



NORWEGIAN  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**Mission Challenge:**

**The Strategy and Method of Evangelism Among Buddhist People in Myanmar**

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*This Master's Thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA degree at*

MF Norwegian School of Theology, [2 year]

AVH5010: Master's Thesis (60 ECTS)

Master of Theology

(39107 words)

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# **DEDICATION**

THIS  
THESIS  
IS  
DEDICATED  
TO

MY BELOVED PARENT

(Khar Dun & Fam Ria)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise the Lord. First of all, I give all glory and honor to the Lord our God who has given me this opportunity to study. Indeed, this golden privilege built me up and equipped me in preparing myself for His ministry. In return, I would serve Him with all my strength, wisdom, and knowledge until the end of my life.

I hereby express my sincere thanks to all the faculties of Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultet (MF: Norwegian School of Theology) for offering and giving the best knowledge whereby I learnt all the knowledge during my master study. It wouldn't have been possible to get all the knowledge I have gained during my studies in MF without your admission.

My special gratitude goes to Roar G. Fotland (Hovedveileder) for his kindness, patience, help, love and his supervision on writing my thesis in order to accomplish my master study. His heart for students, as well as the time and knowledge he shared with me is highly appreciated and very much beneficial. I would not be able to finish my thesis without his supervision.

Words will never be enough to express my sincere thanks to my parents Khar Dun and Fam Ria who always love, encourage and pray for me in any situation I may find myself in; times of difficulties and happiness. They are heroes of faith and love whom I would imitate to become a good parent.

My gratitude goes to my fiancée Bawi Tha Hnem Cinzah for her prayer support, encouragement and grammar correction.

I would also like to thank Norway Chin Mission Church for their financial and prayer support during my study in Norway. And my heart-felt thanks goes to Van Bik and his family, Than Khar and his family, Siang Hmung and his family for providing accommodation during my study. Their support will be returned richly from our living God who has all the richness.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose:**

The central purpose of writing this Thesis is to discuss some of the possible strategies and methods of evangelism and doing mission in Myanmar in this modern day. The paper will include the comparison doctrine of Buddhist and theological responding to the main teaching of Theravada Buddhism in order to understand how to have faith dialogue with Buddhists in doing mission. This paper is also a challenge and contributions to theological schools and Christian colleges, local churches and foreign missionaries that willing to introduce Christ in Myanmar. Christianity was first introduced to Myanmar by Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century. However, these missionaries withdrew because of many difficulties. A more permanent Christian presence started with the Barnabite Fathers in the eighteenth century and the Baptist mission of Adoniram and Ann Judson of America in the early nineteenth century. In spite of this quite early beginning of Christianity, it is still regarded as a 'potted plant' that has not been successfully transplanted onto the Burma soil.

Different theologians, missionaries and evangelists are trying to find the answer as to why the Burmese do not open their hearts to Christianity. Different answers are proposed: the need of contextualization in missions; the unbalanced social and evangelical approach; some theological problems; the need for scholarship in Buddhism to do better missions; the need of better strategies in missions; the authoritative political pressure; the assumption is that long centuries of Buddhist teachings have led the Burmese to ignore the eternal God and the Christian message. As Christian, we must be aware of the plurality and religious experiences and cultures. We must value this diversity at the same time that we strive for solidarity of all peoples living in Myanmar.

The first American Baptist Missionary Adoniram Judson said that it was easier to extract a tooth from the tiger's mouth than to convert a Burmese Buddhist to Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Burmese regarded Christianity as a foreign religion, because it came to Myanmar much later than Buddhism, brought by westerners. Myanmar was a British colony for more than one hundred years. Therefore, in the understanding of the Burmese people, westerners were practicing the 3-M policy: merchant, missionary, and military. They sent

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Clasper, 'Burma The Church Amid The Pagoda' in G.H. Anderson ed., *Christ and Crisis in Southeast Asia* (New York: Friendship Press, 1968), p. 16

merchant first, then missionaries and finally military to occupy the land. These policies still take place in some of the heart of Burmese suspecting Christian mission and evangelism. The country itself is very much interested and been approached by different ministries, missionaries, and evangelists both from local and foreign for decade. However, there are plenty of works to do evangelism and mission across the country.

### **Motivation**

One of the great facts in this 21<sup>st</sup> century is a new awareness of the need for solidarity and harmonious interrelations of faith communities. I was involving with some students in the ministry called Friday Evangelism in North Dagon, Yangon, Myanmar during my ministry in Bible College. A group of Reaching The World Bible College' student collected their offerings and had evangelism to Buddhist people around North Dagon areas every Friday. They were a group of people with one leader among themselves like local municipal. Most of them work in a farm and live from hand to mouth. They never heard of the gospel. Once moment that we laughed so hardly the question raised by one of the group, is Jesus edible? From that time on, I have a heart-felt to think the necessity of evangelism. Reaching The World ministry focus its mission in Shan State, the biggest state in Myanmar. We usually have assembly meeting once a year in Taungkyi. I had seen and met with some missionaries with theirs difficulties and anxieties, challenges of Buddhist resistance to Christianity. From that time on, I dream of writing paper on the strategies and methods of evangelism among Buddhist People in Myanmar.

### **The statement of problems**

This study will tackles the following question in order to address the strategy and method of reaching out Buddhist in Myanmar. My grand question is:

What might be effective strategies and methods to reach out Burmese Buddhist in accordance with leading evangelists, pastors, and missionaries?

As I already have mentioned the Christianity was introduce to Myanmar since sixteenth century but still regarded as a 'potted plant' that has not been successfully transplanted onto the Burma soil. The grand research question will be answered by addressing the following sub-research questions.

1. What is the major issue in Burmese Buddhist resistance to Christianity?

2. What are the basic knowledge and characters required for the churches in Myanmar to reach the Buddhists with the gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. What are the methods of evangelism that are already practiced in Myanmar?
4. What are major hindrances and barriers for church mission in Myanmar?
5. Is it possible to overcome those barriers in accordance with the gospel?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study has various objectives that are as follows. First, the study will identify the required knowledge and characters in order to reach Buddhists in Myanmar. In addition to this, it will also explore the relevant strategy and method of evangelism and mission in Myanmar. Meanwhile, the study also aims to point out the major barriers of mission that hindrances the Burmese Buddhist into Christianity in Myanmar and examine ways to overcome these barriers.

### **Methodology**

In this thesis, I will use the combination of qualitative and literature research as the main methods.

As interviews are one of the most flexible and widely used methods for gaining qualitative information about people's experiences, views and feelings I thought it will be an appropriate method for obtaining qualitative results that I wish to achieve. Interviews are particularly good tools for gaining detailed information where the research question is open-ended in terms of the range of possible answers, which is the purpose of this study. The level of structure in an interview can vary, but I will follow a semi-structure format: meaning that I will develop a guide to the topics that I wish to cover in the conversation, and prepare a number of introductory questions to ask. However, I am open to follow different paths of conversation that emerge over the course of the interview, and prompt the informant to clarify and/ or expand on certain points that I find interesting and appropriate. This format has 3 distinctive advantages in different scenarios as follows;

- When interviewees are likely to provide interesting data in different areas but there is no way of knowing exactly who will provide which information
- When wanting to be able to discuss emerging findings with the interviewees and test out ideas with them, without being held within a rigid structure

- When the interviewee is unclear about what to expect during the discussion, it will allow sending the outline of questions to them in advance.<sup>2</sup>

Interviews can be time-consuming, require high expenses (e.g. for travel) and so I carefully selected informants who will have the knowledge and experiences necessary to answer the research question. I also concluded that rather than face to face interviews, it would be most appropriate to conduct the interviews via modern technology as it is easy to arrange and inexpensive, while all relevant details can still be explored. As Bryman (2012) explains this method is one where the interviewer uses a list of general questions not necessarily following the sequence of the question? I personally reached out to interview at least ten Pentecostal missionaries, pastors, and evangelists both from local church in Myanmar and abroad. I received replies from four of them who wish to remain anonymous, and an interview answers are integrated in the text itself. Interviews were conducted via the most appropriate medium under the circumstances; phone, email, Skype, etc.

I will also be using the method of literature research to obtain results for my study. Literatures are readily available and it is easier, less expensive and less time-consuming to obtain. Moreover, it can be studied and analyzed over a long period of time. The ability to access information from a variety of literature is often referred to as ‘ocean of knowledge’ because of the vast amount of information available. Therefore, I can read through, analyze and sort literatures in order to identify the essential attribute relating to my research question and carefully select the ones that are relevant to my research question. In selecting representative literatures, I will follow the following principles; Purpose: the material must be valid and valuable with theoretical or background information of the research question. The literature should be able to find past trends and predict the future relevant to research topic. Authority: the author of the literature has a reputation or is representative in the research field. This can also be known by how many times the literature has been cited. Effectiveness: data must be accurate, complete, reflective, typical, and importantly not out of date. Reliability: the reliability of literature can be measured by checking if the literature is authentic, fake or modified. After selecting my representative literatures, I will then conduct creative analysis, comparison and summarizing the literatures.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Beardsworth, A, Bresnen, M, Bryman, A & Keil, T, *Qualitative Research and the Study of Leadership*, Human Relations 1988 vol. 41, p. 13-29

<sup>3</sup> Barbara B. Kawukich, "Qualitative research method" volume 6, No. 2, Art. 43 – May 2005. It is studied through internet <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>

### **Scope and limitation**

This thesis will present evangelistic methods, which has been practiced and still practical and relevant to the Burmese Buddhist context. And explain the basic teaching of Theravada Buddhism and the theological response to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism because it will bring better communication with Burmese Buddhist when in evangelism with having the knowledge of their teaching. The strategies and methods of evangelism and doing mission in Myanmar are mainly taken from personal experiences, relevant literatures, experienced-interviewed and articles. This study, concentrate more on contextual perspective of mission within the context of Myanmar. In this study, I will not mention detail about Myanmar Buddhist concepts, philosophy, and characters but focus more on how to introduce Christ in the community of Buddhists in Myanmar.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant because there is the need of strategy and method of evangelizing the Buddhist in Myanmar with the gospel of Jesus Christ in accordance with the relevant mission strategy and method. There are barriers and hindrances to overcome in order to have better and successful mission. Both local and foreign missionaries introduced Christianity with difficulties and challenges for decade and seen many good results with fruitful. However, there are still unfinished tasks of mission both within and without the church in Myanmar.

### **Thesis Design**

The thesis is organized as follows; I have briefly written the background and context of Myanmar in chapters two and three followed by the provision of the main teaching of Theravada Buddhism. After learning the main teaching of Theravada Buddhism, I have provided the theological response to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism in order to have better faith dialogue in chapter four. There are five reasons as to why Bama Buddhists are resistance to Christianity and the hindrances are mentioned in chapter five. As Bama Buddhists are devoted in their beliefs which become their cultures and customs, chapter six give the contextual communication of the gospel in Myanmar. Chapter seven and eight provide the strategies and methods of evangelism in order to introduce the gospel in various ways. The writer invites and write the recommendations for church actions in chapter nine. After all, the thesis ended in chapter ten of conclusion.

## **CHAPTER II**

# **A BRIEF BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF MYANMAR**

### **A. The Land**

Myanmar is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia. The country's long coastline fronts on the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. Myanmar neighbors include India and Bangladesh to the west, China, Thailand, and Laos to the north and east, covering an area of 261228 sq.mm (676577 sq.km). The country is about 1300 miles long from north to south including its 400 miles long Malay Peninsula and is about 575 miles from east to west at its widest extent. There is four man physiographic regions: the northern mountains, the western mountains, the central low lands and the Shan Plateau in the east. Mount Hkakabo (19578 feet) is the country's highest peak, located in the northern border with China. The major rivers are; Irrawaddy, Chindwin, Sittaung and Salween. The Irrawaddy is navigable for nearly 900 miles of its 1300 miles length and drains about two-thirds of the country's surface.<sup>4</sup>

There are three seasons: a cold dry period from October to February, a hot dry period from March to the middle of May to October. Annual rainfall ranges from 200 inches along the coastal plains and mountains to 100 inches within the delta regions, and 35 inches for the central basin around Mandalay. Average daily maximum temperatures for the closest and warmest months range between 85 and 97F at Yangon. Rice production is the most important work, and nearly half of the country is forested with evergreen tropical forest, hardwood monsoon forest, and forest of oak and pine. Animal life is abundant. The elephant is important to produce more heavy beams of teak, Myanmar's chief export. Myanmar possesses a range of commercially exploitable mineral resources including silver, copper, lead, zinc, tin, petroleum, natural gas, high-quality jade, tungsten, gold, precious stones, and coal.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Philip W. Geotz and others, eds., *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 2. 15th. Ed. (Chicago: Encyclopedia of Britannica, Inc. 1989), p. 657

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 657

## **B. The People**

Burmese chronicles draw the lineage of Burmese kings from Tagaung, 150 kilometers up from Mandalay, which flourished in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In the first century B.C, a civilization flourished in the Irrawaddy River valley from Tagaung to Prome, the Pyu civilization, which reached a high level of economic, social and cultural development.<sup>6</sup>

It is not clear who were the original inhabitants of Myanmar. Migrations from central Asia into Myanmar began at least 2000 years ago. The people of Mon-Khamer stock came first and settled in the delta area, and the people of Tibeto-Myanmar began arriving in the area early in the first century A.D. They are Pyu, Burmese, Chin, and Kachin. The third major group of immigrants was the Thai-Shan. In their daily lives most Myanmar people cling to traditional values and customs. The political and cultural center of Myanmar is determined by geographical figuration. The political and cultural center of Myanmar has been the Irrawaddy River valley. The Pyu, whose civilization occupied and most likely controlled the country from the first millennium B.C until the ninth century followed by the Burmese. Mon and Shan groups challenged the power of Burmese, and these three groups often changed positions until the colonial period, though Burmese dominated the country most often and longest. These main three groups were associated with Chin, Kachin, and Karen.<sup>7</sup>

## **C. Religion**

Regarding the religion of Myanmar, Ko Zar Ni mentions that

Prior to the spread of Buddhism, the practice of spirit worship was prevalent among the Burmese. This practice was so strong that even after Buddhism became the major philosophical system, spirit worship came to be incorporated into Buddhist traditions, and this holds the present day. Over the course of time, Burmese embodied spiritualistic elements into Buddhism.<sup>8</sup>

Most Burmese believe the flats are everywhere, dwelling in animate beings and inanimate objects. According to their belief system, everyone has their own personal guardian spirit to record and regulate their thoughts and behavior. Human beings, but even huge plants, rivers,

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<sup>6</sup> *The socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, Published by the information and Broadcasting Department* (Yangon: Printing and publishing Corporation, ed), p. 3

<sup>7</sup> *Lands and Peoples, Grolier Incorporated, Vol. 2* (USA: Hawthorn Books Inc. 1993), p. 269

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Greenwood, *Burma Then and Now*, PP. 59-67.

forests, houses, streets, villages, lakes, fields, towns, and cities have guardian spirits. There are good spirits and evil spirits. Therefore, Burmese fear the evil spirits, so that they avoid doing things that might displease spirits.<sup>9</sup>

Burmese are of the Mongolian-race, but their traditions, folklores, legends, and names do not harked back to China or Mongolia but are largely copied from Hindus. According to the early part of their chronicles they descended from the clansmen of Buddha. Their Mongolia traditions therefore died out. Hindu cultural influence took because Indian colonists came through Assam to Upper Myanmar and by sea from south India to lower Myanmar, bringing their clergy with them. Even though Buddhism came to Myanmar as part of the Hindu overseas expansion, it affected only the towns and trade centers, the mass of the people were animists.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to the coming of “Theravada” Buddhism to Pagan, there were “naga” (dragon) worship, spirits (nats) worship, Visnuite Brahmanism, Hinduism, Malayana Buddhism and its allied Tantric cults already existed. The cult of Mahagiri nats who are brother and sister had their abode at Mount Popa is very strong even up to today.<sup>11</sup>

#### **D. The Coming of “Theravada Buddhism”**

The records and annals regarding Buddhism in Myanmar such as “Sasama Vamsa” claimed that Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar since the early lifetime of the Buddha, about the sixth century B.C.<sup>12</sup> Not long after King Anawratha (1044-77), the founder of the Pagan Dynasty seized the throne, Shin Aahan, son of a Thaton Brahman, brought “Theravada Buddhism to Pagan in 1056. He was a Taling monk of the Theravada School of Southern Buddhism, who burned to evangelize upper Burma.<sup>13</sup> The mission work of Shin Aahan could not thrive because he had not brought sacred books, for writing was still rare. At that time, Thaton had thirty complete sets of the Tripitaka, the three scriptures. Therefore, Shin Aahan urged Anawratha to procure copies from Thaton so that Anawratha could send envoys. When Thaton refused to give the sacred books, Anawratha marched on Thaton and he surrendered after three months. He went back to Pagan with captive chief and court, all the monks, the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 1

<sup>10</sup> G.E Harvey, *Out line History of Burma* (Bombay, Longman: Green and Co., 1989), p. 6

<sup>11</sup> *Glimpses of Glorious Pagan*, Published by Department of History, University of Yangon (Yangon: The University Press, 1986), p. ix

<sup>12</sup> Sao Htun Hmat Win, “*Basic Principle of Buddhism and Essentials of Burmese Buddhism*” (Yangon: Department of Religious Affairs, 1979), p. 11

<sup>13</sup> G.E Harvey, *Out Line History of Burma*, P. 19

entire population numbering 30000, and 32 white elephants, each laden with scriptures and relics.<sup>14</sup>

When “Theravada” Buddhism came to Pagan, it was largely molded and reshaped not only by primitive “naga” (dragon) and spirit worship, but also by Visnuite Brahmanism, Moreover, most of all the inscriptions of the year 1248, the painting on the walls, and the worship temples prove that the “Theravada” flourished in Pagan side by side with Mahayana and its allied Tantric cults. Even some of the gods of the Mahayana pantheon, e.g., Avolokitesvara and Maitreya were adopted from Mahayana. Because of the support of the throne, “Theravada” Buddhism emerged completely triumphant and wiped out its rival.<sup>15</sup> John Bullit explains that

Theravada (Pali: thera-elders + vada-word, doctrine), the “Doctrine of the Elders,” is the name for the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali Canon, or Tipitaka, which scholars generally accept as the oldest record of the Buddha’s teachings. For many centuries, Theravada has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand; today Theravada Buddhists number over 100 million worldwide. In recent decades Theravada has begun to take root in the West primarily in Europe and USA.<sup>16</sup>

“Theravada” Buddhism is identified with many names such as “Southern Buddhism,” in contrast to northern Buddhism, and “Hinayana” (the Lesser Vehicles), in contrast to Mahayana (the Great Vehicles). The language of “Theravada” canonical texts is Pali, probably spoken in central India during the Buddha’s time. The Buddha’s forty-five years of teachings were recorded shortly after his death and passed down within the monastic community following a well-established oral tradition. By about 100 B.C, Tipitaka was first fixed in writing by Sinhala scribe monks in Sri Lanka.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the difference between “Hinayana” and “Mahayana,” the Chinese traveler I-Tsing (635-713), who saw both impartially as living realities in India mentions, “Those who worship Bodhisattvas (enlighten beings) and read Mahayana Sutras are called Mahayanists, while those who do not do this are called Hinayanists (Theravadins).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., P. 20

<sup>15</sup> Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma* (Yangon: Buddha Sasana council Press, 1936), P. 99

<sup>16</sup> John Bullit, “*What is Theravada Buddhism?*” (Wilshire, England: The Sayagyi U ba Khin Memorial Turst, 1998), P. 1

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., P. 1

<sup>18</sup> Lucien Stryk, ed., *World of the Buddha A Reader* (Garden city, New York: Doubleday and company Inc., 1968), xxxviii

## **E. The Nature of Culture**

Simply speaking culture is ‘the patterned way in which people do things together.’ In more accurate definition, culture is ‘the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society.’ It involves the beliefs, values, customs and institutions, which bind a society together with a sense of identity, value, security and continuity.<sup>19</sup> Every culture has its distinctive and praiseworthy, tolerable and good things amidst many intolerable, awful, horrible and terrible things. Every culture, anyhow, has its values.

### **E: 1. The Culture and Costumes of Myanmar Buddhist**

Myanmar was one of an English speaking country in Asia during the British colony. After a few years later of her independent, the government did not offer any English subject in the School as the country was strongly ruled by the nationalist party. The Burmese very much value their cultures and customs. The government institutions have been established to encourage the flowering the arts, under the direction of a ministry of Union Culture set up in March 1952.<sup>20</sup> There is a Myanmar Orchestra (composed of traditional Burmese instruments) unlike Western Orchestra, state school of music, drama, and fine arts. Myanmar Buddhist songs has different lovely tunes that totally different from western music. One of Even Bama Buddhist’s family relationship between husband and wife; parents and children; younger and elder; and their community, attitude and philosophy are very much different other countries. The country has hundreds of festivals. The majority of Burma festivals are cultural and religious. I include only three festivals out of many large and most popular Burma festivals. Anandar Pagoda Festival (23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> January), which is a unique and very important Buddhist festival. 26<sup>th</sup> January is the full moon day and most crowded day. Thingyan New Year Festival (13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April), which is celebrated to welcome Myanmar New Year for four days. It also marks the end of the old year and beginning of the new. Tazaungdaing Light Festival (16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November), which is people carry the candle on their shoulders proceed through town and gather in the city monastery. Homes and offices are colorfully lit and you will see fireworks and hot air balloons at night. The schoolgirls and boys folded their hand when talking with teacher and elder in the way of showing their respect to them. Men wear ‘Tteih-pung’ and ‘longgyi,’ women wear ‘yin-shih’ and ‘tta-htmin’.

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<sup>19</sup> Roger Bowen, 82

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A study of the First year of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 180

## **E: 2. Myanmar Buddhist Family**

Family in the definition from Oxford dictionary means “the body of persons who live in one house or under one head, including parents, children, and servants. But in Myanmar the term for family is “mi-ta-suh”, meaning ‘mother-offspring-groups’ or “ta-mi-ta-pha, meaning, “offspring-mother-offspring-father.” The term for the parents is ‘mi-ba’ in Burmese, it means mother-father. The term ‘ta-mi’ refers calling to daughter and “ta” to son.

According to Mi Mi Khaing, “mother has been placed always the first, and she is seen as the family’s base and strength while the father has been respected as the spirit head of the house.”<sup>21</sup> As Buddhism profoundly dominates all aspects of life in the Myanmar Buddhist family, they believe that the doctrine of Karma (deed or action) has caused the individual to become a family by various means such as birth, marriage, and even adoption. U Hla Pe said, “The law of Karma is a contributory fact to the coalescence of a family.”<sup>22</sup>

Actually, Buddhism teaches that the virtue and good for a person is to respect their parents in the same level with the Buddha, the law, and the teacher. Thus, Myanmar Buddhist children use to kneeling down before their parents and the parents pray for them in order to receive blessings. Through that the relationship is deepened and harmonious in the family, especially between the parents and children.

Therefore, “the son, on marriage, may leave home and the daughter too, but where they go, they take that feeling along, and it is customary for them, even when they reach advanced years, to inform, consult, or seek instructions from their parents when they make decision in business or professional or family life.”<sup>23</sup> It is very important to have male heir to ensure posterity in the Chinese and Chin families. “in fact, it was important to have a certain rites and rituals performed by male heirs, more women being inadequate. Unlike those nationalities, the Bama Buddhist family through realizing that nothing is permanent on this world, do not have much trouble on this account, and there is equality between husband and wife, son and daughter.”<sup>24</sup> Regarding inherited from their parents by children is the same opportunity male and female in the family but in terms of authority women are lowered than men in the mind of Myanmar Buddhist.

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<sup>21</sup> Mi Mi Khaing, *The World of Burmese Women* (London: The Pitman Press, 1984), p. 15

<sup>22</sup> Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature Historiography, scholarship. Language life and Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 168

<sup>23</sup> Maung Maung, *Law and Custom in Burma and the Burmese Family* (Netherlands: Matinu Nizhoff, 1963), pp. 45-46

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 47, 48

In the general sense, there is the same equality between husband and wife at home as well as in public. But since the teaching of Buddha is rooted in the heart of Bama Buddhist, the relationship of husband and wife is based on Buddhism. "It is said that the Buddha, in his discourses, never slighted the role of woman and in his personal life, and he spoke of highly of his female disciples as his monks."<sup>25</sup> Actually, the doctrine of Karma expresses that it possible for a woman to be born again as a man in the cycle of life after life, if she acts accordingly doing well in the present life. Then socialism stresses the equality of human rights in individuals so though those factors contribute to the development of the concept of equality of woman.

Therefore, the able woman, in Chronicles of Myanmar, and their contributions have been mentioned for the posterity to imitate for the fulfilling of their task in the history of Myanmar. In the ancient time, before the arrival of Buddhism and even after that, it seems to have the concept of subordination of woman to man and it is become part of Myanmar Buddhist culture and custom.

Since the husband is put into as the spirit head of the house, and he is the acknowledgement head of the family, but it does not mean that he is the only one who has all authority in the family. It does not also mean that the wife is a slave or subordinate. While the husband is accepted himself as the most responsible person for the family, the wife commits herself to stand together with him for fulfilling the task. The Myanmar Buddhist women use to respect her husband and submit her under the leadership of the husband.

There is something strange to study in Bama Buddhist philosophy that is the concept of the power and the glory of male, which is called "phoun" in Myanmar word. Khaing explained in this way; "every woman has a brother, husband, father or son, and she takes pride in this make quality called 'phoun', which is enshrined in him, in his attaining the peak of being born as human and male. This phoun will be cherished and guarded by her no less than by the man himself."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the attitude and manner of a wife to her husband is set by this philosophy. In respect to her husband's phoun, she does not sit or stand higher than him. She sleeps at his left as the phoun resides in his right. She did not sit with her legs stretched out in the direction to her husband. She does not keep any of her clothes over her husband's property. Concerning this manner, Mi Mi Khaing, a Burmese wife and scholar, notes that "it is simply a part of good manners, and it has nothing to do with inferiority, but connected with love and respect to

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<sup>25</sup> Khin Myo Chit, *Colorful Burma* (Series I) (Rangoon: Myittta Myo Press, 1930)

<sup>26</sup> Khaing. 16-17

her husband.”<sup>27</sup> In the general sense of the marriage life of Myanmar Buddhist has security in their relationship, because it is a special affair that is bonded by religion, law and custom, politics, and mutual commitment to each other. Divorce is very seldom in the community of Myanmar Buddhists.

Regarding the relationship of parents and children, the Myanmar Buddhist do accept their children as Jewel or the most precious thing in their lives as well as the children respect and value their parents as God so the children have a spirit of love-fear-respect to their parents. As Myanmar Buddhist parents, they do wish to fulfill at the responsibility given by the law and custom. They try their best to give the best education. They try to fulfill all religious demands.

The children also are expected to obey and respect their parents. During the youth, they are under the guardianship and control of their parents. Even a grown person, if he/she is unmarried, is expected to consult and seek advised of the parents everything he/she has to do. Customarily, the children are expected although it is not mandated in the constitution and by laws, to take care of their parents when they become old-aged. At least twice a year, they endow their parents with gifts in respect and gratitude.

In the philosophy of Myanmar Buddhism, the greatest benefactors are the parents. They never forget the good things that you have done, so later or sooner they will show you their gratitude. Buddhism extensively stresses the loving kindness or agape love. In Buddhist scripture, many stories were composed about the love and kindness of the parents were recorded, in fact, the Buddha, in his many discourses, spoke about the love and affection of the parents. Thus, it may be said that the relationship between the children and parents in Myanmar’s context is definitely grounded upon the teachings of Buddha, and it is unbreakable as strong as the steel and iron.

Respecting for elders and obedience to them are the culture and custom of the Myanmar Buddhist. The younger one has to submit to the authority of the elders and in the presence of the elder and the younger one in age has to stand with head bowed, and walk in a stooping attitude in front of the elders and sit neatly. When you receive and offer something to the elders, you have to use both hand. There are also different words to address different ages and position. Calling by name is not common and it is not polite. According to age, the title before the name changes, for instance, the “Maung”, as Mister in English refers to a male youth, “ko” for the male adult, and “U” for the old people and those who possess higher

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<sup>27</sup> Maung, 48

position in government office, and “U” is the official terminology used. For female, the word, “Ma” and “Daw” were used in accordance with the ages and position. The official terminology used for female is “Daw.”

### **E: 3. Social Customs in Community**

The Myanmar words, “Gohtu and Dana” are very common practice of the Buddhist. The Myanmar word “Gohtu” means doing good for someone in order to receive blessing by doing good thing to other or “Ah-Gohtu” means if you do bad thing for someone, you will receive curse. They are trying to do good thing to anyone at least once in a day.

The meaning of “Dana” is like donation in the temple or a religious offering. They are trying to offer money or some materials to the monasteries and schools and the name of donor is written in the walls of school and monastery. Those who can offer are respected and honor by the community and they have prestige in their lives.

Therefore, in the religious rituals, festivals, funerals, and social works are performed collectively. They are trying to Dana not only for the monks, also for others who has no food to eat, and assisted those who met accidents, supported social services, building schools and monasteries are done by Dana.

In the community of Myanmar Buddhist, virginity is very important for woman because if a man knows his girlfriend is not a virgin, probably their relationship will be broken. Premarital sex is prohibited both for man and woman.

In the concept of Myanmar Buddhist, marriage represents a threefold status. First, it is a formal transfer of primary loyalty and commitment from one family of orientation to one’s family of procreation. Second, it is a transition from a non-sexual to a sexual role. Third, it is a formal change from subordination to the authority of the parents to independence from them.<sup>28</sup> Generally, to be married is the choice of the boy and the girl not depended on arrangement by their parents although some parents try to influence their son or daughter to marry with whom they love and like. The wedding ceremony is very simple, and it is just like a public announcement of married and lives together as husband and wife legally. The groom needs to offer Dowry to the bride’s family. Divorce is not common in the community of Myanmar Buddhist. Birth control methods were used and practiced in the cities but in the provinces and remote areas still yet not common. Abortion is uncommon practice in the community but it is illegal and dangerous.

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<sup>28</sup> Chin Khua Khai, *Cross Amidst Pagodas: A History of the Assemblies of God in Myanmar* (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 1995), p. 33

In the community of Buddhist, the remaining of the decades lies in state of his own house for at least three days before his burial. The people in the society come to the house of the mourner and play card group by group is a custom of the Bama Buddhist. Playing card is illegal but during a week in the house of death person, the police cannot arrest them because this is their customs. Villagers and relatives bring something to eat or money for the death's family until they buried the dead person. Monks were invited in initiating burial service and a feast after burial. The Buddhist also has a memorial service annually or depends on the wish of the family for their love one who passed-away.

#### **E: 4. Philosophy**

Naturally, Myanmar Buddhists are very deep in their thinking. As the Buddha had often been described as a great philosopher, the Buddhism as full of philosophical ideas, thus, Myanmar Buddhism is grounded in the very hearts of Myanmar people, they, therefore, have philosophized everything in accordance with the teachings of Buddha. In their philosophy, they do not believe in the eternal God or the existence of a “supreme being” who is creator, ruler and judge of the whole universe. Everybody may become a Buddha, if they thoroughly try and follow the ways that the Buddha has prescribed. Rejecting the creation of the world, and they presume that everything that exist comes without beginning or end. Although Buddha himself prohibited to be speculated of the origin of universe, one author wrote “they found an evolution theory in the Buddhist scripture.”<sup>29</sup>

Myanmar Buddhists do not apparently accept the evolution theory, but believed that the origin of mankind is the descendants of Byamahs. They were the first living beings in this present world, according to myth and legend, after previous world had been destroyed seven times by fire and once by water. In those times, they did not have human bodies, but because of their greed and lust of the goodness of the earth, excrements formed, sexual organs developed, and lust came to men and women as they then became. So, there is a saying that the origin of mankind is from Byamahs.

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<sup>29</sup> Schumann, *Buddhism: An outline of its teaching and schools translated by George Feuerstein* (Lodon: Rider and company, 1937)

# CHAPTER III

## THE MAIN TEACHINGS OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM

This chapter deals with the main teaching of Theravada Buddhism. As the Theravada Buddhism was introduced in Myanmar since 12<sup>th</sup> century, the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism rooted deeply in the mind of Bama Buddhist. This chapter meant to explore the teaching of Theravada Buddhism so that the reader will better understands what the Burmese Buddhist beliefs and faith. The writer believe that understanding their teaching will help the reader to have better communicate the gospel with different beliefs and doctrines.

### **A. Anicca (Impermanence)**

Theravada Buddhism is rooted on a view of the world as ever changing or non-eternal, “anicca.” According to “Theravada” Buddhism, there is the three-fold negative character of the space-time order of “anicca” (impermanence), “anatta” (no self or no soul), and “dukkha” (suffering). Winston L. King states

Anicca, means not or non-permanent. Sensible existence in its absolute entirely, including universes, planets, physical entities or things, gods, men (both soul and body), animals, and even atoms are but flux-in-process. There is no permanence, even of the mildest sort in the substantial realities of matter and mind, because solid matter and matter-sensing mind are both constantly, even momentarily, changing. Existence is momentum. What exists only in the moment of its appearance and then is gone.<sup>30</sup>

According to the doctrine of “anicca,” all is in a constant process of change but nothing in the world is permanent. Material and mental entities are in a continual process of dying and being reborn. For this reason, the action of man who pursues earthly pleasures is under the course of impermanence, illusion, and vanity, pain, deception, weeping, destroying, and turning hope for enjoyment into sorrow and death. Therefore, Buddha taught that sense-pleasures are of little satisfaction, but of much pain, tribulation peril. As a matter of fact, the essence of Buddhism is described as teaching escape from suffering and winning of the pure and calm

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<sup>30</sup> Winston L. King, *A thousand lives away: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1964), PP. 17-18

refuge, which is deliverance unto an end from impermanence, inadequacy, purposelessness, lack of time reality or value that characterize the name and forms of phenomenal existence.

## **B. Anatta (Non-soul)**

The belief in soul (atman) is that which is eternal and indestructible in man's soul, as it passes on from birth until it gains freedom by the realization of its oneness with the word "soul" or "Brahman" is Brahmannical-Hindu faith. Buddhism reacts to this faith negatively in terms of its "anatta" (an-atman) doctrine, translated as "no-self" or "no-soul" or "no-substantial" self-nature. Winston L. King mentions that

Anatta usually translated no-self or no-soul. Or it may be better to put in such terms as these: the quality of insubstantiality, or of having no true self-nature, or of having no continuing identity. The Buddhism doctrine of "dependent origination" centers on this negation, for every entity, physical or mental, or physical-mental is a compounded entity, or a confection to use one translation. That is to say there are no identical substances or beings, which continue with new qualities added or in new states or conditions. These new qualities and states are the substance or being, which is different from though connected with the previous condition. And this is true at many levels.<sup>31</sup>

In modern "Theravada" Buddhism, the most persistent form of the statement of "anatta" doctrine is its application to the human self: a flat denial of any abiding personally, consciousness, self, or soul. At any one moment of life, these supposed entities are in constant flux. The denial of this self-belief is, in some respects, the central teaching of Buddhism.

## **C. Dukkha (Suffering)**

The four holy truths are the first preaching of the Buddha shortly after his enlightenment. In this teaching, there are the concept of dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha, and the path leading to the cessation of dukkha. The Buddha's many wide-ranging teachings all express various aspects of these same four Noble Truths. Edward Conze mentions the four holy truths

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., P. 18

1. What then is the holy truth of ill? Birth is ill, decay is ill, sickness is ill, death is ill. To be conjoined with what one dislikes means suffering. To be disjoined from what one likes means suffering. Not to get what one wants, also that means suffering.
2. What then is the holy truth of the origination of ill? It is that craving which leads to rebirth, accompanied by delight and greed, seeking its delight now here, now there, i.e.- craving for sensuous experience, craving to perpetuate oneself, craving for extinction.
3. What then is the holy truth of stopping of ill? It is the complete stopping of that craving, the withdrawal from it, the renouncing of it, throwing it back, liberation from it, non-attachment to it.
4. What then is the holy truth of the steps, which lead to the stopping of ill? It is this holy eight-fold path, which consists of: Right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.<sup>32</sup>

The term “dukkha” (suffering) is pain of mind, heart and body. The Buddha intended to affirm that the source of suffering is lying in man’s grasping or clinging to that which cannot give true or ultimate satisfaction. He ascribed the quality of suffering to that which is impermanent, and in that sense the empirical human body, mind with its feelings and consciousness may be reckoned as an ill.

#### **D. Karma (Law of causality)**

The Sanskrit word “karma” in its Pali form, “kamma,” means the effecting deed. It is the law of the harvest, which built upon the idea of the impermanence of the individual and the universal itself by the permanence of deeds. Karma is the core of the Buddhism because it is the causality of Samsara; round of rebirth, and it determines a man’s life condition, Winton L. King mentions

Karma is the cosmic law of the inescapable reaping of the morally deserved results of one’s own deeds. Just as every physical event is the result of a preceding event or set of circumstances, and in turn acts as the cause of another event, so every deed of every sentient being produces its consequences; and the nature of those consequences is in deed of mercy, kindness or generosity will inevitably yield its benefits of long life, health, or wealth in this existence in part, but most importantly in one’s next existence. And precisely the reverse occurs with evil deeds.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and development* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1957), P. 43

<sup>33</sup> Winton L. King, *A Thousand Lives Away*, P. 129

Karma is the power of one's past accumulation of good or bad thoughts, words and deeds, to determine the nature of his next birth. It is not by blind chance that one man is born happy, rich, handsome, and long-lived, and another poverty-stricken, miserable and ugly. According to the doctrine of karma, some are born as animals or in the hells and some in the glorious company of the devil or gods. All of these circumstances are the result of just and impartial law of karma. Man deserved the results of every word, thought, or deed of his innumerable past lives.

### **E. Samsara (Cycle of Rebirth)**

The beginning of samsara is inconceivable. The theory of moral causality or the law of "karma," which underscores the responsibility of each individual for his own actions is accompanied by "samsara" (cycle of rebirth) or transmigration. These teachings receive great attention and they are essentially related to each other. Lucien Stryk mentions

The Buddha's doctrines were centered in two basic Hindu conception, karma and samsara. The Hindu believed that the universe is inhabited by numberless souls in various degrees of elevation, each passing through many births and deaths in a variety of bodily forms. Each instant of existence experienced by the soul in each incarnation, is directly the result of action performed in a former birth, and in its turn affecting future experience. In short, each soul is made up of an endless chain of sorrow, and the only escape possible is spiritual insight and union with the Supreme Being Brahma.<sup>34</sup>

Concerning the human world, U Ba Khin mentions

This is a halfway house between heaven and hell. We experience pleasure and pain mixed together, in degrees as determined by our own past karma. From here, we can by developing our mental attitude, draw in our own mental forces that are in the higher planes. It is also from here that we can go down to the depths of depravity, and tune up with the forces of the lower order. There is no such constancy as in other planes of existence. One may be a saint today but one can be a rogue thereafter. One may be rich today but one may soon become poor. There is nothing that stable. All are subjected to the Law of karma.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lucien Stryk ed., *World of the Buddha A Reader*, P. xi

<sup>35</sup> U Ba Khin, *"What Buddhism Is?"* (Wilshire, England: The Sayakyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, 1998), P. 3

## F. Nibbana (Non-being)

The meaning of “Nibbana” is to be blown out, and where other traditions speak of eternal life, Buddhism speaks of the deathless.<sup>36</sup> In Buddhist theory the supra-sensory world of abiding reality is nibbana, which is the final and ultimate state of quietude. According to the Buddha, there are two kinds of “nibbana,” at lifetime being annihilation with some residual substratum, and a final “nibbana,” being annihilation without any residue.<sup>37</sup> “Nibbana” is conceived as something attainable by a complete deliverance from the whole catalogue of the defiling elements. Residual substratum refers to the foundation of belief in personal identity. Th. Stcherbatsky mentions

The body has collapsed ideas gone, all feelings vanished, all energies quiescent, and consciousness itself extinct. And likewise, with his body still at life, the saint enjoys some feeling, but in nirvana, consciousness is gone, just as light (when totally extinct), this lifeless nirvana, without any residue, is attained through an extinction of all elements of life.<sup>38</sup>

For a Buddhist, the goal is to reach the true “nibbana” the status of sinlessness and painlessness, sole deliverance from the sorrowful world of origination and decease. Therefore, the most prominent of Buddha’s disciples put the words in their mouths that they did not long for death and life, but for alert and watchful minds to achieve “nibbana.” However, the Buddhist thought of the goal of enlightenment is not eternal life, but rather the everlasting tranquility of death without rebirth, the absence of desire and striving, which is “nirvana.” To achieve “nibbana” there is an eightfold path of conduct to follow, which is the middle Way and the core of the Buddha’s teaching. The Noble Eightfold Path are: Sila (the precepts): right speech, right action, right livelihood; Samadhi (tranquility of mind); right exertion, right attentiveness, right concentration; Panna (Wisdom Insight): right aspiration, right understanding.<sup>39</sup>

In Myanmar, “Theravada” Buddhism is the dominant religion, Myanmar history has been built on Buddhism as a religion and political ideology, for Buddhism was the state religion in Myanmar until the British occupied the country in 1885. Myanmar kings were not only the defenders and promoters of Buddhism but also the builders of pagodas and the

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<sup>36</sup> Eward Conz, *Buddhism: its Essence and Development*, P. 166

<sup>37</sup> Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Concept of Buddhist Nirvana* (Delhi, Varanasi, patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), P. 2

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 194

<sup>39</sup> U Ba Khin, *What Buddhism Is?* P. 3

patrons of the sangha. The kings were believed to be Buddha's in the future. By tradition in Myanmar, the monk's person is sacred and inviolable, so that whatever role they chose to play has always been sanctified.

## **CHAPTER IV**

# **THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE MAIN TEACHINGS OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM**

This chapter deals with the comparison of Buddhist doctrine and theological response to their doctrine. The writer believes and intended to give the different between the doctrine of Buddhist and Christian in order to have a better dialogue of each faith and beliefs.

Unsuccessful mission can be discriminating or inferiority their beliefs and faith. The writer includes theological response to the doctrines of Theravada Buddhism so that the reader will understand the different doctrines between Theravada Buddhism and Christianity with neither superiority nor inferiority to each belief. This chapter will help the reader in doing evangelism to Buddhist how the teachings of Theravada Buddhism is response theologically.

### **A. Theological Response to the Doctrine of Anicca (Impermanence)**

The doctrine of Anicca (impermanence or change) is one of the fundamental Buddhist doctrines. It points out the basis fact that nothing in the world is fixed or permanent. One is not the same person, either physically, emotionally, or mentally, that he was ten years or even ten minutes ago. Living as he does, then as shifting being upon shifting sands, it is not possible for him to find lasting security.<sup>40</sup>

The Bible teaches that human beings are impermanent (Ps. 90:5-6), even heaven and earth will pass away (Mk. 13:31), everything is impermanent but God is eternal (Ps. 102:12, 26-27). The spirit of man also is found to be kindred nature with God the spirit, because man was created with the aptitude residing in the spiritual constitution that is common with God.

There are some of the grounds of belief in immortality of the human spirit. Firstly, there is a belief that the continuance of the spirit after death is almost the universal belief in all ages by man of all grades because the belief in future life is a vital part of the experience of mankind. Human beings feel the inferiority of body to spirit for they know that the spirit exists although the body has died. In other words, death is the reminder of deathlessness. As long as the death of the body is universal, man will be haunted by the strong conviction that the spirit does not die. Secondly, the conviction that another life follows, finds support in various human thoughts and experience. The human ego knows itself as a living being that

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<sup>40</sup> *"The Way of The Buddha,"* Published by the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust (Wiltshire, England: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Turst, 1998), P. 2

exerts a force non bodily capable of existence and spiritual. If God can exist as a Spirit so can man in the universe of God.<sup>41</sup>

Thirdly, the hope of immortality of human spirit was greatly enriched and confirmed by Jesus Christ. He made this hope, as a part of Christianity for it was not believed in advanced of his coming. Therefore, the Christian hope of immortality is not the characteristic of the Old Testament. Sadducees denied it and Pharisees firmly held it. II Timothy 1:10 mentions how truly Christ brought life and immortality to light. The eternal life of the New Testament is not merely continuance of being, but enriched and elevated as worthy and glorious as it is endless. Christ's resurrection effected immeasurably to enhance the sense of the reality of the unseen world and of life therein. Christ's resurrection gives the historic Christian hope of eternal life, which is clear, warm, holy and elevating. Therefore, the conviction that man lives forever is not merely a natural conviction among Christians, but reality. His promises and warnings reinforced man's premonition of endless life, because the hope of a glorious immortality is the crown of the gospel, and the danger of everlasting loss through sin is the warning, which is in contrast to the promise.<sup>42</sup> G.I Williamson mentions the state of men after death and of the resurrection of the dead as follows

The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledged one.<sup>43</sup>

At the resurrection, both the body and soul of believer will be perfectly holy and under the rule of God. The body and soul of the wicked are already dead in this life, for all people are by nature dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), so that their physical death merely marks advancement into death as a more complete experience. Not only their souls descend into descend into hell but the wrath of God remains on them. Therefore, physical death has

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<sup>41</sup> William Newton Clark, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), PP. 194-195

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, PP. 196-198

<sup>43</sup> G.I Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for study classes* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964), P. 252

the effect of delaying not only the full perfection and joy of the righteous, but also the full misery and suffering of the wicked.<sup>44</sup>

## **B. Theological Responses to the Doctrine of Anatta (Non-soul or No-self)**

Buddhist to not believe that there is anything everlasting or unchangeable in human beings, no soul or self in which a stable sense of “I” is basically false one that tries to set itself up in an unstable and temporary collection of elements. Take the analogy of a cart. A cart may be broken down into its basic components – axles, wheels, shelves, sides, etc. then the cart is no more, all it has is a pile of components. In the same way, “I” am made up of various elements or aggregates (skandhas): form (body), perception, conception, volition and consciousness (mind). Upon death, these elements do not vanish from the face of the universe, they form new combinations elsewhere. The whole universe therefore, is a great, ever-changing orchestration of interconnected movements without beginning or end.<sup>45</sup>

When Genesis 1:26-28 says that God creates man in His own image, there is a question then: what is the image of God in man? The image then must be nonmaterial part of man. There are different views. According to Dichotomous view, man is a two part being, consisting of body and soul. This view is taken from Genesis 2:7, and the words “soul” and “spirit” is used interchangeably. But according to Trichotomous view, man is a three-part being, consisting of body, soul, and spirit. Soul and spirit are mentioned to be different in function and in substance. According to this view, the body is for world-conscious, the soul is self-conscious, and the spirit is God-conscious. Paul seems to emphasize the tri-chotomous view, because in I Corinthians 2:14-3:4, he talks about a threefold classification, that is natural (fleshly), carnal (soulish), and spiritual. Also Hebrews 4:12 imply a distinction between soul and spirit. Multi-faceted view is a view that there are a number of additional terms that describe man’s non-physical nature.<sup>46</sup>

In Ephesians 4:23-24 and Colossians 3:9-10, Paul talks about the old-self and the new life. The original righteousness and holiness of man was lost through the fall, but restored in Christ, so that the new self of a believer is in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness. When he talked about the “old man” and “new man” in Romans 7:24, he did not mean that there were two Paul, but meant their co-existing, while it was the new man alone which was the real Paul, the remnant of the old was present, and able to lash out furiously

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., P. 254

<sup>45</sup> the way of the Buddha, P. 2

<sup>46</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), PP. 307-308

against the new. The new man cannot lose the conflict but prevail without bitter conflict. According to Hebrews 5:12-14, then new creature truly exists, and he may seem frightfully weak at first, but will prevail.

### **C. Theological Response to the Doctrine of Dukkha (Suffering)**

The four Noble Truths are the first preaching of the Buddha, shortly after his enlightenment. John Bullitt mentions

1. The Noble Truth of Dukkha (suffering, dissatisfaction, and stress): life is fundamentally fraught with dissatisfaction and disappointment;
2. The Noble Truth of the cause of Dukkha: the cause of this dissatisfaction is *tanha* (craving) in all its forms;
3. The Noble Truth of the cessation of Dukkha: an end to all that dissatisfaction can be found through the relinquishment and abandonment of craving;
4. The Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of Dukkha: there is a method Eightfold Path; to each of these Noble Truth the Buddha assigned a specific task, which the practitioner is to carry out: the first Noble Truth is to be comprehended; second is to be abandoned; the third is to be realized; the fourth is to be developed. The full realization of the third Noble Truth paves the way for the direct penetration of Nibbana, the transcendent freedom that stands as the final goal of all the Buddha's teaching.<sup>47</sup>

The Bible says that man is created in the image of God and human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God (I Cor. 6:19). Man is not just a part of nature as in Hinduism and Buddhism. Man is over nature, but responsible as a steward for ecological resources. Man's right to rule on the earth is thus at least a part of the meaning of being made in God's image. The true destiny of man is stated in Psalms 8:4-9 and Hebrews 2:5-8. When he fell, man lost the right to rule and hold dominion, but he is still considered to be made in God's image. Christ, the representative man won back the right for man.<sup>48</sup>

The biblical view of life is inherently good is a gift of God. After having made human beings, God saw everything that he had made was very good (Gen. 1:31). Life is by nature good because it partakes the goodness of God's creation. Life holds the status of special

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<sup>47</sup> U Ba Khin, *"What is Theravada Buddhism?"* (Wilshire, England: U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, 1995), P. 3

<sup>48</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Evangelical Theology: A survey and Review* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), P. 171

creation above the animal kingdom so that he not only names the animals and tames them, but also is the master of all other creatures (Gen. 1:28).

The Bible says that the birth and death of man is the plan of God (Ps. 90:3, 139:13-18), long life/old age as a blessing of God (Ex. 20:12), and death is the starting point of eternal life (Eccl. 12:7). David Winter says, “Evil, not death, is the final enemy of man. Death is the final enemy of man’s final enemy. Beyond it lies a new kind of life, where evil has no place at all.”<sup>49</sup>

According to the second Noble Truth of the cause of Dukkha, dissatisfaction is desire, which is the cause of suffering. In the Bible, the cause of suffering is sin, and free will is the origin of sin. Because the first sin consisted in man’s eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which was the testing of their obedience to God, for God had forbidden it.

Genesis chapter three describes the entrance of suffering into the realm of humanity as the result of sin. As judgment on the woman, she would experience pain in childbirth and the husband would rule over her. As judgment on the man, only through hard toil by man the earth would produce its fruits, and he was subject to death. Moreover, his sin was passed on to the entire human race so that all humanity became subject to death (Rom. 5:12). Not only the human race but also all creation would be affected by Adam’s sin. Therefore, animal life and nature would resist the man who would groan and long for the day of restoration (Rom. 8:19-21).

According to the third Noble Truth of the cessation of Dukkha (suffering), to end all dissatisfaction is abandoned of craving. Therefore, the full realization of this Noble Truth paves the way for direct penetration of nibbana, which is the final goal of all the Buddha’s teaching. Jesus Christ taught about contentment in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), and in the parable of the unworthy servant (Luke 17:7-10). Godliness with contentment is great gain (I Timothy 6:6). Jerry Bridges states

Gratitude is a handmaiden of contentment, an ever-growing attitude of gratitude will certainly make us more content since we will be focusing more on what we do have, both spiritually and materially, than on what we do not have. But fact that all we do have; we have by the grace of God. We do not deserve anything we have, materially or spiritually. It is all by his grace. Discontent usually arises when we think we are not getting as much as some one else...

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<sup>49</sup> David Winter, Hereafter: *What Happens After Death?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers and the Christian Book Promotion Trust, 1972), P. 91

Discontentment is a sign that we are living by works, that we deserve more than we are getting, that in some way God is not being fair to us.<sup>50</sup>

Concerning salvation, the Bible says that there is no way for those already died in their sins to give to themselves (Rom. 8:10-11, Eph. 2:1-5). Therefore, one cannot be apart from grace to have a reborn relationship to God, because one cannot simply grasp, claim, or seize faith, hope, and love. They are only gifts of the Spirit to unworthy sinners.

According to the fourth Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of Dukkha, the Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration is to be developed to achieve nibbana. Buddhism emphasizes the practice of this doctrine, for there is no savior. Theravada Buddhism posits no God in the Christian sense. Man therefore seeks within himself ultimate wisdom, purpose, significance, and peace or release. Man has the example and teaching of Buddha in this quest, but he must rely upon himself for his own final release from the predicament of endless rebirth and suffering. A syncretism of Buddhism and Christianity is not possible because they hold irreconcilable views of God.<sup>51</sup>

The Bible says that salvation is the gift of God through faith, not the result of works, so that no man may be boast (Eph. 2:8-9). By Jesus' redemptive work, God removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12), he puts all of our sins behind his back (Isa. 38:17), he treads our sins underfoot and hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19), he blots out our transgressions and remembers our sins no more (Col. 1:21,22). Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and whose sins the Lord will never count against him (Rom. 4:7-8).

On the other hand, the Bible tells us about the suffering of non-believers as divine judgment individually and collectively by pain (Acts 9:8-9), death (Ex. 12:29), and finesse, which is destroying evil by evil (Acts 19:16, Rev. 17:16-17).

## **D. Theological Response to the Doctrine of Karma (Law of Causality)**

The venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa Indapanno mentions that

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<sup>50</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently In God's Unfailing Love* (Colorado Springs: A Ministry of the Navigators, 1991), P. 199

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth E. Wells, *Theravada Buddhism and Protestant Christianity* (Chiangmai: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1963), P. 27

Buddhism, on the other hand, maintains: We are to help ourselves; we are to act by ourselves. And by doing, so we receive the fruits of our own actions. There is no God to distribute the fruits of our actions apart from the Law of Karma. If there be any God he would be nothing but the Law of Karma. In this way there is no personal God who lives somewhere in heaven and controls the destiny of beings. Even if one misunderstands good for evil and evil for good, and acts accordingly, the result will be good or bad according to the Law of Karma one reaps the fruits as one acts no matter how one interprets the action.<sup>52</sup>

The Bible says that there is no one who is righteous, not even one, there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless, there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one (Rom. 3:10-12), for man is Adam's race, having the seed of sinful nature even from the time of conception (Ps. 51:5). Jerry Bridges says that

Sin, in the final analysis, is rebellion against the sovereign creator, ruler, and judge of the universe. It resists the rightful prerogative of a sovereign ruler to command obedience from his subjects. It says to an absolutely holy and righteous God that His moral laws, which are a reflection of His own nature, are not worthy of our wholehearted obedience. Sin is not only a series of action; it is also an attitude that ignores the law of God. But it is even more than a rebellious attitude. Sin is a state of heart, a condition of our inmost being. It is a state of corruption, of vileness, yes, even of filthiness in God's side.<sup>53</sup>

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of law (Gal. 3:10). There is no righteous man before God, for no body observes and obeys all of the laws. The Bible mentions the condition of sinners that they are lost (Luke 19:10), condemned (John 3:18), under God's wrath (John 3:36), dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1), having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2.12).

Karma is not therefore synonymous with the Christian doctrine of sin.

In this situation God has provided a remedy for man. The Bible says, "You were dead through the trespasses and sin in which you once lived. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:1-9). Merit is different from grace. It is that which one earns, which rightly entitles one to reward. One is rewarded for merit deserves a just reward. Merit is based

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<sup>52</sup> Buddhadasa Indapanno, *Christianity and Buddhism* (Chiangmai: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1967), P. 32

<sup>53</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Gracing*, P. 30

on justice, not mercy. The language of merit is awkward and uncomfortable in the presence of grace. Grace is not like a wage, given in return for goods or services, but a gift freely given out of divine love.<sup>54</sup>

When grace touches the reality of human beings, it generates a crisis, a liberation process, and freedom from a situation of enmity with God, for because of grace, God becomes human and humanity becomes divine. The incarnation of Jesus Christ represents the meaning of God and man. According to II Corinthians 5:19, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. This shows God's willingness to bear the sins of the world as Jesus' engagement with sin. Therefore, Jesus is not a lamb for God, but he is the Lamb of God, and God also bears what Jesus bears. In Jesus of Nazareth, God not only wills to reconcile human beings with Him and with one another but also takes human beings into the divine life and overcomes them.

One of Paul's strongest emphasis is that no one can earn eternal life by his or her own good deeds. Righteousness from God comes through faith in Christ to all who believe (Rom. 3:22). This righteousness is a gift from God, which is received by faith, because there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The basis for justification is the atoning work of Jesus, particularly redemption and expiration (Rom. 3:24-25). The meaning of redemption is buying back a slave and giving him his freedom through payment of a ransom. Christ redeemed human beings by paying the price of his own blood, and God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. This sacrifice of atonement turns aside God's wrath from man and takes away sin. In other words, through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross, God's wrath against man's sin has been averted and man's guilt has been removed.<sup>55</sup> Justification may be defined as that gracious and judicial act of God whereby he declared believing sinners righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, which is credited to them, forgives all their sins, adopts them as his children, and gives them the right to eternal life.<sup>56</sup>

The doctrine of justification presupposes recognition of the reality of God's wrath, and Christ saved man from God's wrath (Rom. 5:9). But justification is to be received only by faith, for it is a declarative or judicial act of God solely on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, and totally unmerited. It is rooted in the union with Christ, and based on Christ's substitutionary work for man. Christ redeemed man from the curse of the law by becoming a

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), P. 107

<sup>55</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p. 154

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172

curse for him. Man deserved that curse since he could not obey God's law perfectly (Gal. 3:10-13). But Christ bore the curse on behalf of man, so that man might be delivered from it. Paul develops the thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to man in justification. It means that merit Christ acquired by bearing God's wrath against man's sins, and by perfectly obeying God's law, man is justified and becomes righteous before God.

According to Robert P. Lighter, mankind needs God's gift of salvation more than anything else. With God's salvation there is eternal life, without it there is eternal separation from God and all that is holy and good, plus eternal punishment. Salvation is the most wonderful gift in the entire world. To be saved, or born again is to be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son (Col. 1:13). It is to be made acceptable before God. His salvation is complete and without cost to the sinner. The total price has been paid. The work is finished. The moment the sinner becomes a recipient of God's grace; he is delivered from the debt incurred by sin. For him there is no more condemnation (Rom. 8:1).<sup>57</sup>

The result of justification is the rights to eternal life, for those who are in Christ are no longer slaves but sons and daughters of God, because God has made them heirs (Gal. 4:7). They become co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Not only they are constituted heirs of all blessings of salvation in the present life, but also have reserved in heaven an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which cannot fade away. The right to eternal life points both to the present and the future, so that the believers possess eternal life here and now. It was this consummated the rigor of karma in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is prophetically stated by Isaiah (Isaiah 53:3-5).

### **E. Theological Response to the Doctrine of Samsara (Cycle of rebirth)**

In Buddhism the doctrine of samsara or continuous cycle of rebirth is fundamental. In the past each human being has endured an almost endless series of rebirths and he faces a series in the future. There is some question as to what is that is reborn, in as much as Buddhism denies that there is a soul or to transmigrate. The new being that is reborn is sometimes likened unto a candle flame that was kindled by another flame before it became extinguished. The consensus is that the new being or person who is born is neither the same as the one who has just died, nor is he wholly another. Consciousness has been transmitted from the old person to the new, and consequences of karma, and in some cases-memory. Buddha at the time of his enlightenment said, "I remembered many former existences, such as one birth, two births,

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<sup>57</sup> Robert P. Lighter, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 185

three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, hundred, thousand, 100,000 births; many cycles of dissolution of the universe... thus do I remember my many former existences with their special modes and details. That was the first knowledge that I gained in the first watch of the night.” (Majjhima Nikaya I, 240, Mahasaccaka Sutta).<sup>58</sup>

Besides the Buddhist doctrine samsara, there is the theory of pre-existence taught in Hinduism, and was also held by Plato, Philo and Origen. This theory teaches that in a previous existence men were angelic spirits, but as punishment and discipline for sin, they were sent to indwell human bodies. There is no clear supporting statement for this theory in the Bible, because according to the Bible, the origin of mankind is in God.<sup>59</sup>

Death is the cessation of the physical life, the stopping of earthly and visible activities, but not of the cessation of existence. At death, the spirit leaves the body and begins life in another. Therefore, death is only a change of scene and condition into immortality. Where there is immortality, there death, so that there is no rebirth.<sup>60</sup>

The belief in life after death is ancient and universal. But this belief cannot be based upon scientific discovery or philosophical conclusions, because there is no scientific proof of material knowledge of immortality. According to the Old Testament, at death the body remains on earth, the soul passes into Sheol, but the breath, spirit returns to God (Isaiah 38:17, Ps. 16:10; 86:13). Concerning the modern idea of man’s existence in Sheol-Hades, Louis Berkhof mentions that

The idea is very prevalent at present that at death both the pious and the wicked descend into an intermediate place, which the Old Testament calls Sheol and the New Testament Hades. This underworld is neither a place of punishment nor of reward, but a place where all share the same fate. It is a dreary abode, where the dead are doomed to an existence that is merely a dreamy reflection of life on earth. It is a place of weakened consciousness, of slumberous inactivity, where life has lost its interest and the joys of living are turned into sadness. But the idea of such a separate locality, which is neither heaven or hell, in which all the dead are gathered and where they remain, either permanently or until some general resurrection, is an idea that may have been more or less current in popular thought and may have given rise to some figurative a descriptions of the state of the dead, but certainly is not a part of the positive

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<sup>58</sup> Kenneth E. Wells, P. 14

<sup>59</sup> Paul Enns, *the Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 305

<sup>60</sup> William Newton Clark, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 468

teachings of Scripture. The terms Sheol and Hades are evidently not always used in the same sense in Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

In the middle ages, several sects advocated the doctrine of the sleep of soul, which is the notion that at death, the soul indeed continues to exist, but in a state of unconscious repose or sleep (Matt. 9:24, Acts 7:60, I Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23, Rev. 6, 7:9, 20:4). Annihilationist teaches that man was created immortal. Those who continue in sin are by a positive act of God deprived of immortality is a gift of God in Christ for those that believe. Because immortality is not a natural endowment of man, those who do not believe Christ are ultimately annihilated or lose all consciousness. Some teach a limited duration of conscious suffering of the unbelievers after death. According to Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 25:46, Romans 2:8-10, Rev. 14:11, 20:10, sinners as well as saints will continue to exist forever, and there will be punishment for the wicked (Luke 12:47-48, Romans 2:12).<sup>62</sup>

The doctrine of second probation teaches that the salvation of many will depend on their decision between death and resurrection, because the eternal state of man will not be irrevocably fixed until the Day of Judgment (Eph. 4:8-9, I Cor. 15:24-28, Phil. 2:9-11, Col. 1:19-20, Matt. 12:31-32, I Pet. 3:14, 4:6). Not only do these passages fail to carry conviction, but also many passages of the Scripture represent the state of non-Christians after death as a fixed state (Eccl. 11:3, Luke 16:19-31, John 8:21-24, II Pet. 2:4-9).<sup>63</sup>

The basis of all New Testament belief in resurrection of the dead is the fact of the resurrection of Christ, yet the characters of resurrection are different, such as, a bodily resurrection (Rom. 8:11). Resurrection of both just and unjust (John 5:28-29, Acts 24:15), resurrection of unequal importance for the just and unjust. The resurrection of the just is not only an act of deliverance, but also glorification, but the resurrection of the wicked is to face the final judgment by Jesus Christ for penalty of death.

## **F. Theological Response to the Doctrine of Nibbana (Non-being)**

According to the Synoptic Gospel, the major theme of Jesus' teaching and preaching was about the kingdom of God/ the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:17, Mk. 1:14-15, Luke 4:42). Defining the kingdom of God is not easy. Peter J. Leithart mentions that

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<sup>61</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted, 1933), p. 340

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341

The phrase can refer to the place where God's people joyfully feast in His presence (Luke 22:29-30). It can refer to the rule of the triune God, and particularly to the rule of Jesus Christ (Ps. 145:13, Col. 1:13). It can refer to those people who submit to the rule of the Lord (I Pet. 2:9). It can refer to the transfigured new heavens and new earth (Matt. 25:34). How can we put all these different elements together? Considered in all its facets, the kingdom of God can be defined as the new world order that Christ established in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, a new order of things that will be fully revealed and established only at Christ's return.<sup>64</sup>

In the New Testament, the kingdom of God has not yet been fully revealed, established, and manifested, but already come in Jesus' first advent. Some biblical scholars therefore call this eschatological tension "already not yet" character of the kingdom. The believers already taste the heavenly gift and the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:4-6), they are already the citizens of heaven, their lives are already hidden with Christ in God, and already ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem (Col. 3:1-4, Heb. 12:18-24). The believers are already new creations in Christ through they have not yet put on immortality (II Cor. 5:17, I Cor. 15:50-57). Robert P. Lightner says that

Concerning heaven Jesus said to his own, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Where He would be he wanted them also. The historic Christian faith has always held that heaven is a place, not a future at death. Those rightly related to God through his Son are to be with him and within in contrast to those outside (Matt. 22:12-13, 25:10-12). Eternal life is the reward of the righteous (John 3:16, Rom. 2:7), which all the redeemed share alike, but there will be rewards given commensurate with service rendered on earth by the believer (I Cor. 3:11-17).<sup>65</sup>

The kingdom of God is the blessed eternal state, the abode of the righteous, those who are justified by faith in Christ. Although many conceive of heaven also as a condition, which man may enjoy in the present and which will become permanent in the future, it is a place, the house of God (John 14:2). This place is to enjoy the fullness of life in communion with God, which is the real essence of eternal life (Rev. 21:3). It is the new creation, new heavens and new earth where the righteous is at home (II Pet. 3:13).

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<sup>64</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *the Kingdom and the Power Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1993), p. 17

<sup>65</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 256

According to David Winter, Heaven is where God is, when God is, Heaven is being with God and hell, we might add, is being where God is not: an appalling concept. So heaven is in many respects “like” God, replete with beauty, truth, and goodness, eternal and personal. But it is not just a series of abstract qualities. It is modes of living, where we can all develop a greater insight into truth and experience love as never before.<sup>66</sup>

The Bible teaches that man’s physical life is impermanent (Ps. 90:5-6), even heaven and earth will pass away (Mk. 13:31), everything is impermanent but God is eternal (Ps. 102:12, 26.27), and man’s spirit also is immortal (Matt. 25:46). Man is created in the image of God so that he has the non-material elements, which are immortal. Suffering is a part of the existence of man as a result of sin. But God has his own purpose to allow suffering for man’s ultimate good (Rom. 8:28). Jesus is the only one who can kill the law of karma by his own death on the cross on behalf of man. Therefore, believers are forgiven sinners. There is no Scripture concerning cycle of rebirth, but resurrection, judgment and eternal punishment in hell or eternal life in heaven. Man’s destiny in the kingdom of God is to be like the risen Christ.

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<sup>66</sup> David Winter, hereafter, p. 77

# CHAPTER V

## THE HINDRANCES OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

### REACHING OUT BUDDHIST IN MYANMAR

I believe that reaching out to Buddhist in Myanmar with the gospel is difficult. This chapter presents what hindrances the Buddhist to accept the gospel and convert into Christianity. The writer explore that the hindrances are not only the doctrines but also histories and the past still hindrances the Buddhist. This chapter aims to explore why the Buddhist in Myanmar are difficult and hard to convince into Christianity. I believe that these five reasons that hindrances the Bama Buddhist to accept the gospel and convert into Christianity.

#### **A. Colonialism**

Great Britain ruled the country of Myanmar from January 1, 1886 to January 4, 1948. It declared war against Myanmar in 1885 when Myanmar government does not agree with the proposal of the British no permit them to interfere in foreign affairs. Then the British defeated Myanmar in 1886 during the time of Myanmar's King Thibaw. The king and queen and his mother-in-law were brought to Calcutta in India where he died in 1916. Myanmar became one of the provinces of the British India Empire on January 1, 1886.

There was opposition occurred in many places of the country as soon as Myanmar was captive by Britain. By 1920, the University of Boycott, the first political movement against the British empire and the young men's Buddhist Association (Y.M.B.A) was founded and development into a political body in 1906. The general Council of Buddhist Association (G.C.B.A) was also formed. The General Council demanded more to reform liberally in 1918. There are other political parties such as the Moderate People's Party (MPP), the Progressive Party, (called in 1924 as the Independent Party), and the Poor Men's Party (PMP). These events made nationalism in the heart of the Buddhists as well as anti-British and Christians. In 1942, the Burma Independent Army (B.I.A) was founded and led by Thakin Aung San. Japanese trained them before Japan invaded Myanmar.

The Thakin in Burma had contacted some Japanese secret agents and received a promise of Japanese assistance if they should decide to rebel against the British<sup>67</sup> and promised them to offer "independence" after they defeated British. Therefore, the Japanese secret agent, Colonel Suzuki spent some time in Rangoon pretending to be a Japanese

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<sup>67</sup> Aung, 298

journalist, and collaborated Thakin Aung San and then brought him to Tokyo. In March 1941, Thakin Aung San returned back to Rangoon with Japanese cargo ship and selected twenty-nine young men and brought them to Japan to take intensive military training. In 1942, the British soldiers were defeated by the Japanese and, then controlled the country of Myanmar.

Japanese wanted to forget their promises so Thakin Aung San and his friends became furious against the Japanese. Later, Aung San sent secretly Thakin Thein Pe Myint to India to contact the British authorities in order to start the underground movement for freedom against the Japanese. Japanese may consider Aung San as cunning or unfaithful but his conscience was absolutely clear when he sought to join with British forces against Japan because they failed to fulfill their promise to grant 'independence.' The purpose and goal of Thakin Aung San was only to gain "independence" for the country of Myanmar.

Myanmar was under the control of the Japanese government for three years. The "Anti-Racist People's Freedom League (A.F.P.F.L) was formed in 1943 led by Thakin Aung San. They rebelled against the Japanese and the British Government, encouraged and assisted the Burma National Army, and in March 1945, the Japanese in Myanmar were driven out of the country but the British returned back to Myanmar again and took power over the country. However, the independent movements increased under the leadership of the AFPFL. General Aung San had opportunity to dialogue with the British Cabinet in London in January 1947. Then all the national leaders of Myanmar signed the Pinion Agreement on February 12, 1947 at Pinglong in Southern Shan State in Myanmar. This Pinion Agreement was to get independence from British and to be untied all tribes in Myanmar for equal opportunities. Therefore, February 12 is declared as the Union Day of Myanmar.

Unfortunately, the general U Saw and his friends assassinated General Aung San and six members of his Cabinet on July 19, 1947. But the independent movement continued and Myanmar was announced to the world as an independent country on January 4, 1948 called the Union of Burma. The government system was partial democracy from 1948-1962 and the country became a socialist state in 1962. Myanmar is now under the leadership of a military regime since 1989.

During the leadership of Britain, there was no doubt that Buddhism did decline seriously under the impact of foreign rule. Therefore, their government, unlike all previous governments in Myanmar since the eleventh century, was not the patron and promoter of

Buddhism. The internal discipline of the Sangha suffered as the ecclesiastical structure gradually weakened.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, Myanmar Buddhists hated the British and suspect Christianity. The Bama Buddhists identified the Christians as oppressors, invaders and colonizers because the country of Myanmar was colonized by Great Britain for about 62 years and Christianity followed by colonial domination, and some missionaries came to Myanmar with the colonization.

At the same time, some foreign missionaries and western people lacked to follow the customs and values of Bama Buddhists during colonization. For instance, no one is allowed to wear shoes or sleepers inside the campus of Buddhist temples or pagoda or monasteries but some westerners did not follow these customs during the nineteenth century. Wearing shoes inside the campus of their temple is considered as insulting or cursing their religion so it created hatred to foreigners and Christianity in the heart of Buddhist monks as well as all Buddhists in Myanmar.

Experiencing the cruel oppression of the Britain's rulers, and knowing that they were Christians, Christians after Myanmar regained her independence in January 4, 1948, were suspicious of not being nationalistic enough in spirit. Although there had been many genuine and diligent missionaries, because of that misunderstanding, the missionaries as well as Christians never gained favor from the Bama Buddhist people. Bama Buddhist and Myanmar's nationalism misunderstand Christianity were the result of colonialism.

## **B. Nationalism**

Burmese patriotic and nationalistic people from the beginning of eleventh century A.D King Anawratha established the kingdom of Pagan in the eleventh century and developed military and political supremacy upon the other minority tribes. Since the time of King Anawratha, Burmese had a pride of nationalism because they were able to overcome the other Mons, Shans, Kachins, Karens, Indians, mid Chinese alike. Buddhism another factor to nationalism so "the Burmese people cannot think of nationality apart from the religion own they hold, for it is Buddhism which has welded the Burmese together and the idea of nationhood owes its inception to Buddhism."<sup>69</sup> It is used to say that, "to be a Burmese is to be a Buddhist." This is the concept of the Burmese nationalists and the traditional nationalist attitudes rooted in the eight-century when the first protestant missionary came to Myanmar.

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<sup>68</sup> Smith, 30-39

<sup>69</sup> Smith, 83

In 1906, Young Men's Buddhist Association was organized in order to encourage the young men for having a nationalist spirit and to challenge the West. The first serious issue was raised by modern Burmese nationalists regarding the practice of Europeans and Westerners in Myanmar of wearing shoes while walking on pagoda premises even though it is contrary to Buddhist custom. As a result, a meeting was held in 1916 and a letter was sent to the government demanding that wearing of shoes or sleepers on pagoda platforms be strictly prohibited. The British government rejected the demand, which created retaliation against those walking with footwear on pagoda platforms. The spirit of nationalism was heightened since then.

Nationalism and Buddhism cannot be separated in Myanmar because even during the time of King Anawratha, the Burman, kings were the defenders of the Buddhist's faith, and king after kings adopted it as the state of religion and political method. The Union of Burma has two modern nationalist traditions. One is the U Ottama-San tradition and the other nationalist tradition was the Thakin Aung San tradition. Both traditions continued to influence its political development. The nationalist tradition of U Ottama-Saya San emphasized the total rejection of western culture, intense and partly violent struggle against the British rulers, the leadership of political monks, and the value complex of Burmese Buddhist race, religion, language, and culture as the highest loyalty.<sup>70</sup>

The nationalist tradition of Thakin Aung San against foreign rules but with considerate regarding western political institutions, it's in secular and Marxist-inclined in its ideological orientation as General Aung San announced in 1946. "We must draw a clear lien between politics and religion, because the two are not one and the different thing. If we mix religion with politics, then we offend the spirit of religion itself."<sup>71</sup>

When independence was declared in 1948 the Thakin Aung San nationalist tradition was so completely dominant that there was little awareness of the older Buddhist-oriented nationalism.<sup>72</sup> But later on the Asian nationalist was raised in the whole Asia as against any foreign ruler. The Asian nationalist effected Burmese nationalist, so the Buddhist monks and the liberal democrats were united on the most fundamental tenet of political faith. It is to end the foreign rule. In Myanmar, the promotion of Buddhism by the government must be interpreted in part as an attempt to make religion a positive and visible symbol of Burmese nationalism.

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<sup>70</sup> Smith, 118

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 118

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 119

U Nu led the people of Myanmar into the direction of the older U Ottama-Saya San nationalist tradition. Thus, U Ottama Day celebrations were held annually, and statues were erected to honor the memory of the departed Sayadaw.<sup>73</sup> In January 1962, Religious Affairs Minister U Ba Saw opened the U Ottama Gardens, declaring that this great nationalist leader had been responsible for the political awakening of Burma. Annual meetings were held at the U Wisara statue to commemorate Sayadaw's death in the Rangoon Central Jail on 1929.<sup>74</sup> U Ottama was the greatest influential nationalist political leader in the early 1920's. He died in prison while in hunger strike in 1929.

The intimate relationship between nationalism and the promotion of Buddhism was reflected in the statements of several Asian leaders at the sixth Great Buddhist Council. The statement of Dr. Makoto Nagai of Japan declared to the synod: "your country has now escaped from the bondage of a foreign nation and has attained complete independence. Accordingly, you are now holding this Great Buddhist Council."<sup>75</sup> And Senanayake likewise declared that the independence nations of Asia could make an important contribution to World peace by propagating the message of Buddha.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, nationalism and Buddhism are closely related with each other. In 1962, the nationalist tradition of U Ottama-Saya San tails fulfilled, as a result all foreign hospitals were nationalized. Christianity also became affected as it is regarded as a Western religion. From then, the government restricted evangelism and Christian activities. The government totally rejected foreigners and the western cultures and even their language was not offered, in the public school until around 1985. Therefore, the writer believes that Nationalism is one of the greatest hindrances to share the gospel to Myanmar Buddhists. But "the pledge to make Buddhism the state religion did not appear in the election manifesto and program published by the Clean FPFL. On September 26, 1959, U Nu announced in the campaign at Kaba Aye that Buddhism would definitely be made the state religion if his party will win the election. Therefore, promoting Buddhism is the political leadership system of Myanmar. "The elections of February 7, 1960 resulted in an overwhelming victory for U Nu and his party. The NUF won three seats, the stable AFPFL and allies took 45, and the Clean AFPFL and allies with an astonishing 168 seats in the chamber of Deputies.<sup>77</sup> Concerning the 'rove for Buddhism to be a state religion deliberating and debates continued in the government office,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 123

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 123

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 243

and late in August it was decided to add another provision, to become section 21 (6): “The Union government shall protect the religions from all dangers including insult and false representation made by words either spoken or written or by other means.”<sup>78</sup>

### **C. Political Leadership**

The most political leader and promoter of Buddhism was U Nu who was the prime minister of Burma. He was deeply devoted to his religion and the most authentic representative of religious tradition of his country. There is none like him in other countries political leadership whose is devoted to the religious tradition of his country in modern times. He became a monk seven times in his life, of which it resulted to his seriousness in the promotion of Buddhism.

Undoubtedly, the most active Burmese Buddhist missionary to foreign countries has been U Nu himself. He has delivered many lectures on Buddhism in India, England, the United States, and other countries. In 1962 he consulted with Bhikku Kathapa, head of Pali and Buddhist Studies at Banaras Hindu University, about his plan of inviting forty boys from different part of India to study the theory and practice of Buddhism in Burma. These forty students, together with ten from Nepal already invited, would receive several years of training in a monastery in Upper Burma to become Buddhist missionaries. After graduation they return to their respective countries to propagate Theravada Buddhism.<sup>79</sup>

He is a Buddhist revivalist of Myanmar because of his deep devotion in religion. But General U Ne Win is different from U Nu because U Ne Win and his party were convinced that mixing religion and politics is not good for the country. Their major focus is one the solution of Myanmar’s economic crisis and attempted to find the ‘Burmese way of Socialism.’”

The revolutionary Council found it necessary to emphasize: (1) a rational and scientific view of the world, (2) the idea that rapid and substantial improvement in the material standards of human life was possible, (3) the importance of making this the primary national goal at that point in history, and (4) the conviction that man can achieve such goals by intelligence and hard work, without reference to any supernatural powers or agencies.<sup>80</sup>

In 1962, the military took over the country and adopted the Burmese Ways of socialism so all-Christian mission schools and hospitals were nationalized and all

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 270

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 156-157

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 288

missionaries were expelled from the country and Christianity is regarded as an alien religion. From 1962 to the present, foreign missionaries are not allowed to stay in Myanmar.

Evangelism was restricted by requiring travel permits and by the presence of military intelligence officials in the church conferences and even in the church service.<sup>81</sup> Nowadays, Myanmar Christian brothers and sister are doing mission in the existing churches and strengthening themselves because the military regime prohibited on building churches, mission schools and mission centers.

Legally, it can be said that there is freedom of religion in the country but practically it is difficult to say, that there is indeed religious freedom in Myanmar. This time, Christians are not allowed to build their churches while Buddhists are building their pagodas and monasteries everywhere in Myanmar. The military regime destroyed the Cross and replaced it into pagodas and monasteries. Christians were not allowed to have an open-air crusade while Buddhist monks have different kinds of preaching and teaching through television and radio program for the propagation of their faith. There is reserved, leaf in every bus for Buddhist monks while there is none for the pastors.

If you are a Christian, you never get the highest position in any department of the government offices. Thus, there are few opportunities for the Christians to get some things from the government. Therefore, it is very hard to communicate with them), Christian even felt that they should not share the good news to them because of oppression. Sometimes, they arrested some evangelists' arid pastors and destroyed their church building and drove them out from their villages to go back to own province.

The fundamental problem of promoting Buddhism remains unsolved. Nationalism, Buddhism and political leadership are closely related with each other in Myanmar. Thus, these-ism is some of the great hindrances in reaching out Bama peoples for Christ.

## **D. Denominationalism**

The first protestant missionary Judson started the Baptist church in 1813. So, Baptist is the dominant denomination in Myanmar but many Baptist members become nominal Christian after third or fourth generation. There was no denomination before Evangelical and Pentecostal Movement came to Myanmar.

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<sup>81</sup> Khin Lay Maw, *A Strategy For Presenting Gospel Among Burma Buddhists* (Cavite, Philippines: A thesis of Master of Divinity at Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1994), 55

However, when the revival fire is among evangelicals and Pentecostal churches, many nominal Christians entered into Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Denominationalism begins when many main-line church members transferred into Evangelical, and Pentecostal churches. The main-line churches criticized that the Evangelicals and Pentecostals were stealing others' sheep.

The Evangelical and Pentecostal groups said, "there is no sheep in your church but only goats so we are making your goats into sheep." Mainline churches considered the new groups were cult. One writer said, "Myanmar Council of Churches, the movement recognized as ecumenical body, does not permit them to join membership, in fact, the mainline churches, instead of lifting up, criticized those new groups which are gaining success, in public, and even asked government to take some kind of action against them."<sup>82</sup> Even though MCC emphasizes ecumenism but unfortunately it does not encourage an evangelistic effort or the evangelical, Pentecostal, and other Para-churches, may be because of denominationalism.

So, disunity in the Christian community is one of the horrible barriers for bringing the good news into Buddhist community.

Christian ministers used to say that their denomination or church is the best and their teaching is the most Biblical. Confusion Christian teaching hinders the Buddhist to receive Christianity, although they are willing to receive it. According to my friend Rev. Lal Tan Puia, "there is one Buddhist woman who got married with Christian man and followed her husband in the church, at the beginning she enjoyed very much until one day she saw church leaders criticizing each other. Even fought one another which discouraged the Buddhist woman never came again to the church because she was afraid of the church leaders."

According to some pastor, he evangelized one Buddhist village and the whole community received what he taught about the Bible except the chief Buddhist leader of this village. His prayer was that sooner or later this village will be the village of Christian community but unfortunately, another Christian group came into this village, and taught their doctrine, gave them many gifts, and pursued them to enter into their denomination and the Buddhists villagers were confused to which church or denomination would they join. Finally, they decided to remain as Buddhists. The writer was very sad when he heard this kind of stories in the mission fields of Myanmar.

The author requested Rev. Khup Thang to write his experience in mission fields. He writes

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<sup>82</sup> Maw, 57

I have been in touched with several mission fields in different capacities in different parts of Myanmar since 1983. The crises I would like to express, hereby, is created not by unbelievers, but by missionaries or missionary sending churches in order to get the membership or new believers of mission fields their denomination or organizations. In fact, there are inevitably problems and misunderstandings among missionaries and missionary sending churches that may damage new faith and believes of the new believers. Even for some places, the mission fields may become wrestling fields of the churches. Sadly, these occasions have been found in some of mission fields and churches in Myanmar.<sup>83</sup>

The writer believed that there were many experiences in the mission fields like the experiences of the pastor, mentioned in the above. With those experiences, the writer believed that now is a time to love each other and share the love of God to the Bama Buddhists through words and actions and teach those ways to end suffering.

Colonialism, Nationalism, and Political leadership are the most obvious external barriers of reaching out Buddhism. These three-isms are the promoter of Buddhism long time ago. Denominationalism is the most obvious internal hindrance of bringing Myanmar Buddhists to Christ.

## **E. 969 movements**

The 969 movements is a Buddhist-nationalist movement that promotes sectarianism by encouraging Buddhists to be Buddhist.

The 969 movements proposed interfaith law to parliament with the signatures of more than 3 millions. The purpose of proposing this law is to restrict interfaith marriages between Buddhist women and men of other faiths. More than 10,000 monks attended the conference at A Tu Ma Shi monastery on Wednesday. They said the draft interfaith marriage law, which emerged after a monks' conference in Rangoon last year 2014, would be sent to Parliament with help from the National Democratic Front (NDF). If passed, the law would force Buddhist women to get permission from their parents and local government officials before marrying a man of any other faith. A non-Buddhist man wishing to marry a Buddhist woman would be required to convert to Buddhism. Daw Khin Wine Kyi from the NDF party promised to help with the law. We are just helping the law because it is very important for this law to be enacted, as the marriage law of 1954 is not enough to protect women and children from being

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<sup>83</sup> Rev. Khup Thang was one of the leaders of Zomi Baptist Convention, He served as Evangelical and Mission director of Zomi Baptist Convention in Myanmar. This request to write was in 2008.

converted to other religions or nationalities.<sup>84</sup> Many local Burmese Buddhists supported the proposed interfaith law. The law restricted one Buddhist to Christianity and as others. The proposed state that if one wants to convert into another religion, he/she should submit his application form for wanting to convert his/her belief. The application has to be deal official by the local municipal. If one third of the officers agree on application, they will be allowed to convert into other religion. The newly proposed by 969 movement influences many local Burmese Buddhist and hindrance to Christianity.

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<sup>84</sup> *This is taken from CNN, Irrawaddy, local news paper called "the mirror". [www.irrawaddy.org](http://www.irrawaddy.org)*

## CHAPTER VI

# CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION OF GOSPEL IN MYANMAR

Myanmar is rich in diverse culturally as pointed out in earlier chapter. This chapter deals with possible way to introduce the gospel in the context of Myanmar. The Burmese Buddhists highly appreciate and respect their cultures and customs. Contextualization is the capacity to respond meaningfully to the Gospel within the framework of one's own situation.

Contextualization is more concerned with the present, with the people's situation, not only in the area of traditional culture but political, economical and social situations and structures. Contextualization is therefore, more relevant to the reality of the people and sensitive to their situation.

However, there is always a risk while doing contextualization, as there is always a danger of syncretism, which in turn can lead to universalism. To avoid this risk Hiebert gives the following guidelines:

- a). Missionaries must translate and teach the scriptures into the language
- b). The language of the target culture. These two things must be the beginning of all future work.
- c). Missionaries must affirm the biblical teaching of "the priesthood of all believers" and allow the people to read and interpret the Scriptures for themselves.
- d). Missionaries must trust that the same Holy Spirit is at work in the people when they read the Scripture.
- e). Missionaries must allow people the greatest privilege to make mistakes.
- f). Affirm the community of the church and share with fellow Christians the understanding of Scripture, listen to their own understandings. Missionaries also need to know and understand the way the Church has understood and interpreted Scripture throughout history.<sup>85</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, communicating the Gospel to Burmese Buddhists is a difficult task since Burmese Buddhists will listen to the Gospel, but do not want to become Christian. The task therefore is to contextualize the communication of the message of the Gospel.

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<sup>85</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Tools for Missionaries* (Singapore: haggai Institute, 1978), p. 8. Quoted by S. Devasagayam Ponraj, *An introduction to Missionary Anthropology* (Bihar, India: mission educational Books, 1993), p. 90.

## A. Literature Work

Language is part and parcel of the culture. It is a wheel of communication. In Myanmar, the effectiveness of literature evangelism was seen in the mission work of the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson. When he arrived at Yangon on July 13, 1813, the study of the Burmese language was his first and great assignment. In January 1916, Judson began to translate the New Testament into Burmese. He combined his Burmese study, translation and Christian literature such as tracts.<sup>86</sup> By the end of June 1823, he completed the translation of the New Testament.<sup>87</sup> He completed the Burmese Bible on January 31, 1834.<sup>88</sup> He did two-thirds of the Old Testament translation with his evangelistic journeys into the Karen jungle. After he completed the revision of the one volume edition of the Burmese to English Dictionary. In those days, tracts were carried from Yangon to every part of the country. The visitors, even some from the border of China and Thailand came to Yangon to inquire about the new religion. Even though official disapproval prevented people's open response to the Gospel, many people read tracts privately. Judson therefore considered the press as the grand engine for Myanmar, for he was convinced that Myanmar was to be evangelized by tracts and portions of the Scriptures, because the people love reading.

Maung Shwe Wa mentions as follows

These tracts had served two purpose; they stirred up interest in the new religious teacher and brought many people to the zayat to hear more. Then the Gospel of Matthew and tracts presenting of the Christian faith served as follow-up for those who had visited the zayat and were interested carrying the subject further. The whole basis of Judson's approach was person-to-person teaching in an informal atmosphere in which the visitors were perfectly free to express their views as well as to hear his.<sup>89</sup>

Through literature was a powerful means of communicating the Gospel, yet the Myanmar church has not been able to bring out the language from ineligible to Burmese Buddhists who are obsessed by the language form and style of Buddhism terminologies. Most of the hymns used in the churches are translated from hymns, which missionaries brought from the west. Indigenous hymns composed in Burmese tunes are few. Though the language form and style

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 37

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 99

<sup>89</sup> Maung Shwe Wa, *Burmese Baptist Chronicle* (Yangon: university press, 1963), p. 39.

is accepted by Burmese Buddhists as standard literature, it is not intelligible to Burmese Buddhists since culturally they are not in tune with their cultural understanding. To Burmese Buddhists, anything, which is not Burmese in culture and tradition, is not easily acceptable. The need of the time is to contextualize the hymns and literature to make them more intelligible to a Buddhists mind.

## **B. Contextualizing worship**

The Buddhists have different worship services such as temple worship, daily family or individual devotion and Sabbath day fasting. Temple worships take place on special days like Buddhist duty days, Uposatha days, and ceremony entering vasa. On these days monks and lay leaders participate in leading the worship services. It includes chanting in Pali and also delivery of sermons by the monks. The forms of worship consist of the monk or leader taking a seat, folding his feet under him and giving the precepts. The congregation does not simply sit silently but kneels respectfully with hands folded and participates in the worship by repeating after the monks the eight precepts: “ I beg to observe the precept, refrain from taking life. I beg to observe the precept, refrain from taking what is not given... I beg to observe the commandments of Buddha, which consist of these eight precepts...”<sup>90</sup>

In worship, the sound of the drum and bell adds to the solemnity of the worship and indicates the time of ceremony. Offerings in the temple worship are common. These offerings are burning candles, incense and flowers. Prayers by a layman or Bhikkhu are made in a form of an invitation to the devotees who will bring the words of the dharma.

The Buddhists’ daily family or individual devotional time is morning and evening. They erect a shrine in their house either in the eastern or northern side of the house, and in the shrine the idols of Buddha are placed. The devotion consists of offerings in terms of flowers, incense, candlesticks, food, water and branches of trees. These offerings are the idea of gift giving (dana), morality (sila), and meditation (bhavana). Their prayers consist of asking for forgiveness, to be excused now and forever from hell, and for the well being of the family. Cultivating good morality is an essential aspect for a devotee. Prayers through meditation help a devotee to cultivate morality.

Fasting is also part of worship. The full moon, the dark moon, and the eight-day after days are Buddhist Sabbath days. On these days, the devotees usually fast and spend their time quietly in the monasteries, or at the foot of a suitable trees. Here, they renew their vows to

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<sup>90</sup> Kenneth E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism, its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok, Thailand: Suriyabun Publishers, 1975), p. 33

observe the precepts. Buddhist takes their worship very seriously. To many devotees, family and personal devotion are part and parcel of their lives. The churches in Myanmar therefore should be contextualized in the forms of worship. The use of liturgies, hymnals and musical instruments need to be contextualized. But the churches should be cautious not to sacrifice or compromise biblical integrity or content. The traditional form of worship that were introduced by the missionaries can be replaced and instead adapt the existing forms of music and worship to Christian meanings.

The Buddhists kneel during their prayer. Posture in prayer should not be imposed either. Buddhists sit on the floor while worshipping. The churches should allow sitting on the floor or kneeling if the worshippers feel comfortable.

Sufferings are common to every human being. No one is free from sufferings. Suffering comes both from physical sickness and stress. Therefore, in their daily personal and family devotion, Buddhism comes to meditate to be relieved of their sufferings and mishaps. These are their felt needs. The Myanmar churches have to emphasize this aspect and to conduct services where sick people will be prayed. God brings wholeness to person's suffering of all kinds. Power encounter can happen also in such services where the supreme power of Jesus Christ will be demonstrated.

### **C. Contextualizing Lifestyle**

It is a common and famous saying that “deeds speak louder than words.” This is especially true in the life and work of Christians and evangelists. Contextualizing lifestyle includes dress, food habits and behaviors. Buddhism enjoins Burmese culture as mentioned earlier. What Buddhism care for most is their behavior? There are words, which are difficult to translate into English like “Ahnarde,” “Mingalaba.” Ahnarde means when a Burmese feels ahnarde, then he or she would deliberately withhold himself or herself from expressing or physically committing something that might hurt the feelings of others. It therefore typifies a Burmese emotional behavior. This is a remarkable trait of the Burmese character. Hospitality is another remarkable trait. The Burmese are extroverted, warm hearted and friendly people. “Mingalaba” is another which is not easy to render into English but its meaning is similar to, “may there be blessings upon you.” These words are common in the lips of Burmese when they receive people. The lord Buddha in the “Mingalaba Sutta,” the thirty right Modes of conduct, enjoins respect for others. Respect for others includes respect for one's elders. The

rules of conduct of Burmese society require polite and mannerly behavior towards all, but especially towards those older than oneself, whatever his rank or position.

Communicating the Gospel to Burmese Buddhists therefore demands the church to understand their attitude and behavior. Preacher, church workers and Christians' lifestyle should be an example to others. They must be seen as salt and light of the country, imparting kingdom values to people who are ignorant of the kingdom of God. The gospel message needs to be heard from the lives of the church people, which are rooted within their own culture contexts.

#### **D. Contextualizing Cultural Practices**

As pointed earlier, the Burmese culture is deeply entrenched in the Burmese society. Burmese is Buddhism itself. Joop Holthausen pointed out that there is no country in the world, which is so devoted to Buddhism as Myanmar and the life of the Burmese people is strongly connected with their religion, which is more a way of life than a religion in the Western way of thinking.<sup>91</sup>

There are many beautiful traditional customs and practices that Burmese Buddhists are proud of: their myths, legends, respect of the dead, folklore, and festivals etc. All these give life to Burmese. These are a source of joy and strength to them. The question arises therefore, how to contextualize? Paul's methods of evangelization were accommodation and transformation. He had to deal with the question of circumcision of Gentile converts (Acts 15:1-35). He accommodated the church's tradition of circumcision to the context of the gentiles who were turning to Christ. His actions received the support of other apostles and elders.

The Buddhists have festivals and ceremonies. These are observed popularly. Nat festivals are very popular in Myanmar. Two of the best known are Yadanagu (treasure cave) and Taungbyon festivals. In these festivals, participants are many since many believe in nats (spirits). Taungbyon has many cannibalistic features. Many people come to the festivals only for merry making involving themselves in drinking and dancing. Here, they bring offerings to the nats. They believe if they do not do so, they will not be blessed materially.

Another popular festival is the water Festival known as Thingyan. The festival is the prelude to the New Year for Myanmar and her people. It is a time when people shelve their cares and worries and greet the New Year. Unlike the Taungbyon, the celebration is an

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<sup>91</sup> Joop Holthausen, "*Buddhism in Myanmar*" (Whilshire, England: The Sayagyi u Ba Khin Memorial Trust, 1995), p. 1

expression of friendliness and love to one another. It is not cannibalistic, but fun and frolics. It is in this festival that people drench themselves in water “symbolizing the cleansing of misdeed, purifying of the spirit before the auspicious New Year’s Day.”<sup>92</sup>

The church in Myanmar needs to apply a process of functional substitute by sorting out the gospel aspects of festival. Anything relating to spirit worship and glorification of the spirit should be totally rejected. Drawing the analogy from the water festival can be more meaningful in the light of the water of life (John 7:37). One of the practices among the Buddhists is admitting boys into the Buddhist order. They can be novices for a short and temporary time. Many adolescents are anxious to be novitiates, as the ceremony believed to mark their entrance into manhood. This is the desire of the Buddhist parents. When the child entered the Buddhist order whatever the length of time may be, he is considered as a son of the Buddha.<sup>93</sup> Consecrating and baptizing children and young adults by the church therefore can be made more meaningful in the church. Such practice in the church is done formally in many churches but in the Burmese context this has significance and can draw the attention of Burmese Buddhists.

### **E. Self-theologizing**

The church in Myanmar as it faces these issues, which are problems in communicating the gospel, needs to realize the importance of “theological penetration” into the cultural context. It has to learn to be indigenizing in governing, supporting and communicating the gospel. The Nevius methods of “three self”: self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating have been one of the successful methods in communicating the gospel among the other tribes in Myanmar. It will be useful also in the Burmese context where the people see Christianity as a foreign religion. Moreover, there is a need for “self-theologizing.”

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<sup>92</sup> Kyi Kyi Hla, “the spirit of Thingyan” (Whitshire, England: The sayagyi U ba khin Memorial Trust, 1998), p.1,2

<sup>93</sup> Nicholas Greenwood, *Burma Then and Now*, pp. 59-67.

## CHAPTER VII

# STRATEGIES FOR EVANGELIZATION

This chapter dealt with different strategies and approaches to evangelizing Burmese Buddhists. As a general definition of the term strategy, we can say that a strategy is an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem.<sup>94</sup> An interviewed is integrated in this chapter. This chapter gives the possible strategies to reach the Bama Buddhist with different approaches.

### **A. Approach through Holistic Preaching**

In evangelizing Burmese Buddhist, it is important to have in depth knowledge of their beliefs. The previous chapters have dealt with the main teachings of Theravada Buddhism. Although Theravada Buddhism had a strong hold on Burmese culture, yet spirit worship is still prevalent among Buddhists. This practice is still strong and has become the major philosophical system and spirit worship is part and parcel of Buddhism. Burmese Buddhists believe that there are good and evil spirits. The good spirits are not harmful but the evil spirits are harmful. Many Burmese Buddhists fear the evil nat.<sup>95</sup> Burmese are haunted by the evil nat.

The common problem of evangelizing Burmese Buddhists is when the evangelizers do not understand the culture and religious themes of the Burmese Buddhist. Western and traditional missionary methods of evangelism ignore these and deal only with high religious themes. Proclamation of the Gospel to the Burmese Buddhists therefore involves holistic preaching that integrates both low and high religious themes. To common Burmese people, what matters more is their immediate problem of every day life. They fear the evil spirits to that they need to pacify them. They are to observe rituals and purify themselves from evil contamination. The methods of communication and presentation of the gospel therefore needs not to be restricted by traditional methods. The key of successful Gospel communication is to utilize as much variety as possible, with special attention to biblical principles, the gifts of the evangelists, and the preferences of the audiences. The chief danger is that one may get into ruts and be unnecessarily restricted in methods. The failure to apply a holistic presentation in

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<sup>94</sup> Edward R. Dayton and Davif A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*. MARC, 2nd Edition, 1990:13

<sup>95</sup> Nicholas Greenwood, *Burma Then and Now*, pp. 55-57

our evangelistic method is not only obscure the power of the Gospel, but also weakens the faith of those converts.

Understanding the religious belief of the people therefore, is to be taken seriously. Paul's approach to the Gentiles or the Greeks in the Greek culture is useful for today's presentation of the gospel. At Athens, he interpreted the Gospel using quotations from Greek philosophers (Acts 17). He appreciated their religiosity and thus identified with their belief and practices, and communicated the Gospel in their context. He says

Men of Athens, I see that in every religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship. I even found an altar with his inscription to an unknown god. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you (Acts 17:21-22).<sup>96</sup>

Holistic preaching therefore involves "truth encounter" at the level of high religion and "power encounter" at the level of low religion. When the immediate problems of every day life that trouble common man is dealt with in relation to the reality of the sovereign God and man's allegiance to him, then power encounter is possible. The supreme power of God over Satan must be reaffirmed and reestablished. Such presentation will not only prevent syncretism but will also make the message clear to Burmese Buddhists. The Buddhists want to experience power in their lives in terms of miracles and healing. The power of Jesus Christ should be demonstrated as a "greater power" than their belief. Miracles are a powerful evidence of the Gospel.

## **B. Holistic Ministry Approach**

Ezra Sargunam says

... because the church has failed to uphold truth, justice and has lacked compassion for the poor and needy and shirked its responsibility to liberate the oppressed and suppressed for generations. Marxism was born and began to infiltrate, thrive and literally took control of two-thirds of world's population. It is no accident that communism arose in Christendom.<sup>97</sup>

There are many ways to define evangelism because there are different kinds of definition. Even today no definition has been considered to be acceptable either by the liberals or the

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<sup>96</sup> Acts 17:21-22, NIV

<sup>97</sup> M. Ezra Sargunam, "*Holistic Evangelism*" in M. Ezra Sargunam ed., *Mission Mandate* (Madras, India: Mission India 2000, 1992), p. 256

evangelicals. Even among the evangelicals there is no unanimity on the definition. The three prominent ways of defining evangelism in Christian world today can be labeled presence, proclamation, and persuasion. Presence holds that evangelism is helping people to fulfill their needs. It is giving a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus. It is lending a helping hand. Proclamation recognizes that presence is necessary, but goes beyond it and says that evangelism is making known the message of Jesus so that people hear it and understand it. But once people are exposed to the gospel message they are evangelized whether they accept it or not according to a strict proclamation definition. Persuasion argues that presence and proclamation are both necessary, but that biblical evangelism goes beyond that and insists on making disciples... a person should not be considered evangelism until he or she has become an ongoing disciple of Jesus Christ.<sup>98</sup>

One need not go far or labor much to discover the theological basis for the church's involvement in socio-economic development. Nor does one need to adduce much elaborated arguments to justify its action. The mission of the church in general and the specific task of Christians in society is to ensure Christian presence to people in the reality in which they live and to respond to their desires, needs and situations with all that one has and one is. The church has been living with the poor and reaches out to them through service. If the definition for evangelism is proclamation it is also "presence." If this aspect of the mission of the church can be utilized for converting people is still a matter of debate in the evangelical circle. Many evangelicals accept this aspect and term it as "holistic evangelism."

As pointed out earlier, communicating the gospel in the context of Burmese Buddhists is not favorable by an explicit oral and verbal proclamation. The church has to express itself in deeds. Relief and development work among sections of Burmese Buddhists are needed. Thus Christian involvement in social service or economic development is valuable not only due to transformation and reorientation of the temporal order and to the greater humanization and integral development of man.

There are many Burmese Buddhists who needed to be helped. They expect community development through openings of hospitals and creating job opportunities. Some of them are aged, homeless and orphans. The church should respond positively and meet the necessary basis needs. The Burmese tradition of community service is very strong. It is deeply rooted in their tradition. It is based on the worldview that man cannot exist in isolation.

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<sup>98</sup> C. Peter Wagner, "On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy" in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 47

The church in Myanmar should take advantage and be wise use insight from the social behavior of Burmese. Now it the time for churches in Myanmar to become sensitive to the needs of the society. Wherever the spirit of Christ at work, the gospel values are lived and embodied, sharing in some forms or others take place. There the gospel is proclaimed and Christ is glorified.

### **C. Involvement of Lay People**

One of the reasons of the growth of the early church was the participation of the lay people in the work of evangelization. McGauran says that when the churches start spreading in the New Testament fashion across the country, laymen are frequently the agents of extension.<sup>99</sup> The book of Acts records the participation of lay people in preaching the gospel. When the great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, and they preached the gospel wherever they went. It says, “they went everywhere preaching the gospel,” (Acts 8:1,4). Within 300 years therefore every believer preached the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Concerning lay participation, Wagner says

While the church is subjected to many principles of human organizational management, it is much more than a mere human organization. It is the body of Christ. It is an organism with Jesus Christ as the head and every member functioning with one or more spiritual gifts. God does not bring people into the body of Christ as spectators. He expects them to participate in the life and work of the church just as the various members of our own physical bodies contribution to the well being of the whole.<sup>100</sup>

There are several ways laymen can participate in the church. Their involvement in church ministry keeps the church organization running. Some participate as Sunday school teachers, some as leader among different groups like young people, women, and others participate on different church committees. But what is even more important is their participation in activities outside the church. Lay people are the dispersion of the church; they rub shoulders with different classes of people in their places of work. They have more contact with unchurched people. They are therefore more accessible to people outside the church than pastors. They can therefore be more effective and useful in the evangelizing non-Christians.

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<sup>99</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1959), p. 140

<sup>100</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal books, 1984), p. 132

In Myanmar, church is still very small in population as compared to non-Christian in general and the Burmese Buddhists in particular. The work of evangelization can be more effective and fast if the churches mobilize and train lay people for this purpose. Buddhism in Myanmar has also been sustained by the participation of the lay people. In worship services like the worship in the temple in the Uposatha days, not only the bhikkhu or monk but also the novices and the lay people participate in the ceremonies in prayers. When lay Christian people participate in Christian ministry, it also helps the Buddhists to understand that even in Christianity a layperson also has a part in the work of God.

To involve lay people in Christian ministry needs training. The message of the modern discipleship movement is that every layman, every pastor, every man and woman, boy and girl, is to be motivated with the vision of evangelism and be fully equipped to participate in the harvest.<sup>101</sup> Jesus reached thousands of multitudes by teaching, preaching, and ministering to them. He sought to reach the masses by contact on an individual basis. The basic strategy of evangelism, which is Jesus way of reaching the world, is winning disciples who will win others and train them in discipleship. He called twelve men who would be his disciples, trained them and sent them to reach multitudes. In this way, Jesus prepared laborers for the harvest. They, in turn, reached others and trained them with the same vision and purpose. Doles Miles mentions that

Four elements, which stand out in today's lay-witness training are on job training, an emphasis upon spiritual multiplication, the sharing of the gospel through the use of one's testimony and a booklet, and the use of transferable concepts. A missing element in so much of the lay-witness training prior to the seventy's was learning how to witness through actual on the job training. Nowadays the recognized ideal is to have a trained witness models for the trainee, showing how to do it in a living encounter with unbeliever.<sup>102</sup>

This shows that laymen as well as ministers must be trained to evangelize, because training a person to evangelize effectively will be more fruitful than merely winning a soul. For these reasons, lay training is very important for evangelism and church growth. Instead of trying to do the work of ten men, training ten other men is more effective to bring harvest.

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<sup>101</sup> Billie Hanks, Jr., *Everyday Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 21

<sup>102</sup> Delos Miles, *Church Growth A Mighty River* (Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1981), p. 19

## **D. Relatives and Family Approach**

Families are basic units in the communities and regarded as divinely instituted by God (Eph. 3:15). The Bible stresses the sanctity of marriage, the relation between husband and wife, children and parents. In the book of Acts, the apostolic pattern for teaching was in and through family units. Evangelizing whole families is the fruitful pattern of current missionary outreach in many communities all over the world. In this pattern, the Christian families are used as outposts of evangelism because they are recognizable socio-cultural entities. The heads of the families share their faith with the heads of the non-believer families as well as the elders of the communities. When the head of the families are converted, they in turn, persuade their families, relatives, and kinsmen to Christianity.

Aquila and Priscilla used their home as a center for proclamation of the gospel in Rome and in Ephesus (I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5). Christian families in Myanmar can make their homes a witness center by hosting Bible studies. Invites Buddhist neighbors and friends as well as Christians. Invite someone to conduct the study effectively. It is important to use the Buddhist beliefs as contact points to get their attention. Through the goodness of Christian neighbors, the Buddhist family will understand the gospel message. Moreover, in times of need, people become more receptive to the gospel. For this reason, the Christian neighbor should look for ways to help by providing chauffeur service, babysitting, shopping for the lost family when someone is ill, using every opportunity to lead them to eternal life and to help them relate to their own oikos (family).<sup>103</sup>

The Burmese Buddhist society regards families in high esteem. The families constitute basic social units. Families are considered to protect the nation, the language and religion of the Burmese. Therefore, Christian families evangelizing Burmese Buddhists families demands more than aiming to evangelize a single or individual in the family. Since, a single convert on many occasions has to face opposition from the family members amounting to expulsion from family and persecution, converting the whole family will be more helpful in the Burmese Buddhists situation. Christian families should have a vision of reaching at least one another family for Christ during the year.

Besides evangelizing non-Christian families by a Christian family, it is also important to encourage Christian family members to evangelize his or her family members. When a new Christian is welcomed into the church he should be asked immediately about his family. The query should include more than his immediate relatives. Does he have cousins, aunts,

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<sup>103</sup> Ron Johnson Joseph W. Hinkle Charles M. Lowry, *OIKOS A Practical Approach to Family Evangelism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982), p. 69

brothers, or in-laws in the community? Is there anyone with whom he has a kinship? These people are often most responsive to his witness.

This strategy is suitable for evangelizing Asians and Africans and among the societies where clan and family ties are very strong. McGavran says, “members of other clans or families can become Christian and they remain unmoved: but let “one of us” become Christian and they are deeply stirred.”<sup>104</sup>

### **E. Relational Evangelism Approach**

Relational or friendship evangelism functions along the lines of normal human relationship. This approach calls a layperson to build friendship with an unbeliever and through the basis of that friendship to share the gospel. The deepest relationship is the best witnessing opportunity. When a friend whom you believe and trust tells you something you believe him. Therefore friendship can apply an important role in evangelism. Philip was doubtlessly a friend of Andrew and Peter. He was from their hometown. My guess is that Jesus sought and found Philip because Andrew and Peter had told him what fine disciple Philip would make. When Philip got saved, he found his friend Nathaniel and said, “we have found in whom Moses in the law and also the prophet wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (John 1:45). The ensuing dialogue between Nathaniel and Philip reveals that they were friends.”<sup>105</sup>

It is in normal relational times the believer can share the gospel. The church can provide an important context in which the process of evangelization can take place. As the members establish friendship with Buddhists, the church can invite those people to visit the church. The education class program in the church is good place to bring the unbelievers for their first exposure to the Christian community. As people come into the church and hear the Gospel, an experience of warm Christian fellowship can be effective in helping people to see and understand the gospel.

If the church is to be a context for friendship evangelism, there must be reality within the church itself. If there is pettiness, division and lack of true commitment, the context for evangelization is marred. But a mature and healthy group of believers who are relating to one another in love and seeking to honor God in their lives can be attractive to the Buddhists. Also to invite friends over to visit is good for evangelism, because food table is a natural setting for relaxed fellowship.

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<sup>104</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), p. 243

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

## F. The Evangelistic Mission

I interview who wants to be an anonymous and he shared his heart and mind for strategy and method of evangelism in a new concept. He mentioned, Van Hei Lian, you can included my articles what is in my mind for your thesis. Regarding the evangelistic mission of Myanmar, two questions appear to the writer's mind and interviewed: the first question is: "Is the evangelistic mission of the churches of Myanmar *successful* or *effective* as it was aimed or intended?" and if it is successful or not; "*What and how* can the Christians in Myanmar continue the evangelistic mission in Myanmar?"

Based on these two questions, what I feel is that it is already time for the Christians in Myanmar to reconsider the evangelistic mission that the Churches have been doing. The methods and the purpose or goal of the evangelistic mission must be evaluated. The journey of the Christian churches in Myanmar; especially Baptist Church is drawing near to 200 years of its life. Along this journey, the Christian church has put the slogans such; "*Christ for Myanmar*," "*All must be Christians at 2000AD*." These were what we have aimed or intended for our mission. The population of Myanmar at present is over 52 million in which according to the internet web pages of Golden Land Travel Com Ltd is over 89.3% of Myanmar embrace Theravada Buddhism and the rest practice Christianity (5.6%), Islam (3.8%), Hinduism (0.5%) and Animism (0.2%). In one book, the number of Christians in Myanmar describes as 8%. Some say 6%. Even if the 8% among the three statistics is the exact number of the Christians in Myanmar, it is not only the Baptist, or Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian, or mainline churches, but in it, all Christians from the mainline churches as well as from all sects or groups of Christians in Myanmar are included. Considering the first question in terms of the 8% Christians in Myanmar especially within nearly 200 years, it is sure that we could not go as far as we wished or intended. While we have been shouting that all people must be Christians by 2000 AD, we see the 89% is still Theravada Buddhists. Let alone the Buddhists; we still have even the 0.2% of Animist in Myanmar according to Golden Land Travel Company's website. Our slogans such as "Christ for Myanmar" "All must be Christians by 2000 AD" seems to be illogical and impractical because it seems that we are talking about the impossible thing. Then, "*What and how* can the Christians in Myanmar continue the evangelistic mission in Myanmar?" "Should the Christians in Myanmar stop the work of evangelistic mission or how should we continue?" In my opinion, the word "*unsuccessful*" is a challenge for us. That means the Christians in Myanmar still need to do the evangelistic mission. We should not stop it. What can be done is to consider the method or the way that have been using. Regarding the method and strategy, what the Christians in Myanmar have

been using so far is to go by his/her way in evangelistic mission. Different denominations go by their own way, own method and own strategy. Baptists go and do by their own, Anglican also by their own way, and all the rest Christians groups in Myanmar also have been in their own method in evangelistic mission. Therefore, the method that has been used so far by the Christians in Myanmar in evangelistic mission is to say the individual method.<sup>106</sup>

There is no cooperation yet among denominations and groups of Christians upon evangelistic mission. Sometimes and in some places, missionary movement of a particular denomination is even disturbed by other Christian denomination. They do not support one another in the mission field. Worst of all, some Christian groups preach the evangelistic message within Christian churches. How shall we move forward with achievement or success? If we are to go by the way we have been going, we may still be at the same position as now we are.

I feel that one more strategy in evangelistic mission for the Christians in Myanmar is still forgotten or ignored. That is the cooperative method. For this, in the first step, all Christian denominations and groups in Myanmar need to build unity, cooperative spirit and consensus concerning God's assigned task of evangelistic mission. The second step is to form an association called something like "Evangelistic Mission Movement of Christians in Myanmar (EMMCM)" This is not to replace the mission work being conducted by different denominations and Christian groups, but to support or to hold hands together with them if necessary. All zealous evangelists from all denominations and Christian groups are to be invited and welcomed into the EMMCM. The strategy of EMMCM will be the revival preaching, witnessing, and persuasion by individuals as well as groups.<sup>107</sup>

The goal is conversion. Myanmar Council Churches (MCC) is the best to initiate leadership for this program in my opinion. Whether we will be successful or not is not our part, but God's part. It is our responsibility to know whether the things we do is God's will or not. If we do nothing, we will reap nothing. Doing something is better than doing nothing. That is why the Christians in Myanmar still need to put their effort in evangelistic mission cooperatively under the guidance of Holy Spirit.

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<sup>106</sup>An interviewed was taken through mail.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.,

# CHAPTER VIII

## METHODS OF EVANGELIZATION

The previous chapter dealt with different strategies and approaches to evangelizing Burmese Buddhists. This chapter will specifically deal with methods of evangelizing and other ways and means, which is already practice in some areas and can be continuously applied in the context of Burmese and contribute to successful evangelization of Burmese Buddhists. Interviews are integrated itself in this chapter.

### **A. Media**

There are several kinds of media by which the gospel can be communicated to people, namely: print media or literature, video and audiocassette, Radio, television, film show, drama, and others. This section will deal only with those media, which are affordable and useful for reaching out to Burmese Buddhists and the methods of using these media.

#### **A: 1. Literature Ministry**

Even though it has serious limitations, many people believe that literature is the most effective far-reaching media. It has been used in evangelistic outreach. The role of Christian literature is very important for evangelism and Christian education areas of the church. Instruction books, home Bible study materials, evangelistic tract, Sunday school manuals, and correspondence courses are essential for effective evangelism. Many people have accepted Christ by reading tracts, portions of scripture magazines and other Christian books. Missionaries on the Logos and Douglas ships with operation Mobilization said, “we found literature effective in one of the most stubbornly difficult countries in the world, which to share the gospel of Christ and see a response.”<sup>108</sup>

Tracts are an effective method to present the gospel because on the bus, train, ship, bus terminal, and seaport, many tracts are distributed. Every Christian both young and old can distribute tracts to their neighbors, relatives and non-Christian friend at any time and anywhere. To publish literature is a hard task and it requires finances and personal. The church therefore should raise committed writers. Tracts in the form of Bible stories, and Bible portions can be edited and published. Distribution of literature can be done in a systematic

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<sup>108</sup> J.D Douglas, ed., *The Work of An Evangelist* (Minnesota: World-wide Publication, 1984), p. 814

way to make sure that they are at least respected and read. Places, time and types of people should be carefully selected for distribution. Unless these factors are taken seriously, literature distribution will be a waste and people will disrespect Christian literature.

In order to secure support for publication and distribution, the churches in Myanmar should seek support from other Christian literature agencies from outside of Myanmar. These agencies will help in printing and publishing whereas the work of writing, translating, editing should be done by Myanmar Christians. This will help to prevent suspicion from the government and also to provide literature, which will suit the Burmese Buddhists context.

## **A: 2. Radio Ministry**

Radio is one of the effective methods for evangelization of Buddhists in Myanmar as well as an effective ministry to the Christians. Many Buddhists have no chance to inquire about the Christian faith and practice. As it is a highly technical and skilled means of communication, the gospel can reach people all over the country. The most widely used mass media in Christian work is radio. Its advantages are many, but it has limitations too. In the hands of those with knowledge, means and courage, radio is a powerful effective tool. Radio can do certain things no other media can. For example, as long as the people have a receiver radio can reach them everywhere even while they are engaged in doing something else.<sup>109</sup>

Radio is an effective tool for evangelization of all ages for most people can be reached by it. Evangelistic preaching, Bible teaching, and Christian instruction can be conducted effectively through radio. The churches should encourage their members to listen to the programs and invite their Buddhist neighbors to listen with them. The programs should not only be preaching, but teaching and instructions for children, women and for the general public. Many non-Christians respond to the radio ministry of mission broadcasts all over the world. William Mial mentions

In other areas of the world, which are unreachable by any other means than radio due to political restrictions such as in the Soviet Union, we find that gospel missionary radio broadcasting is used by the head of the house to give basic Bible training to his family, and in some cases radio is used as an evangelist to bring his family to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Viggo B. Sphgaard, *Everything You Need to Know for a Cassette Ministry* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship Inc.,

<sup>110</sup> William Mial, "The Impact of Missionary Radio On Church Planting" in *Perspective On The World Christian Movement*, D-196

In Myanmar, the gospel is proclaimed through radio in the Burmese language and in some tribal languages from the far-east Broadcasting Corporation, Metro Manila, so that some non-Christians respond to it. A variety of Bible correspondence courses are necessary to offer the seekers as they develop their faith in a follow-up program. As the church of Myanmar cannot afford to set up radio stations, outside help is needed. The churches in Myanmar should unitedly work together and seek the help of Christian Broadcasting agencies like the Far East Broadcasting and others. The Myanmar church can organize a Radio club for the purpose of evangelization. This club can prepare scripts and request those Radio organizations to relay them.

### **A: 3. Cassette Ministry**

Due to its sight, sound, and motion, audiocassettes have the greatest potential as a communication media. There is a tremendous need to produce good, effective and truly evangelistic programs that reach people where they are. It has had immediate acceptance by Christians. The home or small group approach has great reinforce his testimony; however, special programs could also be used to open the discussion and witness. Programs might be built music, drama, Bible teaching, preaching and panels or testimonies.

The churches can make special programs for youth and literature people to come and watch videocassettes. Young people can be invited. Christians who run coffee shops or teashops can be encouraged to use these Christian cassettes in their shops. The church can also conduct social entertainment on special Christian occasions when Christian music and videocassettes can be used for entertainment.

Cassette may be used for the sick and bedridden people in hospitals and homes. One of the most fascinating experiences of the Korean Christians' methods of preaching is through cassettes. In some Christian hospitals and clinics, cassettes are regularly played in the wards and in the waiting rooms where people and the sick can listen. In India in some states, this ministry has an encouraging report. In Myanmar this would be a great opportunity to let the people hear the gospel message even through songs and speech.

The objective of most cassette producers in Christian circles is often evangelism. A Christian must bring it to the intended listener. Viggo B. Sphgaard points out that

It is important for the producer to understand the listener and his environment.

Communication must be established through frequencies and channels he is tuned into. Do not

just preach, but ask some questions. The listener should not sit passively, but he should be engaged in the communication so that he is actively thinking about the subject. This may be obtained by asking rhetorical questions or by having another voice – one that the listener can identify with asking the questions on the cassette.<sup>111</sup>

A variety of sensory input makes the gospel more interesting and more enjoyable for a media-oriented people. People will hear the gospel outside the church, yet they do not attend the evangelistic meetings and church worship services. Churches in villages and in town can play the cassettes of the New Testament early morning through an implying system. The whole village and people in the town will have the chance to listen to the word of God whatever they like it or not.

## **B. Personal Evangelism**

One of the peculiarities of the Protestants, says a Catholic priest, is that Protestant brethren are not ashamed of talking about the gift of faith they have received. It is not uncommon to find a copy of the gospel with them. They take the chance to speak about Christ with their own relatives, friends or acquaintances. They may do this at home, in the field, in market places or wherever they are. All this creates an unconscious persuading. It goes on by word of mouth from person to person.<sup>112</sup>

Personal evangelism is confrontation evangelism because individuals are purposely contacted and confronted with their need of salvation. The scripture presents the person-to-person method both in Old Testament and in the New Testament, i.e., God's dealing with Cain (Gen. 4:9-15), Jesus Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:5-25), Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-38), and Peter in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:2-48) etc. To contact people individually and to confront them with their spiritual need is the effective evangelism method of Jesus. Delos Miles points out that

Note that Jesus takes the initiative with Zacchaeus. "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5). We shall learn how to take the initiative with the lost. We should meet them more than halfway. We should be second milers towards the unreconciled. We ought to at the very least be willing to meet them on their turf. Jesus did.

This is the seeking element in evangelism. That seems to be the significance of the statement

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<sup>111</sup> Viggo B. Sphgaard, *Everything You Need to Know for a Cassette Ministry*, p. 115

<sup>112</sup> J. Puthernpuraekal, "Missionary Methods of the Protestant" in *Indian Missiological Review* 1984), pp. 1,6,38

in Luke 19:10, “for the son of man came to seek and save the lost.” Our God is a seeking savior. He is like the faithful shepherd who seeks after the one lost sheep until he finds him.<sup>113</sup>

The effectiveness of personal evangelism is very obvious in the ministry of Jesus. His public ministry inspired the masses, but the real impact of his message came person to person by dealing with people where they are. The personal evangelism of Jesus indicates that he became a servant to people by going where people could find him. He not only saw the multitude in terms of individuals but also treated them as needy without regard to position, wealth or race. He responded to opportunities of ministry as they occurred and utilized the advantage of natural family relationships. He not only noticed signs of spiritual interests, but also sought privacy with seekers where possible and took time with people.

Jesus inspired confidence in Himself. That is the appeal of His witness. He not only showed His care for them and observed common courtesies but called people by name and commended persons for their good traits. He asked for small favors and listened to their stories. He was interested in their interests and communicated on their level.

Jesus drew out the spiritual desire of people by assuming the best and asking probing questions. He stated great spiritual propositions and projected the idea of God’s blessing. He illustrated his ideas as He appealed to Scripture. He shared His own testimony and refused to argue. He clarified the gospel not only by accepting the essential truth of the kingdom and uncovering sin, but also by revealing the grace of God and testing human motives. He also leveled with people about the life of faith and personalized the doctrine.

Jesus brought persons to a decision not only by stressing individual responsibility and disclosing the alternatives, but also by challenging people to exercise faith and encouraging the fainthearted. He let persons express their confidence in the most realistic way and respected their freedom. He evangelized people and he nurtured believers Richards Stoll Armstrong says that

By evangelism, I mean reaching out to others in Christian love, identifying with them, caring for them, listening to them and sharing one’s faith with them in such a way that they will freely response and want to themselves to trust, love and obey God as disciples of Jesus Christ, and a member of his community, the church.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Delos Miles, *How Jesus won Persons* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982)

<sup>114</sup> Richards Stoll Armstrong, *Service Evangelism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), p. 53

Every Christian can witness to non-Christian relatives, friends, and others everywhere and bring them to the church. The church should train the active church members to send them to witness on the street, national parks, railway stations, seaports, airports, bus stops, markets, and shopping centers everywhere many people are gathered.

While discussing strategies and approaches, one already dealt with is the approach through relatives, families and friends. Personal evangelism therefore involves penetrating the gospel to the people wherever they are at work, or at home, in market, during travel and in leisure. In Myanmar, it is difficult to bring Buddhists to church. A personal contact through friendship and relationship is a possible way to reach out to the people. However, it demands Christian courage and commitment to witness.

The people despised by others and friendless need to be shown love and concern so that they can experience the love salvation of God. One of the basic rules in evangelism is to be there when people are open to help. They should be shared the goodness of God in the right context. In this way, sinners will become aware of the awesome reality of God's presence and love. Every person has a sinful past that can be recalled under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. It would give them hope to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord by being knowing that He would forgive their sins. Opening heart and pouring out the love of Jesus is better than criticizing and condemning the sinners, which might be unsympathetic. A positive attitude is especially important when ministering to discouraged people.

To win the Burmese Buddhists to Christ by means of friendship one must begin by understanding that his/her life must be an accurate reflection of the Good News. The fruits of the Spirit should characterize the gospel: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). This does not mean that the evangelizer must be perfect in each of these categories, but rather that he or she should be growing in these areas so that the truth of the gospel may be seen in his or her life. The point is that the evangelizer's life is the starting place for relational evangelism. Therefore, the validity of the shares own life is an essential characteristic of relational evangelism.

### **C. Bible Study**

Bible study is apart of Christian education. Evangelism and education must come together, for education is the whole process of leading life to its fulfillment including everything that works upon life as it is toward what it may become. It is a life-long process, and in it God and

man are partners. Therefore, it is important to have the right sense of direction and acquire skill in it. John R. Bisagno says that

The Sunday school can also be a most effective tool in feeding evangelistic prospects into the church services. In using the Sunday school for evangelism, stewardship, discipleship, and leadership training, remember this! Enrollment is the most important statistic you have in your church. Conversions, baptisms, and growth all stem from enrollment.<sup>115</sup>

The careful evangelization of Burmese Buddhists required systematic teaching of the message, so that the truth of the gospel may be understood. This is true for adults. With their increased ability to think and reason clearly, the teaching of the gospel is an effective means of reaching them. The gospel message is reasonable and logical in its development and lends itself naturally to careful explanation of its major points. Therefore, Bible study is a highly appropriate method to practice consciously the evangelization of adults.

When in designing lessons for a life response, the teacher's task is to help bridge the gap from Bible knowledge to life. The proper result of Bible teaching is not simply more information about Scripture but a changed life. Bible teaching as evangelism is the most common impressionable method used with adults, which is the lecture method. The lecture is an oral discourse on any subject, presented in a systematic, orderly manner for the purpose of instruction. After lecturing the teacher should allow the learners to ask questions and discussion in order to discover for themselves the content and subsequent life implications. The teacher also should ask the learners questions. The use of questions will cause students to respond to a specific issue, and his involvement in the learning process will become much more active than it would be in simply listening to a lecture. Perhaps this is why Jesus used questions in his teaching ministry. Bible teaching is not only an effective method for evangelizing the unbelievers but fit for following-up new believers. The total process of evangelism is never complete until the new convert becomes an evangelist. Follow-up programs consist of a biannual membership survey, to check up the members to know them, welcoming them individually, assigning a deacon for the new believer's spiritual welfare, enrolling the new believer in Sunday school and training union, and a new members' class taught by the pastor or other qualified person.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> John R. Bisagno, *How to Build an Evangelistic Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1971), PP. 141-142

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 116

## **D. Mass Evangelism**

Personal evangelism is one presenting the gospel to another whereas mass evangelism is one or two or more persons presenting the gospel to many people. There are some who give the following criticisms to mass evangelism: that it is mass psychology, it lacks personal touch, it is high power emotionalism, it is an unreal atmosphere, that many question of the people are not answered, its success is judged by numbers of people attending and that this method is a western method. But this method has been proved successful in many countries. It was also biblical. It was practiced by Jesus Christ in Galilee and Judea, and by Peter on the Day of Pentecost and the following days, Paul also was preaching in the market places (Acts 2:1-40; 17:17-31).

In Myanmar, Judson conducted such evangelistic meetings. He felt that the isolated location of the mission house was one of the obstacles to communicate with people. On the mission compound therefore, he built the “zayat” after the Burmese fashion fronting the main road leading to the great pagoda in order to receive many visitors and inquires. This zayat was used not only for receiving visitors and inquirers but also for conversation, teaching, preaching, worship, and for evening adult literacy classes taught by Mrs. Judson. From this zayat conversation, distribution of tracts, and preaching, people received their faith in God. Some new converts brought their relatives to hear the gospel so that the new church gained its members gradually. Knowing well that the preaching in zayat was effective, the mission work was extended to Moulmein, and two zayats were built and used effectively.

In modern days, the Buddhists will not come to church because they see church as religious territory. They regard that entering a church is to make the first step toward becoming a Christian. Therefore, Buddhists do not want to take the step of entering into the Christian church. They may come only to some neutral territory where no previous commitment is needed. The church therefore should explore its evangelistic outreach at public spaces such as parks, stadiums, and auditoriums, so that Buddhist people may come without hesitation. The work outside often can be done best in these neutral territories.

Paul G. hiebert mentions that

The Eagles Communications Team in Singapore stages modern musical concerts in Public auditoriums in Singapore and Malaysia. Each concert is followed by an evangelistic challenge and appeal. The team regularly fills the auditorium two or three nights running with young people, many of them non-Christians. Due to the shortage of land, a number of new congregations in Singapore have bought out theaters for use as church buildings. Another

example is Christian sports teams that compete with local clubs in public arenas and share their faith during the intermission.<sup>117</sup>

The usual way to develop a crusade is for a number of churches in a metropolitan area to get together and invite a big-name evangelist. Under the general supervision of the evangelist's association, committees are organized, prayer chains are formed, a choir is recruited, counselors are trained in personal witnessing, the media is enlisted at all levels, cooperating churches are sought, funds are raised, and a public arena is leased for the occasion. The excitement builds in the community and the professional evangelist preaches for a given number of nights. After each sermon, an invitation is given for people to accept Jesus Christ as their savior. In some crusades, the evangelist also gives a secondary invitation for Christians to re-dedicate their lives to God. Those who respond are asked to come forward where they are met one-one by those who have been trained as crusade counselors. After the interview, the counselor prays with the inquirer, either for salvation or re-dedication. Then the person making decision records it on a card with their names and addresses. If they have a church preference, they are asked to indicate that also.

After the crusade, the decision cards are distributed among the cooperating churches and the evangelist moves on leaving the follow-up to those who received the cards. As an aid to follow-up, some evangelistic associations send Bible correspondence courses and Christian magazines to new believers. The evangelistic association reports the result of the crusade or the evangelist on how many persons attended the crusade and how many inquires responded. As the result of crusade evangelism, the growth rates of the churches are changed. Mass evangelism therefore needs a good and timely planning. There is no short cut to successful mass evangelistic meeting. Preparations take long time. The first and foremost things that to bear in mind while preparing for evangelistic meetings are what Yesudian says:

- (a) We keep in mind our non-Christian friends when we design our program to create an atmosphere where they will feel at home
- (b) We modify wherever necessary even the methods of advertisement to make non-Christians feel that the meetings are meant for them too.
- (c) We conduct the meetings in public places rather than in mission compounds and schools.

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<sup>117</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1994), P. 181

- (d) We invite speakers who can communicate the gospel in its simplicity and power to the non-Christians in their contexts.
- (e) We take pains to visit them personally and invite them for meetings.
- (f) We arrange to train the local Christians for specialized counselling to deal with various religious groups.<sup>118</sup>

## **E. Planting Churches**

The churches in Myanmar should be ready to plant churches wherever there are converts. Whatever the number of converts, church planting among them is crucial. If the church is the people of God, the church must be relevant to all the people of God. In this connection, culture is an indispensable factor, which contributes to making the church relevant to its people. The church in Myanmar does not have to lose its biblical principle in doing so. What it needs it to mean a church express its identity, life and mission, worship and witness as the body of Christ within its own culture. There will also be a failure when the church does evangelistic work among the heterogeneous people if the church does not realize the fact that homogeneity should be maintained, especially when some converts are willing to join the church. Some churches in Myanmar accommodate such converts in the churches where the people do not belong to the converts' culture. The converts do not feel at home in such a congregation. They are totally different and worship has no significance to them. Most of the converts slide back or grow as weak Christians. Separate churches for such group of people should be planted. Burmese people are culturally and ethically different from others. To plant churches for Burmese new converts are therefore necessary.

## **F. Appointment of Evangelists among the Burmese People**

It is very important to appoint the local evangelist that they speak the same language and adapt into the context of the community. Many of the missionaries' challenges include language and living-styles. The gospel might be better make known to the Bama Buddhist by local evangelists.

### **F: 1. Resident Witness is Very Important**

The means that an evangelist among the Burmese people if he is other than Burmese should go and live among them whom he evangelizes. He is to stay and identify himself with the

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<sup>118</sup> Prakash Yesudian, "*Crusade Evangelism*" in Ezra Sargunam ed., *Mission Mandate* (Kilpauk, Madras: Mission India 2000, 1992), p. 339

people so that he and his family will become part and parcel of the people. This demands knowledge of their language of dialects and adaptation to their culture life. In such a manner, he wins their love and confidence, short-term and tourist evangelists will not be effective gospel communicators among the Burmese people. They create suspicion rather than trust. Along another line, evangelism will seek to bring those who believe into a congregation made up of their own kind and kin, their own caste fellows. This is possible and desirable.<sup>119</sup>

### **F: 2. Raise Evangelists Among Burmese**

In Myanmar, there are many different tribes and languages. The Burmese are the majority and dominant people. They are Buddhists and more advanced culturally, socially, economically, academically and politically than other tribal people. The best evangelism method to communicate the gospel to the Burmese Buddhists in Myanmar is using local Christians who have been converted from Burmese Buddhists, because they better understand their own people than outsiders. Myanmar churches therefore should be ready to raise evangelists from among Burmese people. Committed converts can communicate better than evangelists from other tribes.

### **F: 3. Burmese Social Structure Should Be Respected**

In the Asian situation where social structure is based on culture, anything that affects the social structure will create tension. To avoid such undesirable situations, evangelists should strictly maintain and respect social structure. If he is an outsider of the Burmese culture, an evangelist has to learn and understand their social structure. Instances can be given: the social structure may demand that preaching or Christian activities are to be conducted, consent from the head of the society, the village or the place should be consulted.

### **G. Evangelist Lifestyle and Attitude**

As already mentioned, “Deeds speak louder than words.” How true it is with the people who work for Jesus Christ - the evangelists and those who reach others for the gospel. Evangelists are the salt for the people to whom he preaches. He imparts the values of the Kingdom of God. The message is heard from the lives of those who preach. In Myanmar, where Burmese Buddhists are the majority this principle is extremely important, there is no better message

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<sup>119</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Ethic Realities and Church: Lessons from India* (California: William Carey Library, 1979), P. 228

than the lifestyle of the proclaimer. His dress, behaviors, respect for the culture and even his food habits are very important. These cannot be ignored. Saddhu Sandar Singh, who converted to Christianity and became the ardent indigenized servant of God, told the story how a high caste Brahmin refused to drink water from a common cup even when he was about to die of thirst. He demanded that he should drink the water in an Indian cup (it is made of earth). Sandar Singh always use this phrase “Give Christ (to Hindus in India) in an Indian cup.”<sup>120</sup> The lifestyle and behavior of a preacher should confirm his preaching.

Concerning Christianity and national culture, King Bagyidaw asked Judson if the Burmese Christians were real Burmese and whether they dressed like others. Judson assured him that they were real Burmese and they wore longyis and aingyis like their countrymen. The Burmese normally do not change names or style of clothing on becoming Christians, but they forsake their – previous religion and its pleasing associations. The Burmese believe that to be a good Burmese, one must be a Buddhist. Therefore, it is very important to demonstrate that Christians are good and loyal citizens. Christianity does not make them love their country less. Although this is the message for all Christians, it will be more useful for evangelists to understand the Burmese feeling of their culture.

## **H. Communication of the Message**

As pointed out earlier, the message of the gospel cannot be altered but the way of the message is communicated can be changed when preaching to Burmese Buddhist.

### **H: 1. Religionless Gospel**

Evangelization is announcing the news of the incarnation, salvation, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word *gospel* derives from the Greek word *euangelion* which means “good news and sharing the gospel of Jesus through a variety of means.”<sup>121</sup> The gospel should not be the gospel about Christian religion rather about love, salvation, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without differentiating between the gospel of Jesus and the news of religion, the gospel may scarcely find a place in the Bama Buddhist context. In the book, *Papers and Letter from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the term religionless Christianity. For him, religion meant observing church traditions, faith and doctrines in terms of worship and prayer; religionless Christianity meant living out the life of Jesus Christ in a secular world. Bonhoeffer was

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<sup>120</sup> Subbamma B.V., *Christ Confront India* (Madras: Diocessan Press, 1973), P. 10

<sup>121</sup> Donald K. McKIM, “Evangelism” in *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 1996 ed.

concerned with living out the “incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus”.<sup>122</sup> Without all the practices, teachings, and rituals the church had developed beyond the life of Jesus. He called Christians to fight for justice in the midst of the injustice caused by Hitler, head of Nazis party. Bonhoeffer’s was that Hitler, the governing power, used most of the churches for maintenance of his power—the power that committed the genocide of millions of people. With the purpose of saving people’s lives, Bonhoeffer held to the view of religionless Christianity and lived out the life of Jesus until he died. Borrowing from Bonhoeffer, I would like to introduce a term, *religionless gospel* for the Bama Buddhist context in Myanmar. Christianity encompasses the gospel of Jesus and the religious additions to the gospel. Jan Martin Depner wrote a paper *Objectives of Theological Education*. In the paper, he clearly points out the division of religious side and non-religious side of Christianity. Depner holds a non-religious side of Christianity as follows

But I hope we understand that it (Christianity) is not a religion in the true sense of the word. Christianity is about a relation to Jesus, a walking through life next to and as brothers of the messiah. We are children of the Highest; we don’t need religion. We are not guests in the house of God anymore; it would be offence to him to approach Him in a religious way.”<sup>123</sup>

For Depner, what we need to choose is the yoke of Jesus Christ, not of religion. We need to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ, not the news of religion. Jesus Christ did not establish any religions but a group of his followers. His aim in coming to earth was not to build religious organizations but to extend the kingdom of God. Roland Allen wrote *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* He stated in the book that St. Paul’s method was a “method of a gospel not of a law.”<sup>124</sup> Paul aimed at establishing indigenous churches, which are authorized by the local people.<sup>125</sup> “He refused to transplant the law and customs of the church in Judea into the four provinces. He refused to set up any central administrative authority from which the whole church was to receive directions in the conduct of local affairs. He refused to allow the universal application of particular precedents.”<sup>126</sup> St. Paul’s method was to simply share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others. He did not propagate the news of Christian religion or

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<sup>122</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975), 286.

<sup>123</sup> Jan Martin Depner, “*Objective of Theological Education*” November 16<sup>th</sup> 2009. This paper is received from the Makong Region Mission Seminar held at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong.

<sup>124</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul or Ours?* Foreword by Lesslie Newbigin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1962),148.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

culture but the gospel of Jesus Christ. He let believers establish their own churches in their context. To my way of thinking, religionless gospel is a part of Paul's method – simply witnessing a gospel of Jesus Christ in terms of words and deeds to a particular culture, not institutions and practices transposed from another culture. Buddhists who accept Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life will find ways to group themselves as the body of Christ to do the reconciling work of Christ in the Myanmar context, i.e., they will discover how to "be the church" in their own cultural context. If we understand religion as a cover of an intimate and personal relationship with God, the cover would mean practices, activities, and worship services. The point that a religion is a cover of God does not mean religious activities are unnecessary rather that they are not a primary concern. It also does not mean that we need to reject church organizations, faith, doctrines and institutions. I simply would like to indicate that it also makes sense that Buddhists can be followers of Jesus Christ without changing their religion and cultures because religion does not save humans but Jesus Christ does save them. Christian practices, activities, and worship cannot save but faith in Jesus Christ can. Religious organizations and practices are necessary but Jesus Christ is more important than those. To help Bama Buddhists accept Jesus Christ, Christian religiosity is not a major necessity but the gospel of Jesus, Christ is the essential message to share. We can obey God without participating in any activities and organizations. We can love and help other people without attending any ceremonies or following any accepted practices. In Christianity we can accept Jesus Christ as our savior and Lord without joining any church services. Attending church activities is not accepting Jesus Christ. Both acceptance of God as the creator of all beings and Jesus Christ as savior are concerned with personal faith and belief not with religious rituals. To believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as one's savior is not concerned with any human organizations. The Church cannot save but Jesus Christ alone can save. A man hanging on the cross on the left of Jesus repented and confessed his sin. Because of this faith, Jesus Christ promised him that he would be in heaven (Luke 23:40-43). He neither belonged to any organization nor attended any church activities. The church is responsible for bearing witness of the love of Jesus but not of Christian religion. David Bosch holds this position.

Conversion is, however, not joining of a community in order to procure 'eternal salvation'; it is, rather, a change in allegiance in which Christ is accepted as Lord and center of one's life. A Christian is not simply somebody who stands a better chance of being 'saved', but a person who accepts the responsibility to serve God in this life and promote God's reign

in all its forms. Conversion involves personal cleansing forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in order to become a participant in the mighty works of God.<sup>127</sup>

What the Bama Buddhists see as Christian in Myanmar are religious practices and rituals. They only see religiosity, the gospel about Jesus that covers or obscures the gospel of Jesus. It is very important to let Bama Buddhists know that God is not bound to any religion. Religions like Christianity and Buddhism are the God clothes people wear. In reality God belongs to no religion. Jesus Christ came to the earth not to build any religion but to establish the kingdom of God. Thus believing in and accepting Jesus Christ does not mean changing one's religion but rather changing one's life and heart. Changing our religions is not the meaning of accepting Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ says that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Without changing our religion, we can accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior and Lord. For example, a Bama Buddhist can be a follower of Jesus Christ without attending church services. He or she can be a follower of Jesus Christ without participating in Christian culture or religion because religion does not make us followers of Jesus Christ. He or she can be a follower of Jesus Christ while staying in Buddhism. The weakness of our evangelism is that it always stands for Christian religion. The gospel brought by Jesus Christ is not the Christian gospel but the gospel of God; it is not the gospel about Christians and Christian religion but the gospel of Jesus Christ. The aim of evangelism is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; the objective of preaching the gospel is helping others to be acquainted with Jesus Christ.

### **H: 1: a. Witnesses**

To be a simply witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ, an individual Christian first needs to incarnate Jesus Christ in his or her life. Christian Pentecostals emphasize "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." The criterion for knowing a person whether he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.<sup>128</sup> The criterion for measuring whether a person incarnates Jesus Christ in his or her life depends on his or her humility. To be a Christian means not to be a mere human, but to be a person in whom Christ is alive. Such person according to Bonhoeffer is not a mere religious person but a wholeheartedly and undeservedly committed person to Jesus Christ. To be a witness to Jesus Christ means not to be a mere missionary but to be a person in whom Christ is alive.

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<sup>127</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Mary Knoll and New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 488.

<sup>128</sup> David L. Smith, *A Hand Book of Contemporary Theology: tracing Trends and Discerning Directions in Today's Theological Landscape*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 2001), 52, 53.

To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a patient, a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to a man - not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the suffering of God in the secular life. The religious act is always partial; faith is something whole, involving the whole of one's life. Jesus calls men not to religion, but life.<sup>129</sup>

A society like the Bama Buddhists, to let Jesus be alive in our lives means humility that is very important factor for a witness to Jesus Christ. Without humility, one may mistakenly take holier than thou, imperialistic, exclusive, dominating, and superior attitudes towards people of other faiths. These attitudes made Christians see other religions and cultures as satanic, savage, and barbarous.<sup>130</sup> These attitudes may not extend the Kingdom of God but may cause instability in a community instead. In my opinion humility is one of the criterions for measuring if Jesus Christ is alive in one's life. "And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death- even death on the cross" (Phil 2:8). David Bosch articulates the way how to be witnesses of Jesus Christ as follows:

It is, however, a bold humility- or a humble boldness. We know only in part but we do know. And we believe that the faith we profess is both true and just, and should be proclaimed. We do this, however, not as judges or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers, but as envoys of peace; not as high-pressure sales persons, but as ambassadors of the servant Lord.<sup>131</sup>

## **H: 2. Possibility of Religionless Gospel in the Bama Buddhist Community**

In our evangelism, religionless gospel can make room for Jesus Christ in the Bama Buddhist society. The gospel about the love and salvation of Jesus Christ has no religion. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder wrote *Constant in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. They argue that the context of the gospel is changing but the gospel (love and salvation/centrality of Jesus Christ) is constant. They also mention that we need to keep the

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<sup>129</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 361, 362.

<sup>130</sup> Samuel Ngun Ling, *Theological Themes in for Our Times: Reflections on Selected Themes of the Myanmar Institute of Theology*, (Yangon: Baptist Printing Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>131</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Mary Knoll and New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 489.

church constant in every context.<sup>132</sup> It is true, the love and salvation of Jesus Christ is constant in all cultures, but the traditional form of church may not have a place. In the Bama Buddhists context, to transplant a traditional form of Christian church may have very narrow acceptance. We would rather need to find a new way for establishing a group of people of God in the Bama Buddhist context. Even though the form of Christian religion and culture is inconstant, the religionless gospel (love and salvation) of Jesus Christ is constant. This is simply telling the love and salvation of Christ to people of other faiths and to people of no faith; it is witnessing the gospel told by Jesus Christ and the gospel about Him. We should avoid telling about Christian doctrines, faiths, practices and rituals. To become members of Christian institutions depends on personal conviction of individuals. To tell the story of Jesus Christ is our task.

An interviewed person has mentioned the story of Chai, a Thai young man who becomes a follower of Jesus Christ without changing his religion.

So when Chai gave his life to Jesus, he began referring to himself as a Child of God and a new Buddhist. He then related a subsequent incident in which he had a conversation with a Buddhist monk on a train. ‘After I listened to his story, I told him that he was missing one thing in life. He asked me what that was and I told him it was Jesus.’ Chai continued to tell us the story in which the monk not only gave his life to Christ, but also invited Chai to come to his Buddhist temple to share about Jesus. Then Chai said, ‘At the beginning of our conversation the monk asked me, ‘Are you a Christian?’ and I said NO.’ I explained that Christianity and Jesus are two different things. Salvation is in Jesus, not in Christianity. If I had said that I was a Christian, the Conversation would have ended at the point. But it did not end. The monk now walks with Jesus.<sup>133</sup>

Chai is a missionary by way of witnessing simply the gospel of Jesus Christ. He shared the love and salvation of Jesus Christ with others. He understood that salvation comes from Jesus not from Christianity or Christian organization. He tried neither to form an organization nor

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<sup>132</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constant in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 394-395, 398.

<sup>133</sup> Ca Hngak, the president of Reaching The World Bible College and Church of Jesus Christ in Myanmar. He served God more than 30 years to Buddhist and had experience. I interviewed him by phone in 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015. This is quoted by the author from Frank Decker, When “Christian” Does not Translate, in *Mission Frontiers: The Bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission*, Vol. 27. No. 5, Ralph D. Winter ed. (September-October 2005), 8.

an institution. In the opinion of this author, this mission method can have a huge place in the Bama Buddhist context.

Another missionary I interviewed is Khin Maung Htay who also witnesses with the religionless gospel. There are many villages that are not open to hearing even the words, Christian and Christianity. They do not allow any missionary and preaching the gospel in their communities. Knowing that the villagers were so sensitive to Christians and Christian gospel, Htay simply preached the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I went to a village to put up at the house of the village head-man in Burmese *tagyi*. I arrived at the village at about 7:00 PM. It was getting dark. I went to *tagyi's* house and asked permission for staying a night because my motorbike was out of order. *Tagyi* told me that he could help me check the bike. I replied that the bike was out of order; I had tried repairing it for a few hours. And he allowed me to stay for the night. I first inquired why different images of Buddha were in the home. They asked me whether I was a Buddhist. They also would like to know whether I was a Christian. I replied to them that I was not a Christian but was just a man who shared the gospel of Jesus who loves all people. They asked who God Jesus was. I asked them whether they wanted to hear about Jesus. They said they did want to hear. All family members gathered together and I shared the gospel of Jesus. Family members welcomed the gospel. I was very careful not to talk about Christian or Christianity.<sup>134</sup>

Htay also said Christianization and confessing Jesus Christ as one's savior are different things. Christianization or traditional mission strategy emphasizes church growth and organization. Religionless gospel has nothing to do with church growth and Christianization. This evangelism method shows that the Bama Buddhists are open to the gospel told by Jesus Christ and the gospel about Jesus. Simply propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ is not alien and strange to them. It finds a home in their hearts. L. Zau Latt observes, "To be a Bama means to be a Buddhist and vice versa. Buddhist people are peace-loving people. When we preach about the love of Jesus Christ they listen silently without any interruption. But when it comes to changing their religion from Buddhism to Christianity, it almost becomes unthinkable for them."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Khin Maung Htay is a Bama missionary. He was born in 1968. He converted to Christianity in 1991. He has been working as a missionary for twenty years. The interviews was taken in 2008. He studied *pali* language and theology. Pali is the language in which Buddhist Texts are written.

<sup>135</sup> L. Zau Latt, "Rereading the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18 – 20)" in *Our Theological Journey: Writing in Honor of Dr. Anna May Say Pa*. Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2006, 88.

### **H: 3. Preach with Confidence**

The message should be preached with conviction and confidence. When the preacher preaches, he must be convinced that the message is true as the Burmese Buddhists are very much devoted in their beliefs. According to my understanding, the Bama Buddhist judges outward appearance when someone preaches or teaches especially regarding doctrines. Be a doer of the words.

### **H: 4. Preach with Humility**

Certainly of what a preacher preaches should go together with humility. Former foreign missionaries preached with certainty, humility and conviction. They were very dear to the people whom they preached. They sacrificed to such a great extent that some of them lost their health, the school education, they become poor and some of them died and never saw their homeland again. In spite of their great sacrifice, in some countries, like India, Myanmar and other Asian countries, because of colonialism and political circumstances, missionaries became the scapegoat of these troubles. People blamed missionaries as those who came to preach the gospel in disguise. They were also blamed as destroyers of people's cultures. Their good intentions were misinterpreted.

Now it is for the national Myanmar Christians to overcome and disprove these misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Now a brown skin man is preaching to a brown skin man; a Myanmar is preaching to a Myanmar. Humility counts Christianity does not make people feel that they are on a higher class. Any sense of superiority from those who preach will destroy the gospel message.

### **H: 5. Preach with Sincerity**

The message may be eloquent, but it doesn't touch the heart of the Buddhists. Buddhists are honest and helpful. An honest evangelist can touch the heart of Buddhists. It matters more what he is than what he is preaching about. Christians and preachers must live an honest and a holy life as blameless people before men and God. Many Buddhists monks are saintly and they influence many people. The strength of Buddhism was the saintly life of the monks. But this has changed. Some monks became secular. It is therefore for the church to exploit the situation where evangelists can prove themselves faultless before the Buddhists.

### **H: 6. Preach with Clarity**

It is only when an evangelist adapts himself to the culture of the Burmese Buddhists that his message will become clear. He will know their dialect, cultures, tradition, habits and customs. The message becomes clearer when an evangelist use right words and appropriate phrases intelligible to them. Non-Christians do not understand the high sounding terms. They do not understand the Bible contents unless it is made relevant and intelligible to them. If the preacher does not bring a clear message, the Burmese people will not be convinced.

## **H: 7. Preach with social development**

I interviewed Herbert Tum Ceu who is the current director of Myanmar Mission International and he mentioned

This is my prayer that my experience will be share in doing mission in Myanmar. I hope and pray that this sharing strategy and method of evangelism will be beneficial and helpful for each and every one those who are willing to do mission in Myanmar. There are various ways to serve God in different places and countries and one of the most necessities is mission. The gospel has been planted in Myanmar for 200 years but still many people do not know Christ and many people disregard what have been preached because of may be lack of knowledge of strategy and method. Missionaries and churches have different kinds of methods and strategies. Now is the time to see the most relevant strategy and method in doing mission. The time, money, facilities should no longer be wasted in doing mission. By God's grace, God blesses my ministry and reap many lost during the period of time in doing mission. Firstly, this is because of God's love. Secondly, MMI has relevant strategy and method that we use as a tool for proclaiming the gospel to Burmese Buddhist. This is the contribution to the pastors, evangelists, and a missionary in order to reach out Buddhist in Myanmar is to help who bring good news in Myanmar and serves people with loving hands. It is good to train native people and trying to plant vital house-churches in mission fields by sending missionaries. Working non-denominational mission mobilization and co-operation and native worker-centered mission. One of the relevant and effective strategies to do mission is to train missionaries and do social development evangelism. As Myanmar is a poor country, many people live by cultivating and looking care livestock. The message should not be just by words but with the social development that can benefit for their living. Caring the poor, orphans, and handicaps is very much needed and effective message of sharing the good news. Many children could not

go to school because of their poverty. Therefore, teaching the literates, educating the children, and developing relationships with other churches is necessary.<sup>136</sup>

I believe Myanmar Mission International is successful ministry by seeing the growth of their members and conversion because of its strategies and method of introducing the gospel to Buddhist. I believe doing mission in Myanmar with social development is more effective than just preaching the good news.

### **H: 8. Preach by Comparing and Contrasting the Teaching**

The Burmese Buddhists are not responsive to the gospel. They have strong aspirations to obtain nirvana. To reach out the gospel to them in a comparing and contrasting study would help to see their needs fulfilled. This will give hope to them and a chance for the church to respond to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism. The following are some points of contrast between the two teachings.

- (i) Theravada Buddhism leaves God out of the picture, but Christian faith begins and ends with God
- (ii) Gautama the Buddha disclaimed divinity. But Jesus claimed divinity the Son of God, the second Person of the Triune God
- (iii) Gautama the Buddha said that he found the way and shows the way. Jesus Christ said that he is the way the truth and the life
- (iv) The mission of Gautama is to teach the Bhrama, but of Jesus Christ is to save mankind from sin and death.
- (v) Buddhism stresses anicca, the impermanence of everything even the life after. Christian belief stresses the unchangeable God and the life everlasting in the unshakable kingdom
- (vi) Buddhism is man-centered that to achieve nibbana is only done by self-effort. Christianity is God-centered; salvation is God's gift through Jesus Christ, receiving by faith.
- (vii) Buddhism stresses non-soul, anatta but Christianity believe that man has eternal spirit.

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<sup>136</sup> Herbert Tum Ceu is the current director of Myanmar Mission International who fully commits to reach out Buddhist in Myanmar. I interviewed him by phone and concluded his experience reaching out Buddhist with the strategies and methods his ministry used.

- (viii) The basic problem in Buddhism is dukkha, suffering that is caused by karma. The basic problem in Christianity is sin caused by free will.
- (ix) According to Buddhism, the origin of man is unknown (Samyutta Nikaya 15:1:1 and Slutta nipata). According to Christianity, the origin of man is God that he created man in his own image.
- (x) According to Buddhism, man is involved in an endless cycle of rebirth. But the Bible says that man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment (Heb. 9:27)
- (xi) The goal of a Buddhist is nibbana, non-being. But the goal of a Christian is everlasting life to dwell with God in the kingdom of God.
- (xii) In Buddhism, one cannot escape from karma, the law of harvest. In Christianity there is the forgiveness of sins for those who repent from their sins and turn to God.

There are some similar points in Buddhism and Christianity such as

- (a) As Buddhism stresses anicca, (impermanence) Christianity also emphasizes the impermanence of the world and worldly things as well as the physical life of man.
- (b) Both faiths uphold high standards of ethics
- (c) Both faiths commend love for others and reverence for life
- (d) Both faiths emphasize meditation and self-discipline
- (e) As Buddhism teaches the elimination of all desires, Christianity teaches the submission of natural desires and cleansing from unholiness
- (f) Both faiths speak of inner peace

## **I. Gospel Team Ministry**

Missionaries of Myanmar apply the evangelism method of Jesus by training native believers to carry out the gospel to their own people. The missionaries and native disciples used wide tour evangelism. For instance, Judson and his Burmese assistants visited every lane and corner of Moulmein and neighboring villages, to preach and to distribute tracts. They met every morning to pray, to report the work and successes of the previous day. These short meetings gave the opportunity for correcting mistakes and furnishing new topics for argument and conversation. In his way, they communicated the gospel to non-believers.

Therefore, the churches in Myanmar should apply the methods of Jesus to reach the Burmese Buddhists. Gospel team ministry systematic visitation witness program, week of evangelism programs should be conducted effectively. The believers in the book of Acts went in teams, in groups, as individuals to the market places, prisons, temples, homes, river banks, wherever people could be found. To evangelize the Burmese Buddhists it is necessary to infiltrate the homes, business houses factories, markets, squares hospitals, dispensaries, schools, farm and barracks with the gospel. The gospel should be reflected by actions of love, kindness, sympathy, and helpfulness.

# CHAPTER IX

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHURCH ACTIONS

One of the most difficult subjects is the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church. It is not easy to make a clear conclusion of the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church. This chapter includes the recommendation for church actions which has been already practice meaningfully in some areas and still relevant for today church to take action. Hedlund tries to explain the kingdom of God in relation to the church. Here the writer takes the idea from Hedlung, as he says

What does this mean for the mission of the church today? Evangelization is as Beyerhous stated, means inviting people into the Kingdom of Grace. Jesus himself came announcing the nearness of the kingdom. In fact, Jesus is the central element in the kingdom. In his person the kingdom has come! Consequently all New Testament evangelization was centered in Jesus Christ and consisted of the call to enter His kingdom. Likewise, our evangelism must remain Christ-centered. Christian evangelism preaches a kingdom that is realized now by spiritual regeneration. The people of God comprise the kingdom of God on earth. It follows that the church, the body of the redeemed that confess his name, must manifest the kingdom in their relationship and life in the world.<sup>137</sup>

What the writer is trying to say is that the church has the obligation to carry out the task of proclamation of the gospel to every nation, people and ethnic groups. The Myanmar churches must understand that the church is the agent of the kingdom and as an agent it is abounding duty, a mandate that it should not ignore. It (the church) is to proclaim this kingdom. It is the duty of the church to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. It visibly demonstrates what the kingdom is. The church acts under the authority of the kingdom. Keeping this understanding in mind, the church in Myanmar is urged to take evangelistic work seriously. The writer makes the following recommendations for the church in Myanmar to take action:

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<sup>137</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, *Evangelization and Church Growth: Issue from the Asian Context* (Madras: McGavran Institute, 1992), 27

## **A. Evangelism Should Be Given Priority**

There are different kinds of ministry that the church should undertake, but it also depends on the situation and the circumstances. The church should always be conscious of the fact that its existence is to be the agent of the kingdom of God. It is to bring people to the kingdom and nourish them till they fully accept Jesus Christ and makes Him not only as their savior but to pay loyalty to him and commit everything to him. The churches in Myanmar should be conscious of the fact that when the Christian population is only 6.5% evangelism is the church priority. Maintaining and keeping the church to run is an important task, but while looking into running of the church, churches in Myanmar should prioritize evangelism.

The following suggestions of the writer can be adopted

- (a) All Myanmar churches that are committed to biblical sound doctrine, whatever denomination may be, should come together and form a united Myanmar Evangelistic Forum and Association. Preaching and evangelistic work should be done jointly, especially when evangelistic meetings and revival meetings are to be conducted. In countries like Myanmar where government is not very favourable to big people gathering and which misinterpret Christian activities a joint action by churches will be more practical to move the government for any implication that may occur. Secondly, by joint action it helps to make known to other non-Christians that Christian preaches an undivided Christ or undivided church.
- (b) Myanmar joint evangelistic work can support and send evangelists to work among the Burmese Buddhists
- (c) This joint Myanmar evangelistic association can take up training of evangelists.

## **B. Conscientious Churches about Evangelism**

Evangelism should be made among all members of the church. Churches should regularly deal with this subject through preaching from the pulpit, literature and through youth and women meetings where evangelism is given as a challenge to young people and church members. Many churches do not preach about the need of evangelizing other people. Sunday schools are also a place where young people will be challenged to the evangelistic task of the

church. Seminars and evangelistic training schools should be conducted regularly. Pastors should have concern for evangelism and be willing to encourage lay people for evangelism. When the church is aware and convinced, the evangelistic task of the church will become everybody's job.

### **C. Observe Evangelism Week**

Every church should make a plan to have at least one week set apart for evangelism. In this week, a related program of activities can be arranged. A seminar, or conference or workshop can be conducted for young people during the weekdays and during evenings evangelistic meetings can be conducted. This program should culminate on Sunday or as the case may be, where a public worship service will be held to challenge young people and members of the church for evangelism. Promotional materials like literature, films, videocassette can be used to great enthusiasm among people for the task of evangelism.

Information about evangelistic or missionary work can be of great inspiration to church members. Biographies of great missionaries like Judson, David Brainerd, William Carey, Martin Henry, Hudson Taylor and others can play an important part in educating members of the church for missionary work. Also, missionary information of other countries and other organizations can be very helpful to infuse information about mission work in other parts of the world.

### **D. Training of Lay People for Evangelism**

#### **D: 1. Training School**

In general, Myanmar mainline Christian denominations are known to be advocated holistic mission as the fundamental tenet of mission theology. However, Myanmar conciliar church's theological education model has been found oriented primarily toward the pastoral care of congregation while neglecting courses that are oriented toward missiological thrusts. In fact, churches of Myanmar define mission in terms of multifarious activities carried on in the name of mission but have failed to define it biblically as to the intended outcome in terms of disciples made among the nations. The most glaring of this is reluctance to participate in evangelism on the part of professionals prepared in the theological schools and colleges that have existed in the country. These symptoms and signs indicate that the current theological education pattern being used in Myanmar church as a whole, whether conciliar or evangelical,

has been more concerned about the inner life and system of a bureaucratic church rather than about the task of the evangelization of Myanmar.<sup>138</sup>

In the light of the above, the imbalance of courses in our theological education, the following are suggested to kindle missionary passion in every Bible student.

- We need to identify and discard dysfunctional theology, which is more concerned with uplifted of church members and social gospel than reaching out the world
- We need to encourage the systematic study of missions, evangelical theology of mission in particular, in all theological schools and colleges in the country
- A suitable balance must be created between the need for academic excellence, practical experience and spiritual maturity in the curricula of theological schools and colleges
- Care needs to be taken to avoid the danger of becoming too academic and too structured instead of being flexible and becoming relevant to the needs of the missiological and sociological issues being faced in Myanmar
- We need to make some changes in our courses orientation in all leadership training institutions and programs to ensure that mission be a fundamental and essential core component of every course.<sup>139</sup>

Moreover, the church in Myanmar also should start a regular lay training or lay leadership school. There are many different kinds of ministry in which lay people can be involved. But here the specific need is involving lay people for evangelism. Lay people therefore need training, without training their preaching will be difficult and they will lose interest after a few attempts. Towards this aim, Myanmar churches should have regular lay leadership training programs. It can be a six months training for lay people who cannot fully work as evangelists. For this, a crash program course can be prepared where experienced facilitators from among experienced people not necessary ministers who involved themselves in evangelistic tasks can be invited to conduct these short term courses. For a longer period type of training, it needs more planning. This can be called the Mission Training School or Lay Leadership Training.

It is always a dangerous trend when in such training school; pastors with seminary degrees but without experience in evangelism work or without a conviction are asked to train

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<sup>138</sup> Cung Nawl, *Why Myanmar Churches fail in Evangelizing the Buddhist Bamar People of Myanmar* (2004), PP. 20-21

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., P. 46

lay people. Seminary knowledge will not be as practicable as those who really have involved themselves in evangelism. D. Sunder Singh says

Missionary training in India is a failure as far as producing evangelists and church planters are concerned because there is more theology and less missiology. Almost all theological colleges are interested in training their students in western theology, which is scholastic, idealistic and hence dry. Unless missiology finds its place in the curriculum theological education in India will not enable the seminaries to produce church planters.<sup>140</sup>

For the Myanmar situation, churches should encourage producing more lay trained workers where the need for evangelizing is the need of the hour.

### **D: 2. Introducing Mission Department in Theological Seminaries**

It is important for all the seminaries to open mission departments where theological students who prepare themselves for the ministry shall not only be theologically oriented but mission oriented as well. Missiology subjects should be in the curriculum and practical work should be made during holidays and vocation in rural places to acquaint young students with evangelistic work among non-Christians.

### **E. Prayer**

Prevailing prayer is the all essentials preparation for the harvest. And city, village, area, or nation is made more open responsive to Jesus, Christians efforts, and more aware of its spiritual need it has been prepared by prolonged and intensive prayer. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message (Acts 16:14). Prayer is necessary. Without prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit cannot be experienced in Christian's efforts.

Churches therefore should be encouraged to plan for prayer meetings specifically for the evangelization of Burmese Buddhists. Prayer meetings can be arranged as follows:

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<sup>140</sup> D. Sunder Singh, "Theological Education and Church Planting" in Mission Mandate, P. 356

### **E: 1. Dawn Prayer**

In the early morning Jesus went out to solitary place and there he prayed (Mk. 1:35). One of the reasons why the Korean churches are growing rapidly is the dawn prayer meeting. Many Koreans credit Rev. Kil Sun-Cho for beginning the early Morning Prayer meeting. Some say this is a characteristic of Koreans because of their Buddhist background. It is true that Buddhist monks rise early to pray, but few laymen. Yet in Korean churches, many Christians gather daily to pray. The number increased after World War II and after Korean War. Many Christians repent their Shinto Shrine worship and many prayed for their families in the North.<sup>141</sup>

### **E: 2. All Night Prayer Meetings**

The Korean Churches have not only dawn prayer meetings, but also all night prayer meetings once a week. Dr. Park Cho-Choon mentions that

Recently many churches have begun all night prayer meetings on Friday from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am during this time there is singing, preaching, testimonies, group and individual prayer. Many churches have a prayer mountain or retreat center where groups and individuals can go for prayer, Bible study and meditation. I truly believe that our church is growing because we are sincerely praying.<sup>142</sup>

### **E: 3. Fasting and Prayer**

Fasting and prayer is the teaching of the Bible. Moses fasted forty days two times to receive the Ten Commandments from God. Prophet Elijah fasted forty days. Daniel fasted for his people and he received the answer of God after three weeks of fasting and prayer. The fasting of queen Esther and her people, of the king and his people of Nineveh, of king Ahab of Israel, of king Hezekiah of Judah changed their situation and received God's mercy. In the New Testament, there are many Scripture tests about fasting and prayer. Christians who practice fasting and prayer experience the effectiveness of it. Churches should encourage individual or group fasting and prayer, once a month or once a week lead by the pastor.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., PP. 28-29

<sup>142</sup> Park Cho-Choon, "Dynamics of Young Nak Presbyterian Church Growth" in Bong Rin Ro and Marlin L. Nelson eds., Korean Church Explosion (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995), P. 204

#### **E: 4. Prayer Cell Groups**

Prayer cells should be organized according to the region where the church members live. Each prayer cell group can meet once a week and pray together, especially for non-Christian relatives, friends, and for those to whom they have witnessed about salvation. This is what churches of Myanmar lack in spite of it crucial not only for church growth but also for mission itself.

#### **E: 5. Chain Prayer**

Chain prayer is one of the effective methods of prayer. It needs careful planning. There are two ways to have chain prayer where the church gather together in one place praying without ceasing for the whole night and assign to pray each other in different by hours.

### **F. Social Work**

It is also suggested that churches should as far as practicable, involve themselves in social service like community development and social and economic development. These days the word “empowering” has been a common word among Christian social workers. The churches can take these up. The following suggestions may be helpful to make Christian witness felt through social service.

#### **F: 1. Adult Literacy Centers**

Since formal schools have been the country’s subject, the government has taken the responsibility to establish schools and educational institutions, the church can also supplement by opening adult literacy center. These centers can be useful where adults will be taught during the night and the gospel message can be infused indirectly to them.

#### **F: 2. Vocational Centers**

Vocational centers have been useful tools for evangelization. Seventh day Adventists and the Roman Catholics through Don Bosco Order have contributed to the welfare of the poor people who cannot have formal school education. They can earn their living after completion of the course. Needless to say, the Roman Catholics have achieved great success in converting young people in such centers.

In Myanmar, many young people need work. Economically, Myanmar is one of the poorest countries. Its population is composed of many young unemployed. These need to be care for and such training will help them to get employment.

### **F: 3. Homes for the Poor**

Orphanages, homes for the aged, are another kind of service that the churches in Myanmar can introduce. These are the acts of mercy and compassion. The work of Mother Teresa in Calcutta and in other parts of the world speaks louder than any preacher can preach about the compassionate Christ. In Myanmar, the government does not ban these types of service. Through these acts of compassion many poor, neglected people will be cared for and introduced to Christ.

### **F: 4. Rural Development Work**

Multi-purpose schools can be set up in rural areas. Such schools will help the local rural people to learn the new methods of farming like running a piggery farm, broiler, guttery, and other kinds of farming including agriculture. These schools will bring together many rural people for training programs and in such a gathering; it will give a chance for preaching the gospel.

### **F: 5. Relief**

These are services, which can be done during calamities like floods, cyclones or any kinds of natural calamities. Relief like giving people temporary shelter, food, supply clothing, medicine will be more meaningful than those helped by government or other non-Christian agencies like the Red Cross and others.

### **F: 6. Setting Different Self-help Schemes**

Solar Energy can be installed in villages where there is no electricity. With such help it will increase their economy by giving them energy they can utilize in rice pounding, bringing a good and filtered drinking water and they can enhance their work even during the night.

### **F: 7. Food for Work Program**

Myanmar like other poor countries needs communication. Road building can be suggested. Here food for work program can be taken up. People will build their road; will not get money

for the word but food will be provided. So also with well digging and other developmental work. Many people are without employment; they can be engaged for the time being. In such programs, people will have their food and also bring development in terms of roads, wells etc. for their community.

### **F: 8. Hospital and Dispensaries**

It is needless to emphasize the impact of such service in a country like Myanmar, where the population is poor and infested with different kinds of disease. Hospitals and dispensaries are extremely necessary in some villages and towns. Missionaries all over the world to express their concern for the people have traditionally used it and in turn they won the hearts of non-Christians.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effective strategies and methods to reach out to Burmese Buddhist. In order to do so, the writer first studied the characteristics of Burmese Buddhist and their resistance to Christianity. The study in this research shows the peculiarity of the main teaching of Theravada Buddhism. It has a long history and its teachings stay deep down in the hearts of the people and it is carried down from generations to generations. It has affected the culture of Burmese, and the culture of Burmese is a Buddhist culture. It is not easy to win and change their hearts. This lead to exploring the knowledge and characteristic required penetrating through the population. Along with this, there are still many barriers that must be faced in order to bring the Gospel to the Buddhist population. This is where the effective strategies and methods are investigated to overcome all of these limitations.

This Thesis is also an attempt to make Christians aware of the strength of Buddhism, its teachings and the non-responsive mind of the Burmese Buddhists. The comparison of doctrines between Christianity and Buddhism is written in order to have a better faith dialogue. The theological response, which the writer puts forward will be understandable to Buddhists and Christians that Christianity is about Christ and that “there is no other salvation but in Christ Jesus.”

I used qualitative and literature research as the main methods for finding answers to the many questions of my research. Out of the many qualitative methods, I chose interviews for this study as I thought it was the most appropriate method for my research type and circumstances. I could tailor the interviews to my exact needs to allow me to be in control of the depth and details of study to uncover various things. I successfully interviewed four people who are either currently in the mission field or who have had previous experience in the field. To enhance my findings, I also conducted literature research with logical analysis, judging and reasoning to draw final conclusions of the effective strategies and methods to reach out to Burmese Buddhists.

By the time that the first missionary Adoniram Judson arrived in Myanmar in the year 1813, the tremendous efforts given by foreign missionaries being sent between 1813 and 1963 for the tasks of evangelization of Myanmar had achieved no significant success particularly among the Buddhist population of the country. The Myanmar national churches, which have carried on the missionary work after the foreign missionaries left the country in 1965, have many tasks remaining in its ministry of evangelization in Myanmar. The most obvious evidence for this missional incompetency can be seen in the five missional weaknesses. They

are lack of local churches that have concern for mission, lack of men and women for mission, lack of knowledge and skills for mission, lack of material resources for mission, and lack of social development for mission on the part churches involving in mission.<sup>143</sup>

The church in Myanmar has now existed for 200 years. But it is sad to see that Christianity is still only about 10% of the population and less than 2% being the Burmese Buddhist (turned Christians). The Christian population is mainly among the tribes. Christianity has not been able to make an inroad in the hearts of Burmese Buddhists. Attempts have been made from the time of Judson's arrival, but to no avail. Buddhism still holds away in the life and hearts of the Burmese people. Myanmar is rich in culture. The Theravada Buddhism becomes their culture and costumes. The mission and evangelization has to be done contextually.

Christianity becomes the religion of the tribal and it is regarded as a foreign religion. There are five reasons what the writer believes that resistance Buddhist to Christianity in this thesis that are colonialism, nationalism, political leadership, denominationalism and 969 movements. Politically, one of the issues that have to be reconstructed in Myanmar is the ministry of religion. It is not easy to propagate Christianity as in other countries although religious practice and preaching is not restricted but circumstances prevent an open and dynamic evangelization.

The strategies and method, which the writer presents, will help both foreign missionaries and the churches in Myanmar to think and apply them wherever possible in evangelizing Burmese Buddhists. There are different approaches in doing evangelistic mission that the writer also included. There is something more importantly strategy that we all Christians have to do in Myanmar is cooperative method. All Christian denominations and groups in Myanmar need to build unity, cooperative spirit and consensus concerning God's assigned task of mission. Christians in Myanmar has to form association like Evangelistic Mission Movement of Christians in Myanmar or International Myanmar Mission Cooperation whatever... and the strategy of this movement will be the revival preaching, witnessing, and persuasion through personal evangelism and social media by individuals as well as groups. The social and technology development hugely influence the entire world and we can also see much development in Myanmar. Therefore, the method of social media and development evangelism will be also be appropriate, for instance building Christian radio stations, building

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<sup>143</sup> Cung Nawl, *Why Myanmar Church fails in Evangelizing the Buddhist Bamar People of Myanmar*, PP. 4, 5

missionaries training centers, schools, kindergardens, colleges, orphanages, in different languages and places. The goal is conversion.

The recommendations for church actions are many and they can be used for enhancement of God's kingdom among Burmese Buddhists. Some of the actions have practiced and bring good result in doing mission. I highly recommended Church to take action on it, as it will possibly bring more successful in evangelization.

We are so immersed in our own culture that it is hard to see its faults or imperfection, and to see the strengths and goodness of other cultures. We often have taken what we are familiar with as the standard and model for judging what others do. It is crucially important to keep in mind that the one who evangelizes is not judge who judges whether his/her own cultures and beliefs are better than theirs or not. We are just the gospel tellers who offer cosmic Christ to others with their cultures. Christian mission is an act of fellowship with the Lord who is already there, identified with those who as yet do not know him. Therefore, a Nigerian lawyer said that "the missionary should not think of himself as someone who takes Christ to other people, but as someone Christ takes to hidden God.<sup>144</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, Christian mission and evangelism in Myanmar must be contextual with relevant strategies and methods.

The Buddhists people are very religious. They are kind, gentle, helpful, cultured people like the Greeks in Paul's days. They are godly people, therefore the church must say like Paul, "whom you ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you," (Acts 17:23).

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<sup>144</sup> John W. Deschner, "Jesus Christ and the Christian Mission," in *the Christian Mission Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 23

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_Burma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Burma)

U Wirathu to propose Interfaith marriage law

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/?s=monk+propose+interfaith+marriage&x=0&y=0>

The Monk propose interfaith marriage law to the government

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/29/world/asia/myanmar-interfaith-marriage-laws/index.html>

Myanmar Mission International director discusses on how they train missionaries

<http://myanmarmissions.com/category/missionaries-and-sponsors/>