcher is ready to draw some conclusions.

As I mentioned above, a true Catholic and a true Buddhist, being an authentic human being, will never do injustice to other human beings. The world needs true Catholics and true Buddhists to promote social justice. Previously, I did not realize that also Buddhism contains a good teaching on justice, I used to think that only Catholics have a very rich teaching on justice, although I was growing up myself in a Buddhist country. Only after reading and doing some research on Buddhism I came to know that Buddhism also has very good elements of teaching on justice and social justice. To guide the world into a better world the followers of Jesus and the followers of Buddha have to learn from each other and help each other to let social justice flourish. A true Christian should not be told by non-Christians, “I like your Christ, but I do not like you Christians. You Christians are so unlike your Christ” (Mahatma Gandhi) let us learn from each other. It is better that two people carry a load together than one person alone: the load is also lighter by that.

The researcher could only set out for a start. He could not touch and answer all questions involved. The author is fully convinced that it was worthwhile for him to pursue this difficult and challenging research on one aspect of the teaching of these two great religions. He hopes that other researchers will go deeper into the rich and attractive forest of social teachings on justice, love, non-violence and peace of the Christian and Buddhist faith tradition.

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