Compassion beyond boundaries, solidarity beyond beliefs : responding to the suffering peoples of Asia interreligiously - a comparative study of Christian and Buddhist perspectives

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COMPASSION BEYOND BOUNDARIES, SOLIDARITY BEYOND BELIEFS: RESPONDING TO THE SUFFERING PEOPLES OF ASIA INTERRELIGIOUSLY – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN AND BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the S.T.L. Degree

Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

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August, 2011

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Introduction

Buddhism was introduced into the Eastern part of Asia from India about two millennia ago. Since that time, the teachings of the Buddha have attracted innumerable people who seek after the ultimate truth of human life and the universe; also, the immense compassion of the Buddha has supported and comforted the weary souls of those who suffer. Moreover, Buddhism has shaped the social, philosophical, cultural and religious attitudes of East Asian countries and peoples. Christianity, on the other hand, despite its comparatively shorter history and time of influence, has been a significant force in East Asia, specifically in China, Japan, Viet Nam, and Korea, during the last two centuries. Although the over-identification of Christianity with Western colonial powers led to violent resistance against Christian churches in the 19th and 20th centuries, Christians as individuals and communities as well as Christian institutions have continued to have an increased influence on East Asian society by means of human service and charitable activities dedicated to education, health care and social welfare. By way of a very specific example, Christians in South Korea have made considerable contributions to the advancement of democracy and the improvement of human rights, which in turn has attracted many young adults to Christianity.

As varied forms of suffering afflict humanity all over the world, the world looks to world religions for insight, for assistance, and for direction. Within the Korean context, young, highly educated adults, Buddhists and Christians alike, confronting the reality of suffering, are challenged to understand and respond to it – not only economically and politically, but also religiously. Living in a religiously diverse society, they are also

challenged to respond to human suffering interreligiously. As a Korean young adult raised in a religiously pluralistic environment, living with the daunting question of how one faces human suffering interreligiously played a significant part in my own personal history. Today, as a Franciscan friar and Roman Catholic priest concerned about those who suffer, this question motivates me to undertake this comparative theological inquiry.

Thesis Statement

This thesis is informed by the reality of human suffering as it manifests itself globally throughout the world, regionally in Asia, particularly East Asia, and more specifically in the context of Korea. Globally speaking, the complexities of human suffering as well as the qualitative and quantitative magnitude of human suffering are beyond the understanding and control of individuals, groups and nations. Mindful of this reality, the thesis asserts that there exists an urgent need for interreligious cooperation among adherents of all religions of the world so that together they may find ways of responding to those who suffer. It argues that *interreligious cooperation* directed toward the alleviation and prevention of human suffering is not an option but an obligation to all adherents of all religions.

The thesis takes as its particular focus the interreligious cooperation of Christians and Buddhists. It asserts that while Christians and Buddhists have distinctive and differentiated understandings of the nature and meaning of human suffering, both religions share a common *concern for* and *commitment to* those who suffer. The thesis further argues that their mutual recognition of a common concern for human suffering can serve as a pathway to interreligious understanding about suffering, compassion, solidarity,

interdependence and responsibility. Moreover, this common concern and interreligious understanding can serve as a source of inspiration for young adults, both Christians and Buddhists, by fostering in them the courage and commitment necessary to sustain interreligious cooperation on behalf of those who suffer now and in the future. The thesis illustrates some of the ways in which interreligious cooperation can grow out of a common concern for those who suffer. It also illustrates how such cooperation can foster mutual respect as well as ongoing efforts to understand other religions within the Asian context in general and specifically in Korea.

Overview

Chapter One provides a historical chronicle of both the failures and successes that have occurred in Korea, a country historically characterized by its religiously pluralistic environment. In their efforts to respond interreligiously to many sorts of human suffering, Koreans have faced many challenges. Using a case study which illustrates some of these challenges, the chapter draws attention to the urgent need for dialogue and mutual understanding. If the people of Korea desire to respond to the present and future challenges of human suffering by means of interreligious cooperation, mutual understanding of religious beliefs and values will be essential. For this reason, it is important to raise the interreligious consciousness of young adult Koreans – in particular that of Buddhists and Christians – so that they may become convinced of the need for interreligious cooperation in the service of those who suffer in their society. To this end, the subsequent chapters provide backgrounds and frameworks for both religions – Buddhism *and* Christianity – as a means for gaining some insight into their respective

understandings about the reality of human suffering. Overviews of the teachings and lives of the founders of both religions are provided as well as some contemporary perspectives on each religion's convictions about the nature of suffering and the ethics of compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility.

Chapters Two and Three examine in a broad way the Christian and Buddhist understandings of the following concepts:

- Suffering – individual and collective,
- Compassion – as a natural response to the suffering of others,
- Solidarity – with suffering people, and
- Interdependence – among people and with the world.

Chapter Two briefly reviews the life and teachings of Jesus, specifically his teachings on the Kingdom of God, along with traditional Christian insights about suffering and compassion in the light of the Kingdom of God. It then provides a synthesis of modern Roman Catholic teachings on human suffering, solidarity and interdependence.

Chapter Three briefly reviews the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha, specifically the teachings of the Four Noble Truths. It also discusses briefly the significance of the profound understanding of suffering and the practice of compassion as seen through the lens of the traditional Buddhist Sutras. It then provides a synthesis of the modern *Engaged Buddhist* understanding of the Four Noble Truths and other selected traditional Buddhist doctrines. This perspective addresses the pursuit of the Buddhist path of liberation not only in terms of individual *spiritual* liberation but also *social* liberation.

Chapter Four reviews five noteworthy examples of contemporary theologians, religious leaders and movements that have endeavored to respond interreligiously - in words and actions - to the cry of those who suffer. They include:

1) Johannes Metz: Political Theology and the Engaged Christianity
2) Thich Nhat Hahn and Engaged Buddhism (Vietnam – Mahayana Buddhism)
3) Dalai Lama and Engaged Buddhism (Tibet – Tibetan Buddhism)
4) Jon Sobrino and the Crucified People of History
5) Minjung theologians and the Minjung of History

These examples are derived from very diverse cultural, religious and political contexts by individuals who reflected on the reality of suffering facing their own people and contexts. However, their commitments and insights have challenged the world while providing points of reference and sources of inspiration for the kind of interreligious cooperation that is so needed in today's globalized and religiously pluralistic world.

Chapter Five affirms the importance of interreligious understanding for a new generation of young Christians and Buddhists and stresses the urgent need for interreligious cooperation in efforts to respond to the suffering peoples of Asia. Chapter Five offers a comparative assessment of Christian and Buddhist perspectives on suffering, compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility as described in Chapter Two, Three, and Four. Through the comparison of two religious perspectives, the chapter provides interreligious understandings of the concepts and proceeds to further discussion on the subject which serves as an essential foundation for interreligious cooperation among Buddhists and Christians. Using James E. Gilman's argument that compassion is

normative in all the world religions, the chapter argues that interreligious cooperation among Christians and Buddhists is an imperative. Chapter Five goes on to examine selective documents of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference (FABC) which address two major challenges present throughout Asia – overwhelming poverty and religious diversity. Considering the complex realities of immense human suffering and of harmonious co-existence of diverse religions, the FABC documents assert that solidarity with the poor and religious harmony are foundational for collaborative activities and for the overcoming of serious challenges often associated with cultural and religious diversity. To this end, the FABC advances interreligious collaboration as a significant way to address the problems of poverty and suffering through solidarity with the suffering poor.

Based on the assertions and positions presented in previous chapters, the Conclusion proposes that mutual understanding on the reality of human suffering, compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility can motivate adherents of diverse world religions to cooperate in response to various forms of human suffering. It also recommends that religious institutions and leaders should be concerned about helping young adults to acquire a greater understanding of other religions and to realize the importance and necessity of interreligious cooperation as a way to be faithful to each religion's teachings as well as an ethical duty for the whole of humanity.

Chapter One

Facing the Historical and Contemporary Challenges of Interreligious Cooperation: The Case Study of Korea

Imagine a context where a mother seeks after a Shaman's advice for familial issues, a father who loyally practices annual filial rites for his ancestors in accordance with the Confucian tradition, a son who is absorbed in Zen meditation, and a daughter who goes to church every Sunday for worship. Although it may seem unreal or contrived for the purpose of depicting a religiously pluralistic family, this snapshot of diverse religious practices within a single family reflects the general circumstances in which Korean society finds itself today with regard to a very religiously pluralistic situation.

Throughout the world, there exists a prevailing sentiment that religious diversity tends to cause tension or conflict within a family, within a society, or among nations. In parts of Asia, however, specifically in Korea, where diverse religions have coexisted throughout history, people have learned how to live together harmoniously and work together to confront their common problems, particularly to relieve people from many sorts of sufferings. Mindful of the great demands for assistance in the face of human suffering and the calls to practice love and charity present in every religion, the situation of religious diversity need not contribute to tension or conflict, indeed it can contribute to harmony and collaboration for the common good.

Chapter One provides an overview of the religiously pluralistic context of Korea and examines how Koreans have lived amidst religious tension and conflict, while trying to

collaborate out of common concern for the suffering people in ways that are harmonious and mutually respectful.

1.1. Pluralistic Context of Religions in Korea

James Huntley Grayson, a religious scholar who has expertise in the religions of Korea, depicts Korea as a "unique religious laboratory."[1] He explains the uniqueness of the religiosity of the Korean people in three ways.[2] First, the shamanic type of primal religion of Korea has been present since ancient times. It became the "substratum of all Korean religious experience" and has had a strong influence on religions which have been introduced into Korea, including Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism as well as Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity. Second, in the history of religion in Korea, a particular religion formed a dominant force in the society during a particular time period; the era of primal religion, the era of Buddhist dominance, the era of Confucian dominance, and the post-Confucian era. Finally, Grayson points out that the conservative nature of Korean religious experience is manifest in the fact that primal religion, Sŏn Buddhism[3], and Neo-Confucianism formulated by Chu His, have continued without the serious syncretism found in the neighboring countries, China and Japan. Christianity also follows this tendency; and forms of Christianity present in Korea are considered mostly conservative in comparison with their Western counterparts.

[1] James Huntley Grayson, *Korea-A Religious History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 277.

[2] Grayson, *Korea*, 270-72.

[3] Korean Zen Buddhism.

With the colonization of Korea by the Japanese empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, Confucianism lost its dominant position as a ruling political and social system. Its social and moral norms, however, still pervade Korean society and contribute to the formulation of social and familial relationships as well as ethics. The decline of Confucian influence on society was followed by the revival of Buddhism and the rapid growth of Christianity. Although Christianity has not been an exclusively dominant religion in Korea as Buddhism and Confucianism have been, it exerts a most dynamic force in society.[4]

According to a survey on the Religion and Religiosity of Korean people by Gallup Korea in 2004, the religious population of Korea constitutes 53.5% of the whole population:[5] 24.4% are Buddhist; 21.4% are Protestant Christian; 6.7% are Roman Catholic; and 0.9% are affiliated with other minor religions.[6] Usually, in most surveys on religion, it is hard to find a large – even a notable - number of adherents of Confucianism or Shamanism despite the significant influences which both have on the social and religious horizons of Korea. This can be attributed to the fact that in modern times, Koreans do not consider Confucianism as a religion, understood as a "notion of a religion as a particular

[4] Grayson, *Korea*, 271.

[5] As of 2010, the population of Korea is 48,501,000, http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp (accessed April 4, 2011).

[6] *Han'guk'in ŭi Chonggyo wa Chonggyo Ŭisik-1984, 1989, 1997, 2004 Chosa Kyŏlgwa rŭl Pigyohan Chonggyo Yŏn'gusŏ*, surveyed by Gallup Korea (Seoul: Gallup Korea, 2004), 18. However, Don Baker, a religious scholar in Korean religions, asserts that among those who responded with 'No' to the question of religious affiliation, many Koreans hold beliefs we "normally associate with religion or engage in activities that appear religious even they say they are not religious." He considers those as 'spiritual' distinguished from 'religious.' See Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 5.

system of belief embodied in a bounded community."[7] This is most interesting since Confucianism has functioned as the comprehensive governing principle of the nation and the foundation of its social ethics since it was introduced into Korea. Similarly, Koreans do not identify themselves as adherents of Shamanism either.[8] Another religious phenomenon, though insignificant in terms of numbers, consists of the several new religions which emerged in Korea around the beginning of the twentieth century. These religions are called *sinhŭng chonggyo* or literally, newly emerged religions. They are also considered as syncretistic religions, which have mixed elements of major religions, including Christianity, with Korean primal religion, to create a new system of belief.[9]

1.2. Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation in Korea

The General Situation of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation in Korea

Throughout history, Koreans have found ways of translating and interpreting imported religions into their own cultural, social and religious context so as to enrich their spiritual life as well as their culture. Without denying the fact that there have been religious conflicts such as the institutional suppression of Buddhism, a social contempt for Shamanism, and the violent persecution of Catholics in Chosŏn dynasty, religious conflicts have not been a defining characteristic of Korea's religious history. In fact, for much of their

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7 John Hick, forward to *The Meaning and End of Religion*, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), xi.

[8] Since Chosŏn dynasty, which governed the country according to Confucian teachings and suppressed Buddhism and Shamanism, Shamanism has been considered as superstition. In modern times, many Koreans do not consider Shamanism as a religion because it does not have canonized scriptures nor forms unified organization. Yee-heum Yoon, "The Role of Shamanism in Korean Culture," in *Korean Cultural Heritage vol. 2: Thought and* Religion, ed. Joungwon Kim (Seoul: Korea Foundation, 1996), 188.

[9] Grayson, *Korea*, 240.

history, Koreans have found ways of overcoming differences and living together in harmony.[10] Specifically in modern times, Koreans from differing religious backgrounds began to collaborate in their efforts to address social, political, economic, and environmental issues as well as issues of peace and unification in a divided Korean Peninsula.

In the history of religious cooperation in modern Korea, the cornerstone was laid during Japanese rule. In 1919, a decade after its annexation by the Japanese, Koreans demonstrated against the Japanese colonization of Korea, demanding the independence of Korea. This demonstration is known as the March 1, 1919 Independence Movement.[11] This movement was triggered by reading the Declaration of Independence that was signed by thirty-three of the major leaders of three religions: Protestants, Buddhists, and Ch'ŏndogyoists.[12] The movement spread out from Seoul to every corner of the Korean Peninsula, led by religious leaders. The entire Korean people voluntarily participated in this non-violent demonstration regardless of age, gender, social status, and religion.

In addition to the March 1, 1919 independence movement, another significant cooperative interreligious event was held in 1965. Leaders of six religions - Protestantism,

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[10] Chin-hong Chung, "Adapting to Historical Circumstances," in *Korean Cultural Heritage vol. 2: Thought and* Religion, ed. Joungwon Kim (Seoul: Korea Foundation, 1996), 226.

[11] For the March First movement in detail, see Timothy S. Lee, "A Political Factor in the Rise of Protestantism in Korea: Protestantism and the 1919 March First Movement," *Church History* 69, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 130-34.

[12] At the end of the nineteenth century when it seemed as if Korea was overwhelmed by foreign Powers outside and wretched by government officials' corruption, a new movement, which synthesized important aspects of Korean traditional religions and also was influenced by Christianity. This new movement was called Tonghak movement originally, and later renamed as Ch'ŏndogyo, literally meaning the Religion of the Heavenly way. See Grayson, *Korea*, 234-39.

Buddhism, Wŏn-Buddhism,[13] Confucianism, Ch'ŏndogyo, and Catholicism - gathered together to discuss interreligious dialogue and cooperation. The event was hosted by the Christian Academy.[14] This meeting resulted in the formulation of diverse interreligious cooperation movements in order to deal with the urgent social problems of Korea which were a direct consequence of the urbanization and industrialization of modern society. Kwang-Cheol Shin, a Korean theologian dedicated to working for interreligious dialogue in Korea, organized the various areas of concern for the cooperative movement into five categories:

- First, cooperation and solidarity for the sake of the common good;
- Second, efforts to share the meaning of historic events;
- Third, mutual understanding through cultural and artistic activities;
- Fourth, solidarity through religious dialogue;
- Fifth, ecumenism.[15]

During the 1970s and 1980s, Koreans from various religious backgrounds made a joint protest against the repressive military government, demanding democracy, economic justice and respect for human rights. This solidarity movement continued to go forward by means of anti-war activities and activities on behalf of peace, the unification of Korea, human rights, pro-life (such as organ donation), the abolishment of capital punishment, the

[13] Wŏn Buddhim is a new branch of Buddhism which emerged in the late nineteenth century in Korea.

[14] Sang-hun Kwak, "Chŏnjugyo wa Pulgyo ŭi Chonggyo kan Taewha mit Hyŏmnyŏk ŭi Hyŏnhwang kwa Chŏnmang" *Sasang Yŏn'gu* 15 (2005), 175-6.

[15] Kwang-Cheol Shin, "Chonggyo Hyŏmnyŏk Undong ŭi Hoego wa Chŏnmang-Hyŏndae Han'guk ŭi Chŏnghwang ŭl Chungsim ŭro [Retrospect and Prospects of Religious Cooperation Movements-With Special Reference to the Situation of Modern Korea]" *Chonggyo Yŏn'gu* 31 (Summer, 2003), 29-51.

protection of the environment and so forth through 1990s and 2000s.[16] While religious leaders endeavored to cooperate for the sake of the common good throughout society, they also tried to promote mutual understanding of *neighbor religions*[17] through academic conferences as well as various cultural and artistic projects, including television programs about *neighbor religions*, explorations of the situation of cooperative interreligious movements, religious music festivals, religious arts festivals, and religious cinema festivals.[18] These kinds of creative and easily accessible activities have made it possible for more and more people to participate in interreligious dialogue and cooperation. By way of example regarding the involvement of young people, a youth camp program[19] has proven to be an exemplary model of the dissemination of the cooperative interreligious movement as it has contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding of *neighbor religions* among the next generation.

Dialogue and Cooperation between Buddhists and Christians

As noted above, religious dialogue and cooperation have developed significantly in Korean society since 1960. From the beginning of the movement, minor religions such as Chŏndogyo and Wŏn-Buddhism, have played an important role in the progress of the

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[16] Kwang-Cheol Shin, 35-44.

[17] KCRP(Korea Conference of Religion for Peace), a representative organization for interreligious cooperation in Korea, began to use the term *neighbor religion* in place of other religion, acknowledging the long history of co-existence of diverse religions in Korea. The term *neighbor religion* actually reflects the contemporary situation of Korean society, wherein different religious believers are living together next door under one roof, or in one family. See Jin-heung Byun, "Han'guk Sahoe ŭi Chonggyo Kongjon kwa Chonggyo Hyŏmnyŏk Undong [Religion's Co-existence and Interreligious Dialogue in Korea: With the Specific Focus on the Activities of KCRP]" *Chonggyo Yŏn'gu* 56 (2009), 5-6.

[18] Kwang-Cheol Shin, 45-6.

[19] For details on the youth camp, visit the website at http://kcrp.or.kr/sub/02_01_3.php (accessed on March 20, 2011).

movement. Christianity also has played a leading role in the movement through the power of social influence and the ever-growing numbers of Christians. In addition, Buddhists in Korea, in large numbers, have influenced the movement quantitatively. In modern Korea, Buddhists began to realize the necessity and importance of engaging social issues in addition to secluded meditation. This movement took hold in other parts of contemporary Asia as well. Mindful of the fact that Christians and Buddhists constitute the majority of religious adherents in Korea, it is important to acknowledge the particular ways in which interreligious cooperation between Buddhists and Christians in Korea has evolved in recent decades.

Until the 1980s, the relationship between Buddhists and Christians had been generally amicable. The Second Vatican Council enabled Korean Catholics to give up an exclusivist attitude toward Buddhism in favor of a more inclusivist theological understanding of other religions. At the same time, Buddhists maintained their traditional harmonious and tolerant attitude toward *neighbor religions*. This friendly atmosphere, however, was negatively affected by the vandalic demeanors of some fundamentalist Protestants. Through the 1980s and 1990s, statues of the Buddha were beheaded, Buddhist temples were vandalized, burnt or otherwise destroyed; and the assemblies of Buddhist worshipers were interrupted by Protestant extremists.[20] Religious leaders of both religions felt it necessary to ease tensions caused by the hostile activities of some fundamentalist Christians. Efforts were undertaken to promote reconciliation and mutual understanding among Buddhists and Christians. Public gestures such as the exchange of congratulatory

[20] See Chŏnpullyŏn, "Hwoepul Ilchi" *Kidokkyo Sasang* 42 (1998), 56-64.

messages on the occasion of Buddha's birthday and Christmas contributed a great deal to the creation of a reconciliatory mood between the two religions. [Since the early 1990s, Catholic leaders have been sending personal congratulatory messages to Buddhist representatives for the Buddha's birthday. Buddhists have made similar efforts at Christmas. Since 2000, this mutual correspondence of congratulatory messages has been conducted as an official announcement of the Catholic Church in Korea and Chogyejong, the major sect of Korean Buddhism.][21]

Another gesture worthy of note was a public apology made by a Protestant theologian to Buddhists. In 1996, some Protestant extremists were involved in setting fire to Hwagye-sa, an international Buddhist temple in Seoul, three times. In response to these barbaric acts, Kyŏng-jae Kim, a theology professor in Hansin University, located in close proximity to the affected temple, visited the temple with his students - mostly Christian seminarians [Methodists] - to apologize for the misbehavior of his fellow Christians. The professor and his students proceeded to clean the temple as an expression of deep regret.[22] This reconciliatory gesture worked as an inspiriting initiative for restoring mutual respect and understanding. The same year, Hwagye-sa temple hung placards on the main gate of the temple with words of congratulations to Christians on the occasion of Christmas. The following Spring, the Seminary also hung placards with the words of "Congratulations on the Buddha's birthday."

[21] Sang-hun Kwak, 177-78.

[22] Sang-hun Kwak, 178.

The reconciliation between the Buddhists and the Christian seminarians extended beyond the Buddhist temple and the Christian seminary to neighbors in the local area. Since 1999, Hwagye-sa, Suyuil-dong Catholic Church, and Songam Protestant Church have cooperated in a charity bazaar for the benefit of people suffering from incurable diseases. Over time, the event began to combine cultural events, along with bazaar. Soon the event was transformed into a local festival which continues to attract a considerable number of participants from among local residents regardless of their religions. This cooperative bazaar is considered to be an exemplary model for interreligious cooperation in a local community. It is commonly referred to as the 'Suyu-ri model'.[23] As a consequence of the inspiring event at Suyu-ri, similar interreligious activities, including cultural and sports events as well as charity bazaars, have spread out nationwide. What began as a limited endeavor among clerics and academics has evolved into an event that is highly appreciated as a promising model for advancing interreligious cooperation at a broad popular level.[24]

Despite the hope that such gestures inspire, the fact remains that all religious peoples do not appreciate the importance of mutual respect and interreligious cooperation. It is estimated that more than the half of the Protestants feel uncomfortable with congratulatory messages being sent to Buddhists,[25] and some members of the Songam Protestant Church oppose the Suyu-ri event.[26] Some attribute this kind of exclusivist

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[23] Jin-heung Byun, "Kungnae Chonggyo Hwahap Sarye Series 4: Chonggyo Kaldŭng Haegyŏl Chiyŏk Chonggyo Hwahap Moim ŭrobutŭ" *Chonggyo wa Pyŏnghwa[Religion and Peace]* (April 1, 2011), 20.

[24] Jin-heung Byun, "Kungnae Chonggyo Hwahap Sarye Series 4," 20.

[25] Munwha Ilbo (May 21, 2005), http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2005052101012230008002 (accessed April 13, 2011).

[26] Jin-heung Byun, "Kungnae Chonggyo Hwahap Sarye Series 4," 20.

attitude to worries and concerns that interreligious dialogue can threaten religious identity. Others adhere to the conviction that such gestures are incompatible with their religious beliefs. In a religiously diverse society, wherein each religion competes to some degree for growth in numbers, the exclusivist tendency may be inevitable. Sang-hun Kwak acknowledges that Christian mission involves the need for effectively communicating religious experience and beliefs. Nevertheless, he also insists that religions should compete for love and compassion not for the superiority of doctrines or for the expansion of their power and size.[27] Kwak states that despite the differences in their soteriological paradigms, there are common characteristics shared by religious people whether they are Buddhist or Christian:

- First, they are transformed from a selfish to an altruistic existence;
- Second, they aspire to be free of the fear of death;
- Third, they are charged to commit themselves to the task of charity and service, which nourishes life in society.

In addition, he defines mission as an expression of a mind transformed by a profound religious experience, which necessarily tends to the service of people.[28]

In a context where diverse religions co-exist, the discipline of pluralism is necessary to avoid conflict and to live in harmony. Hee-sŏng Kil, a scholar in the comparative study of religions, categorizes pluralism in three ways: centralized pluralism, pluralistic pluralism and practical pluralism. He differentiates practical pluralism from centralized pluralism,

[27] Sang-hun Kwak, 187.

[28] Sang-hun Kwak, 187-88.

which asserts that every path leads to one destination, and from pluralistic pluralism, which presupposes diversity of salvation and truth. Here, Kil's practical pluralism claims that all religions can be compatible, not on the theoretical, philosophical or doctrinal level, but rather at the level of a practical commitment to justice and well-being for all human beings.[29]

1.3. Summary

Chapter One offers historical and contemporary insights about some of the ways in which Koreans have learned to get along with adherents of other religions over time. They have done this by coming to understand others as *neighbors*, who live together, and who often help and support one another throughout their lives, especially in times of need. This consciousness demands that one recognizes that adherents of other religions are also one's neighbors or friends. It is a consciousness that needs to be promoted and advanced throughout Korean society, especially at this moment in time. As noted in the case of Suyu-ri, cultivating a sense of *neighbor religion* can be an effective means for encouraging cooperative works undertaken for the good of all, and in particular, for suffering people.

Awareness of the suffering of others is an imperative for people of every religion. As a consequence of such awareness, people of every religion are called to put love and compassion into practice. As long as people are faithful to their religious traditions, whether they are Buddhists or Christians, the values of love and compassion will be upheld. Moreover, whenever experiences of suffering affect the lives of their own family, friends,

[29] Hee-sŏng Kil, "Chonggyo Tawŏnjui: Yŏksajŏk Paegyŏng Iron Silchŏn," *Chonggyo Yŏngu* 28 (Fall 2002), 14.

and neighbors, an awareness of the suffering of so many others often occurs. When it does, a sense of solidarity with all those who suffer is prompted emotionally. This sense makes it possible for them to collaborate with others without regard for religious differences.

Mindful of this background, this thesis sets out to suggest that in a religiously pluralistic society, religious leaders and teachers must educate their followers and students so as to prioritize the essential values of love and compassion for those who suffer over all other religious doctrines. For this reason, the following chapters of the thesis explore in further detail some basic notions about the nature of suffering and the ethics of compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility as interpreted by Christians and Buddhists respectively. Such foundations, I contend, are both necessary and instructive because they provide young adult Koreans – who, while already involved in interreligious cooperation are often superficially informed of other religions – with a beneficial opportunity to deepen their knowledge of another religious tradition. In the process of doing so, their profound conviction about the importance of interreligious cooperation on behalf of those who suffer will be built on a firm foundation for mutual understanding and authentic dialogue.

Chapter Two

Jesus, the Kingdom of God and Recent Catholic Teachings on Suffering, Compassion, Solidarity and Interdependence

Suffering draws near to humans as a "threatening, challenging, and mysterious"[30] problem. Suffering is a frightening reality inasmuch as humanity is always fearful of it. Driven by fear, they strive to avoid it individually and collectively. Suffering is also a challenging reality inasmuch as it poses to humanity a hard to answer question: Why do people suffer? At the same time that it poses this question, it also demands from humanity a response. Finally, suffering is a mysterious reality inasmuch as people throughout time and throughout the world have been unable to fully understand or agree upon the nature and meaning of suffering. For Christians, the life and teachings of Jesus serve as a lens through which to make meaning of pervasive suffering in personal or collective ways. Moved by faith and hope, they turn to Jesus for insight, understanding and guidance as they endeavor to respond to the threats, challenges and mystery of suffering.

This chapter begins by briefly reviewing how Christians understand suffering, compassion, and solidarity in the light of Jesus' life and his proclamation of the kingdom of God. It then presents an overview of selected recent teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that highlight the need for solidarity that builds upon an awareness of interdependence that is derived from modern insights on the cultural, economic, political and social dimensions of human suffering.

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[30] Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *Why Do We Suffer?: A Scriptural Approach to the Human Condition* (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2000), vii.

2.1. Jesus and the Kingdom of God

The Life of Jesus Christ

The *Encyclopedia of Religion* presents Jesus as "the founder of the Christian religion."[31] However, Jesus Christ is more than that, at least for Christians who believe that he is God, "the origin" and "the focal point" of their faith.[32] The Gospels, which are the core of the Christian scriptures, depict Jesus as the Christ, the savior, and the Son of God. Although there have been scholarly endeavors in recent centuries to understand Jesus primarily as a historical figure,[33] for the purposes of this thesis, the presentation of Jesus and his teachings will be limited to those biblical interpretations of the New Testament upon which Christianity has based its religious understanding of Jesus Christ as later expressed through worship, doctrines, ministries and institutions.

According to the Christian tradition, Jesus was born about two thousand years ago[34] in Bethlehem, Israel. By an act of God, Mary, his mother, conceived Jesus and bore him in

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[31] Dale C. Allison Jr., "Jesus," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 3, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 4843-52, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE%7CCX3424501606&v=2.1&u=mlin_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=GVRL.encrel&sw=w (accessed June 4, 2011).

[32] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology*, trans. O. C. Dean (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 3.

[33] From the eighteenth century, there has been a debate on the historical figure of Jesus which is chiseled out of the interpretation of early Christian communities. For general information on the historical development of the debate on the historical Jesus, see W. P. Loewe, "Historical Jesus," *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 6, 2nd ed. (Detroit, Gale, 2003), 863-68, New Catholic Encyclopedia Complete, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE%7CCX3407705270&v=2.1&u=mlin_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=GVRL.ncec&sw=w (accessed June 6, 2011).

[34] According to the Gospels, the birth date of Jesus can be approximated to 6 B.C.E. (cf. Mt 2:1, 6) or 7 C.E. (cf. Lk 2:1-2). See R. L. Foley, "Nativity of Christ," *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 10, 2nd ed. (Detroit, Gale, 2003), 173-74, New Catholic Encyclopedia Complete, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE%7CCX3407707894&v=2.1&u=mlin_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=GVRL.ncec&sw=w (accessed June 6, 2011).

her womb. Joseph, to whom Mary was betrothed, raised Jesus as his son. Since Jesus was raised in a village in the region of Galilee, he was called Jesus of Nazareth. At about thirty years of age, Jesus inaugurated his public ministry by being baptized by the son of his mother's cousin, John the Baptist, a wilderness preacher who had called for the repentance of the people of Israel. From this moment forward, Jesus began to preach about the Kingdom of God and to heal people miraculously as an imminent manifestation of the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus also called disciples to follow him. He taught his followers through parables and by way of example. On the one hand, Jesus, as a faithful Jew, respected the Law of Moses and Jewish customs. On the other hand, he was critical of the behaviors and attitudes of religiously prestigious Jews such as the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the high priests. They were often obsessed with the formality of religious practice and at times burdened people with religious norms and duties. During the final phase of his life, Jesus entered the city Jerusalem. His bold actions and teachings provoked the Jewish authorities and led them to conspire against Jesus by charging him with the crime of blasphemy. They pleaded with the Roman authorities to punish Jesus. He was later sentenced to the death on the crucifix under the governance of Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea from C.E. 26 to 36. The crucified body of Jesus was placed in a tomb. Three days later, he rose from the dead. The events of his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into heaven initiated the religious movement called *Christianity*. The four Gospels in which the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are recorded were written by followers of Jesus and members of the earliest Christian communities.

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Jesus lived a relatively short life of about thirty-three years. Though a few details of his infancy and childhood are recorded in two of the four Gospels, most of the information contained in them focuses on the three final years of his life. A common question asked by those interested in the life of Jesus focuses on what he tried to teach people during his years of public ministry. The first chapter of the Gospel of Mark provides the answer: Jesus preached: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). According to Pope Benedict XVI this proclamation is the "actual core" of Jesus' words and works.[35] The Gospels, in addition to recording the teachings of Jesus, also address his identity as the Son of God, which is found in his "relatedness to God," his "closeness to God," and his "rootedness in God,"[36] as Abba or the Father, and his mission as the incarnate God is to proclaim the kingdom of God.

The Hebrew phrase *malkuth shamayim* corresponding to the English translation of Kingdom of God is concerned with the sovereignty of God, as it were, to his activity in ruling.[37] When it comes to Jesus' intent on the announcement of the kingdom of God, Benedict XVI asserts that Jesus is proclaiming "the living God, who is able to act concretely in the world and in history and is even now so acting."[38] Jesus, actually, not only proclaims

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[35] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York, Doubleday, 2007), 47.

[36] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology*, 322. Agreeing with Schnackenburg's assertion, Pope Benedict XVI writes in his book *Jesus of Nazareth* as follows: "[My book] sees Jesus in light of his communion with the Father, which is the true center of his personality; without it, we cannot understand him at all, and it is from this center that he makes himself present to us still today." Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xiv.

[37] Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York, Harper & Row, 1967), 55

[38] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 55.

the coming of the Kingdom, but also brings the kingdom into human history by his physical presence and action.[39] By forgiving sinners, driving out demons, healing sick people, and challenging all to love God and neighbors, Jesus manifested that the kingdom of God is already manifest, though it is not yet completely fulfilled; thus, the kingdom of God breaks into history, at the same time it remains as a hope.[40]

Throughout Christian history, the kingdom of God has been interpreted in various ways. A key passage found in the Gospel of Luke 17:21, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" was often translated as "the kingdom of God is within you" so that the kingdom was interpreted in an individual and spiritualized way. As Christianity evolved over time and became established as the religion of the empire, the kingdom of God was identified with the dominant political structure of the Roman Empire. The kingdom of God was and continues to be identified with the Church.[41] Besides these individual-spiritual, political, and ecclesiastical interpretations, Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God alludes to a social dimension as well. According to Jesus, the kingdom of God will be received by the little ones and those considered to be among the least in society: the children (Mk 10:15), the poor, the hungry, those who weep, those persecuted for righteousness (Lk 6:20-21; Mt 5:10). Jesus includes the marginalized, the suffering, and the oppressed peoples into the kingdom of God where there are no boundaries.[42] In addition to all of these interpretations

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[39] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 60.

[40] In the concept of the eschatological Kingdom of God, God is expected to visit and redeem his people as the final and decisive activity. See Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 56-7.

[41] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 93-94. See also Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 49-50.

[42] Ulrich Luz and Axel Michaels, *Encountering Jesus & Buddha: Their Lives and Teachings*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 39.

of the kingdom of God, Daniel Harrington designates the kingdom of God as “the horizon” against which Christian should live their lives and “the goal” toward which all must direct themselves.[43]

The Kingdom of God, Sin, and Suffering

When Christians believe that the proclamation of the kingdom of God is Jesus’ essential mission and that the kingdom has begun to break into history through Jesus’ ministry of forgiving sinners and healing the sick, they are led by necessity to examine more closely the relationship between the kingdom of God and the realities of human sin and suffering. For anyone interested in understanding Jesus’ teaching, particularly with regard to human suffering, as well as a general understanding of Christian attitudes toward human suffering and its alleviation, one must have a grasp of the meaning given to the concept of the kingdom of God.

If the kingdom of God is the state in which God is with us and exercises his lordship over the world, sin is “misconduct”[44] out of the path given by God, “revolt”[45] against his sovereignty, and “the power that prevents humanity from receiving God-with-us.”[46] Here,

[43] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 94.

[44] The most usual Hebrew word for sinning is *hātā’* which means ‘miss’. Thus, in the Old Testament, ‘to sin’ means first of all a misdeed against Yahweh. People may sin against other human beings or violate the Law given by God to the Israelites through Moses. However, since all humanity and the Law itself belongs to God, people actually sin against God. See Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 1-2; 7-15.

[45] Another Hebrew word for sinning *peša’* means rebellion or offense against God. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, 2; J. Lachowski, “Sin (in the Bible),” New Catholic Encyclopedia Complete.

[46] Leo D. Lefebure, *The Buddha and the Christ: Explorations in Buddhist and Christian Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 32.

sin is not simply acting against God but acting against the kingdom of God, and it is also about power. Jon Sobrino, SJ writes about Jesus' perception of sin as follows:

> For Jesus sin is the rejection of God's kingdom which is drawing near in grace; and the anthropological essence of sin is people's self-affirmation which leads them to assert their own power in two negative ways. On the one hand they use it to secure themselves against God; on the other hand they use it oppress others.[47]

Humanity sins by trying to secure itself against God and by using powers endowed by God to oppress others. In this context, sin has personal and social dimensions as well as individual and collective dimensions as manifested in the history of the Israelite people.[48] When Jesus denounces the Pharisees who do not pay attention to injustice; priests who impose religious burdens on people; the rich who refuse to share their wealth with the poor; and the rulers who do not treat people justly and compassionately, he is identifying human sinfulness with actions that go against the kingdom of God, actions that represent an abuse of power. The power of self-interest and oppression which opposes the coming of kingdom constitutes sin. On the contrary, the power of love, service, and truth constitutes participation in and anticipation of the kingdom of God.[49]

When Jesus cries out to the people "repent" and "believe in the good news," Christians believe that by God's grace people turn from their sin and that the good news is to be found in the coming of the kingdom. Jesus comes to save those sinners who repent: "I

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[47] Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 51.

[48] The Old Testament, the history of the Israelite people before Jesus Christ, records numerous accounts of collective disloyalty against God or violation of the Law given by God to them.

[49] Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 50-55.

have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:32). Most of the people whose sins Jesus forgives are considered sinners according to the Jewish law. They are tax collectors, prostitutes, and adulteresses. Unlike the righteous Pharisees (Lk 18:10-14), those who are marginalized and excluded do not possess the power to secure themselves against God. Humanly speaking, they are powerless in society, yet they are willing to receive God's grace. Paradoxically, when the definition of a sinner is one who rejects God's grace and relies on one's own power, it is the marginalized and excluded who become the righteous ones. It is to them that Jesus announces the forgiveness of their sins as a sign of the presence of the kingdom of God among them.

Because disease and illness were viewed by the Jews as punishment for sin, the healing of those afflicted with diseases and illnesses also became an important part of the public ministry of Jesus. The healing miracles of Jesus included driving out demons, the curing of physical illnesses or diseases, and even the raising of dead persons to life. The Gospels present many accounts of physical, spiritual and psychological healings of those who underwent serious suffering.[50] Each of these healing narratives manifests Jesus' extraordinary or divine power since Jesus desires and does what God desires and does. Jesus' opponents denounce Jesus' power to heal and to work miracles. They accuse Jesus of "casting out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons" (Lk 11:15). On the contrary, Jesus replies that his miracle affirms the presence of God's reign (Lk 11:20). The power of

[50] Some of the many accounts of healing from physical illness or chronic conditions in the Gospels include: paralysis (Mk 2:1-12; 3:1-6; Lk 13:10-17; Jn 5:1-9), blindness (Mk 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Jn 9:1-14), leprosy (Mk 1:40-45; Lk 17:11-17), and other conditions (Mk 1:29-31; 5:24-34; 7:31-37; Lk 14:1-6; 22-49-51). There are also many cases of exorcism (Mk 1:23-28, 5:1-20, 7:24-30, 9:14-29; Matt 9:32-33; Lk 8:2). Jesus even raises the dead (Mk 5:21-23; 35-43; Lk 7:11-15; Jn 11-12). See Daniel Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 100-1.

Beezebul contributes to the division, conflict, and sufferings in the world. However, Jesus uses his power in the service of people who are suffering. Through his actions the Kingdom of God is revealed and fulfilled. While Jesus uses his power to heal the sick, those who are afflicted must have faith for faith is required for the miraculous work of healing; they must be open to accept God's grace. Here, it is evident that the event of healing involves the proper use of one's own power of will as demonstrated in the acceptance of God's sovereignty and grace, which are the reverse of sin and a sign of the presence of kingdom of God on earth.

Sin and Suffering

Both the forgiveness of sin and healing ministry of Jesus are presented as significant signs of the kingdom of God. Then, what is the relationship between sin and sickness or suffering? The Jews of Jesus' day believed that collective sin as a people against God had caused foreign invasion and control or diverse turmoil in Israel, and personal sin as an individual had resulted in illness or bad luck in everyday personal life.[51]

This idea of suffering as the consequence of sin prevails throughout the Old Testament. The authors of the Old Testament wrestled with the question: "Why do people suffer?" Suffering could be considered as a way of expiation,[52] punishment from God, and a

[51] David M. Abernathy, *Understanding the Teaching of Jesus: Based on the Lecture Series of Norman Perrin "The Teaching of Jesus"* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 56-57; 62-64.

[52] Viewed in the context of atonement sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of the Israelites, the prophetic books, in particular, Second Isaiah describes a suffering servant who will suffer on their behalf. In this understanding, the New Testament also depicts Jesus as the suffering servant of God by whose suffering and death the whole world would be redeemed. See Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 53-68.

means of discipline employed by God with an educational purpose.[53] The most prominent answer given in the Bible as to the cause of suffering is the law of retribution, which generally implies the other interpretations above. The principle that the just are rewarded and the wicked are punished, runs throughout the Bible. For example, Genesis attributes the sufferings of humanity to the original sin of Adam and Eve. The Pentateuch and the Historical Books interpret the history of Israel from this perspective, and the prophets challenge their people to repent in accordance with the law of retribution.[54]

However, the law of retribution does not explain every case of suffering in the world. As Qoheleth states, "There are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evildoing" (Eccl 7:15). The Book of Job explores this problem theologically. Insisting on his innocence, Job also challenges the law of retribution which cannot explain his suffering, and poses a question to God about His injustice.[55] How can an omnipotent and just God allow innocent suffering? This is the problem of theodicy. In response to Job's incessant demand, God at last speaks to Job. However, God does not give a direct answer to the questions of whether Job is innocent and why God allows Job to suffer despite his innocence. Instead, God makes Job realize that God's justice cannot be measured by the human view of justice. The Book of Job exposes the inadequacy of the law of retribution, but does not offer a complete explanation for the suffering of the innocent, and leaves the mystery of suffering in the hands of God.

[53] Erhard S. Gerstenberger and Wolfgan Scharage*, Suffering*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 103-16.

[54] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 16.

[55] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 32.

Nevertheless, the Book of Job confirms that God can overcome suffering and does not leave his people in distress.[56]

When it comes to Jesus' understanding of the law of retribution, it is hard to know whether Jesus completely agreed with the general understanding of the Jewish teachers of his day regarding the relationship between sin and suffering. In the miracle story of the healing of the paralytic man, Jesus implies that the illness is caused by sin.[57] While Jesus was in Capernaum, four people carried a paralytic to him, but they could not get near Jesus because of the huge crowd. They went up and removed the roof so as to lower the paralytic down to Jesus on a pallet. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Knowing the Scribe's accusation of his forgiveness of sin, Jesus said to them, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'?"[58] Here, to forgive the sin was to remove the consequence of the sin – the paralysis; the healing was a sign that the man had been forgiven.[59]

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[56] For the Book of Job, see Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 31-49. The discussion in this section focuses on the problem of suffering in the Book of Job. However, as Susan F. Mathews points out, the book can be understood as the proper attitude toward God: be faithful to God and continue to serve God even in distress as oppose to solving the problem of suffering. See Susan F. Mathews, "Job," in *The Bible on Suffering: Social and Political Implications,* ed. Anthony J. Tambasco (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 51-68.

[57] Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to ST Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 86.

[58] Mk 2:1-12.

[59] Abernathy, *Understanding the Teaching of Jesus*, 62; Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 550; John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), 7-8.

However, according to Luke's account on the holocaust of the Galileans by the Roman soldiers and the fall of the tower in Siloam, Jesus repudiates "a simple cause-and-effect understanding of suffering."[60]

> There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (Lk 13:1-5)

Jesus questions the popular notion that sin is the cause of tragedies and calamities of human life (Job 4:7; Jn 9:2); but he does not offer simplistic answers to atrocities and sufferings. While challenging the theology of retribution, Jesus points out that "life is uncertain, death is capricious and judgment is inevitable."[61] In another Gospel account, Jesus also denies the application of the law of retribution to a blind man: "As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.' (Jn 9:1-3)"

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[60] Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, 54.

[61] R. Alan Culpepper, "Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 270-71. In the commentary on the Gospel account, Culpepper argues that the notion that God is the immediate cause of all events does not leave any room for human freedom.

The words of Jesus in the story of the paralytic (Mk 2:1-12) appear seemingly contradictory to the denial of the association of sin and sickness (Lk 13:1-5; Jn 9:1-3).[62] However, the Gospel accounts do not discuss explicitly the association of sin and sickness. Rather, they focus on Jesus' authority to forgive sinners and to heal the sick "as acting in God's stead"[63] (Mk 2:10); the call for urgent repentance (Lk 13:5); and the present "new hope in Jesus as the 'Light of the World'"[64] (Jn 9:5). Whether a person is sick or a sinner, he or she becomes socially ostracized or has to endure the pain and inconvenience of everyday life. Through the ministry of forgiveness and healing, Jesus restores those who are afflicted physically, spiritually, socially, and even religiously as a person, He opens the door to a new life,[65] and presents a hope and light to the world; Jesus not only brings salvation to the sinners and the sick but also challenges those who oppress others and even invites them into the new world by showing the sign of the kingdom of God.[66]

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[62] For a brief exploration of the sickness, sin and the ministry of Jesus, see Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 117-18.

[63] M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 76.

[64] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to ST John: Volume Two Commentary on Chapter 5-12* (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), 241

[65] Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology*, 26.

[66] Pope John Paul II stresses the universal aspect of salvific meaning of suffering in his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*: "In the messianic programme of Christ, which is at the same time the programme *of the Kingdom of God,* suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbour, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a "civilization of love". In this love the salvific meaning of suffering is completely accomplished and reaches its definitive dimension." John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Suffering* Feb 11, 1984, the Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html.

The Meaning of Suffering for Christians

Thus far, this chapter has examined briefly Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God and two of his public ministries, the forgiveness of sins and the healing the sick. In the account of the paralytic, Jesus tells the man to rise and take up his pallet rather than telling him that his sin is forgiven, for forgiveness of sin cannot be objectively proven but the act of healing is so obvious that no one can deny it.[67] Thus, being distinctive from sin, suffering is an actual, concrete reality that no human being can deny or avoid. Although Jesus had the power to heal illness and drive out demons, he did not solve the problem of suffering for all humanity. So uncertainties remain: Did he choose not to avoid suffering himself when it was forced upon him by his oppressors *or* did he accept it voluntarily for the fulfillment of God's will? What was Jesus' attitude toward human suffering? What does the New Testament say about the meaning given to suffering by his followers - the early Christians - in the light of Jesus' life?

The New Testament interprets suffering in terms of the life of Jesus Christ - his ministry, suffering, death and resurrection - and his teachings. During his public ministry, Jesus healed people who were afflicted by physical pains, mental illnesses, as well as economic, social, and religious marginalization. For Jesus, suffering was something to be alleviated and to be avoided. On the other hand, suffering was to be accepted for the sake of justice and for the sake of Jesus.[68] According to the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, Jesus himself underwent extreme suffering and death on the cross as a vicarious and

[67] See Boring, *Mark*, 77; Robert H. Stein, *Mark: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 120.

[68] See Mt 5:5-12.

expiatory sacrifice (Mk 10:45; 14:24);[69] he subjected himself completely to God's will (Mk 14:26; Mt 26:39; Lk 22:42). However, his suffering and death was vindicated by his resurrection from death. His resurrection denotes the victory of life over death and offers a hope to humanity that suffering and evil do not conquer humanity forever.[70]

Early Christians, who had to confront the sufferings caused by political and religious persecutions, found meaning in the midst of their suffering by considering it in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul identified himself with Christ (Gal 2:20), aspired to participate in Christ' suffering through his own sufferings (Phil 3:10; 2 Cor 4:10), and endured all manner of troubles in order to spread the gospel (2 Cor 11:24-28).[71] The First Letter of Peter considers suffering as a testing that will discipline Christians (1 Pt 1:6-7). It encourages Christians to take on sufferings for the sake of Christ, in whose glory they can participate through their own sufferings (1 Pt 4:12-19).[72] The Book of Revelation, when addressing the religious persecution occurring at the time of its writing, takes an apocalyptic approach. The book affirms the omnipotent and just God, and interprets the present suffering as only temporary and as part of God's larger plan. Christians can endure the present suffering in the hope of that Christ will return at which time he will take away of their sufferings and reward them: "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense,

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[69] See also 1 Cor 15:3; Rom 3:25; Heb 10:10.

[70] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 114-20.

[71] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 124-28.

[72] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 132-36.

to repay every one for what he has done" (Rev 22:12). This hope is grounded on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[73]

Although suffering has meaning in the light of Jesus Christ's life and resurrection, in Christianity, suffering still remains "a negative reality," including Jesus' pain and death on the cross. As Lucien J. Richard, O.M.I. summarizes in *A Kenotic Christology*:

> Jesus' Resurrection is a promise that ultimately we will not be abandoned, but not a promise that God will remove our suffering, pain and death. Jesus offers no palliatives for death in his cry from the cross. Even in the context of hope in the Resurrection, death is recognized to be death.[74]

Jesus did not passively surrender to suffering and death but accepted it of his own will in order to obey to God's will. He accepted suffering only because it was inevitable in the path of Gospel proclamation and in bringing forth the salvation of the world. Regarding the early Christians' endurance of suffering in the New Testament, Harrington argues that their approaches to suffering should be considered in their particular historical contexts.[75] Christians' suffering has meaning in the contexts of religious and political persecutions which they underwent as a minority group in a society. In its different social and historical settings, Christianity cannot force people who suffer from poverty and oppression to endure their afflictions as did the early Christians. Rather, Christians, who are called to witness God's love and His commandment to love one's neighbors, should strive to relieve the burdens of suffering people. When Christians confront challenges and persecutions

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[73] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 139.

[74] Lucien J. Richard, *A Kenotic Christology* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 229.

[75] Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, 140.

while being faithful to their vocations, then the courage and patience of the exemplary forerunners of faith strengthen them to continue their tasks.

Compassion

Some religiously devout people resolve to accept and endure their suffering in the light of their religious faith, but what is the general reaction of Christians to suffering? In the Old Testament, people who confront suffering, respond to it in varied ways: they may try to deny it, flee from it, resist it, or be immobilized by it.[76] Some people like Job strive to know the cause of their suffering and make inquiry to God about it. Then, how does God respond to the suffering of his peoples? Listening to the Israelites' outcry for help, God says to Moses, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters: I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians."[77] In the Old Testament, God at times appears to be angry at and enraged by the misconduct of his people (Ex 4:14; Num 11:1, 10, 33; Ps 79:5). On the other hand, he also shows his compassion for those who are oppressed (2 Kgs 13:23) as a father has for his children (Ps 103:13). When Jesus encourages people to call God as the Father of all humanity (Mt 6:9), he means the Father who forgives his children's sins (Mt 18:27) and takes care of his children's needs whether they are just or unjust (Mt 5:45). He is like a father who has so much compassion that he runs to embrace his wayward, wretched, and hungry son (Lk 15:20).

[76] Gerstenberger, *Suffering*, 116-20.

[77] Ex 3:7-8.

As God the Father is compassionate, so too, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is also compassionate to his people. Jesus has compassion for the crowd seeking him out for instruction and healing (Mt 9:26; Mk 6:34); for the widow who lost her only son (Lk 7:13); and for the blind men begging incessantly for mercy (Mt 20:29-34). Most of all, the second person of the Trinity is so compassionate as to take flesh as a human being: "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but empted himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil 2:6-7)," and even allowed himself to be put to death for the sake of humanity (Rom 5:7).[78] Jesus teaches people how compassionate God is; he shows how compassionate he is; furthermore, he commands his followers to be compassionate for the suffering people as a good neighbor, like the Good Samaritan who did not abandoned a stranger in need: "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37), says Jesus. As the theologian Jon Sobrino, SJ states, "[compassion[79]] shapes [Jesus'] life and mission and seals his fate. And it molds his view of God and human beings."[80]

To have a more complete understanding of Jesus' compassion, it is necessary to explore the meaning of compassion in the New Testament. The New Testament writers use a few different Greek words such as *éleos* (mercy), *oiktirō* (sympathetic or compassionate), and *splánchnon*, when speaking of compassion. While *éleos* and *oiktirō* are used in regard to

[78] Richard, *A Kenotic Christology*, 223.

[79] Jon Sobrino discusses about God and Jesus' mercy in his book *The Principle of Mercy*. In the book, his use of the word mercy connotes the meaning of compassion. See Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 17.

[80] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 17.

the compassion of God,[81] another word, *splánchnon*, is used primarily in order to refer to the compassion of Jesus. In early Greek it referred to the lower part of the body, especially the womb or the loins, and later it came to denote profound feelings or emotions. In this regard, compassion, according to the Greek term, is experienced as an "interior revolt"[82] in sympathy with other human beings or animals who are afflicted by suffering. Therefore, compassion means to share the suffering of the sufferer not only emotionally but also physically within one's own internal bowels. Here compassion comes to have a literal meaning as expressed in the Latin word, *com-passio* (to suffer with).[83] Karl Barth states about Jesus' holistic response to others' suffering in these words: "[*splánchnon*] is a strong one which defies adequate translation. It was not only the heart of Jesus that was affected by human misery, but rather his entire self, so that the misery became his own. It was more his misery than that of those who suffered it. He took it from them and laid it on himself . . . . He humbled himself in their place."[84] Jon Sobrino also argues that initially mercy or compassion is an "interiorized reaction" to someone else's suffering within oneself, and this interiorized suffering of others is the "first principle and foundation" of the activity of

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[81] *Éleos* is most frequently used in the New Testament for compassion or mercy. It denotes emotion for the undeserved suffering in others. In reference to God, it means God's steadfast love, the covenantal faithfulness of God that has been made manifest in the history of salvation. This is the meaning of God's mercy in the Canticle of Mary (Lk 1:50, 54) and in the Canticle of Zechariah (Lk 1:72, 78). Also, it is used to describe God's disposition towards sinners (Eph 2:4; Tt 3:5; 1 Pt 1:3). Besides *Éleos*, the forms of the verb *oiktirō* (sympathetic or compassionate) were also used several times in referring to the compassion of God in the New Testament: For example, "Be compassionate (*oiktirmōnes*) as your Father is compassionate (*oiktirmōn*)" (Lk 6:36; Mt 5:48). Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Compassion," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller and Dianne Bergant et al. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), 156-57.

[82] Reinhold Bernhardt, "Compassion as a Core-Element of Christian Ethics," in *Compassion in the World's Religions: Envisioning Human Solidarity*, ed. Anindita Balslev and Dirk Evers (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 90.

[83] Bernhardt, "Compassion as a Core-Element of Christian Ethics," 90.

[84] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV. part II, p. 184; cf. also vol. III, Part II, p. 211, quoted in Richard, *A Kinetic Christology*, 222.

mercy and compassion.[85] Listening to the cry of the oppressed Israelites, God came to rescue them (Ex 3:7-8); and Jesus, moved by the diverse afflictions of the people, cured the sick, expulsed demons, and welcomed sinners. Compassion cannot remain at the level of "sheer sentiment,"[86] but rather, it must become a "particular praxis love"[87] driving the person to act in order to free the afflicted people from suffering. When Sobrino discusses the principle of mercy, he argues that mercy has two dimensions: the holistic identification with the sufferer, which is compassion, and the praxis of love entailing action.[88]

Compassion and Solidarity

When compassion means suffering with others, to be compassionate, God must be and is in solidarity with humanity: "[Jesus] had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Heb 2:17-18). The incarnation of God is an evident manifestation of God's solidarity with humanity.[89]

While interiorization and identification with the suffering of others are essential elements of compassion, solidarity is understood as identification with a small or large group of people. According to the definition by Scott A. Hund and Robert D. Bendford, sociologists who study social movements in terms of collective identity, solidarity, and

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[85] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16-7.

[86] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16.

[87] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 18.

[88] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16-20.

[89] See Richard, *A Kinetic Christology*, 222-23.

commitment, solidarity is "an identification with a collectivity such that an individual feels as if a common cause and fate are shared."[90] Thus, solidarity involves a feeling of belonging to a collective entity. Also, a person who stands in solidarity with other members of a group is concerned about the well-being of the group and/or its members to the extent that motivates the member to participate in the activities to protect the group from potential threats to the well-being of the group and also to improve the well-being of the group.[91]

This sociological definition of solidarity is very applicable to God's solidarity with humanity. Through the mystery of the Incarnation and Jesus' agony on the cross, humanity comes to realize God's solidarity with them, and people feel God's intimate presence within them. God who was in solidarity with the people of Israel did not abandon them to their suffering; he rescued his people from oppression, and healed the afflicted. This relationship of solidarity between God and humanity is further extended to the relationship among human beings themselves. Human beings are all children of God, to whom Jesus commended all people to call "our Father" (Mt 6:9). In this relationship, as the Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* 32 stresses, brotherly and sisterly solidarity must be the bonding agent which builds the family of God. Jesus is positioned at the center of this brotherly and sisterly solidarity. Jesus also connects people who follow him as friends (Jn 15:15), and by laying down his life for his friends he shows what friendship or solidarity between friends is like (Jn 15:13).

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[90] Scott A. Hund and Robert d. Benford, "Collective Identity, Solidarity, and Commitment," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow and Hanspeter Kiesi (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), Blackwell Reference Online, http://www.blackwellreference.com.proxy.bc.edu/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631226697_chunk_g978063122669720 (Accessed May 6, 2011) .

[91] Hund, Scott A. and Robert d. Benford. "Collective Identity, Solidarity, and Commitment."

Along with concern for the children of God and the friends of God, concern for one's neighbor is another relational type of solidarity that binds people together. Through the parable of a Good Samaritan, Jesus redefines the meaning of neighbor. A neighbor is not merely a person who belongs to the same cultural, geographical, racial, economic, and religious realities, but rather, everyone who is in need. Everyone who comes to the aid of someone in need is a neighbor to the other.[92] Here, the definition of mutual neighbors builds up a sense of solidarity not only among the poor or the oppressed, but also among all humanity. Hund and Benford's two levels of solidarity may help to further clarify this extended definition of neighbor: "Solidarity has two fundamental foci: internal and external. Internal solidarity is focused on the group to which one belongs and to the members within that group, external solidarity is the identification of and identification with groups to which one does not belong. The construction of internal and external solidarity depends a great deal upon the framing of worldviews or ideologies."[93] In the light of Hund and Benford's argument, the deed of neighborly love by the Good Samaritan moved by compassion corresponds to external solidarity, and compassion is the framework which expands the scope of solidarity as well as the scope of neighbor.

Jesus emphasizes solidarity among humanity as children of God, friends, and neighbors. Furthermore, by identifying himself with the poor, the sick, and the alienated, Jesus proposes solidarity as a religious norm to his followers. He says: *"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,*

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[92] Bernhardt, "Compassion as a Core-Element of Christian Ethics," 91.

[93] Hund and Benford. "Collective Identity, Solidarity, and Commitment."

I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt 25:35-36, 40)

Suffering is part of human existence. While it is difficult to find an answer to the question of the origin of suffering, Christians may find ways of giving meaning to suffering in the light of Jesus' life and in the Bible. In the face of suffering, Jesus does not strive to dissolve or explain the reality of suffering, rather he focuses on the practical consideration – how does one respond to the suffering of others. His response to the reality of suffering in the world is compassion and solidarity. Jesus took on the suffering of the people as his own. This identification with others' suffering is possible through solidarity with those who suffer. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus urges people to extend the scope of solidarity, which must not be confined nor limited by social or religious collectivities and norms. Solidarity with people who are suffering should be unlimited and compassion should be extended to all.

2.2. Solidarity and Interdependence in Church Documents

Thus far, this chapter has examined some of the ways in which emotional, ethical, and voluntary responses to suffering are rooted in solidarity and compassion. Empathy with the sufferings of others is strengthened when people choose to remain in the midst of those who suffer. In return, strong bonds of solidarity reinforce a sense of compassion toward others. Suffering, compassion, and solidarity are in a close dynamic relationship. In the modern era, human civilization has benefitted from many brilliant achievements both

quantitatively and qualitatively. The extent of human development has reached out to every corner of the world overcoming the boundaries of nation, race, gender, social class, and religion. Modern civilization has provided humanity with more conveniences and comforts. It also has made the world smaller with the advancement of transportation and communication technologies. However, the modern world has been confronted with problems of ever greater sophistication and of a vast range of negative effects on humanity. Conflicts among nations extend to the world level beyond bordering nations; social and economic forms of exploitation have consequences for people on the other side of the globe. Suffering prevails over all humanity to a much greater extent and a more profound degree, quantitatively and qualitatively. Viewed from a global perspective, the problem of human suffering cannot be solved by individuals or nations; solidarity among all peoples is needed now more than ever before. Mindful of this reality, overviews of three contemporary Catholic documents – one from the Second Vatican Council and two papal encyclicals - are provided as points of reference on contemporary Christian attitudes regarding the need for solidarity to relieve suffering and the importance of interdependence among the peoples of the world.

Gaudium et Spes

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the Roman Catholic Church came to recognize the socio-economic and political dimension of human suffering, which affects human life beyond the boundaries of family, village, or more broadly speaking, nation. Acknowledging the urgent need for charity and justice without boundaries, whether geographical or spiritual, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for solidarity

among all people. In *Gaudium et Spes*, 32, the basic theology of solidarity is stated as follows:

> As God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity, so also "it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without bond or link between them, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness." So from the beginning of salvation history He has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community. Revealing His mind to them, God called these chosen ones "His people" (Ex. 3:7-12), and even made a covenant with them on Sinai.[94]

God created human beings to form a "social unity" and extended His salvation collectively to the human community. Humanity then is given the opportunity to respond to God's call to participate in God's salvific plan as *a single people* not as individuals. By proclaiming the familial relationship between the Creator and all of humanity as well as the familial relationship that should exist among all human beings, Jesus emphasized the importance of strengthening the bonds of human community. Jesus revealed God as the Father of all humanity so that all of humanity would come to understand itself as children of God, as brothers and sisters to one another. The "social unity" which God desires for humanity is to be found in the building up of "the Family of God, in which the fullness of the Law would be love" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 32). The document also stresses that brotherly and sisterly solidarity must be increased to the point of perfection in which people will participate in offering "flawless glory to God as a family beloved of God and of Christ their Brother" (*Gaudium et Spes,* 32).

[94]See the document on the official Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed February 2, 2011).

While recognizing the theological and spiritual aspects of solidarity, *Gaudium et Spes* also addresses the socio-political dimensions derived from the signs of the times. As *Gaudium et Spes*, 4 states:

> Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. . . . As happens in any crisis of growth, this transformation has brought serious difficulties in its wake. Thus while man extends his power in every direction, he does not always succeed in subjecting it to his own welfare. . . . Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance. Although the world of today has a very vivid awareness of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce everything to ashes. (*Gaudium et Spes* , 4)

As the document asserts, humanity has never enjoyed as much wealth, convenience and comfortable living as in modern times. Nevertheless, there remain innumerable people suffering from various socio-economic and political evils: diseases, lack of basic medical care, starvation, chronic poverty, alienation, lack of education, political and religious persecution, and extreme discrepancies in the distribution of wealth. The marvelous achievements of modern sciences and technologies have drawn the peoples of the whole world closer to one another creating a neologism of *global village* as well as expanding the definition of neighbor to a worldwide scale. The swift transportation of people and goods as well as the instantaneous flow of information have bridged the psychological distance among people in different places, and as a consequence, the understanding of neighbor has

been broadened. Such changes have made it possible for Christians to become more conscious of *all* human beings. These changes also have contributed to the cultivation of more intimate and direct relationships with people throughout the world by furthering an attitude and understanding of what it means to be part of the family of God.

Populorum Progressio

In 1967, after the close of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI announced a social encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*(PP), in which he stressed that the Church needed to pay closer attention to the development of those people with diverse needs and that "concerted action" to solve the serious problems in human history was needed "at this critical juncture."[95] Paul VI posed the social questions in their worldwide context; the problem of poverty needed to pursue its solution by means of international relationships between the developed and developing nations rather than individuals and classes.[96] Throughout the encyclical, the Pope recognized the enormous injustice in the distribution of wealth and resources all over the world. In this context he suggested that a search be undertaken for concrete and practical ways of organization and cooperation so that all humanity could benefit from the available resources in the world (PP, 43). Since the complete development of individuals or social groups cannot be achieved without the integral development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity, all are obliged to contribute to the development of humanity. Paul VI presented three ways to fulfill this obligation, particularly at the

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[95] Paul VI. *Populorum Progressio,* 1, the Vatican official website, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html (accessed February 5, 2011).

[96] Judith A. Merkle, *From the Heart of the Church: The Catholic Social Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, 2004), 122.

international level: the duty of human solidarity - providing aid to developing countries; the duty of social justice - the rectification of inequitable trade relations between countries; and, the duty of universal charity - the effort to build a more humane world community where all benefit mutually and not at the expense of others (PP, 44).

The Pope suggested that development begins with the sincere dialogue between cultures and between individuals as well. Such dialogue can foster brotherhood and sisterhood among people so as to lead to stronger bonds of solidarity (PP, 73). Paul VI, then, called upon all people of good will to go beyond religious boundaries - "Catholics and Christians, believers in God and devotees of truth and justice" - to "blaze the trails to mutual cooperation among men, to deeper knowledge and more widespread charity, to a way of life marked by true brotherhood, to a human society based on mutual harmony" (PP, 85).

The spirit of Vatican II and the theme of Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* were readily embraced and advanced throughout the world. One outstanding example is found in the response of the bishops of Latin America. In 1968, the bishops present at the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín, Colombia took a serious look at the urgent problems prevalent in Latin America and tried to find solutions in light of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and Paul VI's encyclical.[97] Bishops at the

[97] In 1955 the bishops of Latin America formed the Latin American Episcopal Conference and held their first meeting in Rio de Janeiro. After Vatican II, the Latin American bishops gathered to implement the directives of the Council to gather for regional conferences at which the regional churches could address their particular contexts and concerns. The second meeting was held in Medellín, Colombia in 1968, the third in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, and the fourth in Santo Domingo, Domincan Republic in 1993, and recently in Aparecida do Norte, Brazil in 2007. The Latin American bishops were exhorted to not only apply the teachings of Vatican II to their continent but to advance them; "[the Latin American bishops] offered their own interpretation of the signs of times, calling the Church to promote social change and real justice in Latin

conference claimed that the preferential option for the poor and solidarity with the poor and oppressed was the duty of the church:

> We ought to sharpen the awareness of our duty of solidarity with the poor, to which charity leads us. This solidarity means that we make ours their problems and their struggle, that we know how to speak with them. This has to be concretized in criticism of injustice and oppression, in the struggle against the intolerable situation which a poor person often has to tolerate, in the willingness to dialogue with the groups responsible for that situation in order to make them understand their obligation.[98]

Sollicitudo Rei Socials

On December 30, 1987, Pope John Paul II announced his second encyclical devoted to Catholic social teaching, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS), or "On Social Concern." The encyclical, built on Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967), and offered a theological reflection on the issues of global poverty and development.[99] John Paul II particularly emphasized the significance of the awareness of interdependence in the lives of individuals and nations which could lead to an increased sense of solidarity between the poor and the rich, between peoples and nations:

American society. They recognized the aspirations of the poor, and clearly indicated that the Church must stand with the poor as their advocate." Since the late 1960s, the Catholic Church began to address the local discernment of cultural, social, political and economic situations and made an urgent call for justice in diverse particular circumstances. This call for discernment and action for justice encouraged regional or continental churches to reflect on their particular situation in the light of Christian faith and social teachings of the church. See Merkle, *From the Heart of the Church*, 165-70; 129-30.

[98] Medellín documents, "Poverty of the Church," 10. http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/medpov.htm (accessed January 20, 2011).

[99] One of the distinctive points of the encyclical from the previous Catholic social teachings is that the document shifts the social concern of the church and world from East-West ideological division to the division between the rich and underdeveloped nations. See Robert Ellsberg, "Introduction," in *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical On Social Concern*, eds. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), vii.

> It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue", is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38)

Thus, interdependence can work in favor of solidarity. On the other hand, the Pope warned that interdependence in the world can be manipulated by people who possess economic and political power. Through such manipulation they can accentuate the iniquitous situation of the few who accumulate more and more wealth at the expense of the many who have less and less.[100] Marie Vianney Bilgrien, in her book *Solidarity,* explores the theme of solidarity in the documents of John Paul II. She describes the mutually challenging and encouraging relationship between solidarity and interdependence in these words: "Solidarity insures that interdependence really is directed to the good of all people and the world. Interdependence, formed by solidarity, insures that the virtue remains and becomes ever more firm and persevering."[101]

When the moral response to interdependence is solidarity, the act proper to solidarity among individuals and nations is "collaboration" (SRS, 39), and John Paul II calls first for all Christians and also the members of other religions to the pursuit of integral human development (SRS, 32). The more people recognize that the sufferings and

[100] SRS, 16.

[101] Marie V. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle, and Attitude, a Duty? Or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 108.

problems of the world are related to one another and the more they agree on the common goal of human beings achieving the common good, the more they become aware of the urgent need to work together.[102] When people realize that serious problems affect everyone in the world and that they cannot be eradicated by the effort of any one individual or nation, they become aware of the need to dialogue and work together on the level of both individuals and nations. Here, dialogue has an important role. As long as dialogue continues, the collaborative efforts to find solutions and work for the common good will not cease despite the obstacles of differences and divisions.[103] In SRS, John Paul II stresses the necessity of international collaboration and encourages people to make sacrifices for the world:

> None of what has been said can be achieved without the collaboration of all-especially the international community-in the framework of a solidarity which includes everyone, beginning with the most neglected. But the developing nations themselves have the duty to practice solidarity among themselves and with the neediest countries of the world. . . . An essential condition for global solidarity is autonomy and free self-determination, also associations such as those indicated. But at the same time solidarity demands a readiness to accept the sacrifices necessary for the good of the whole world community.[104]

However, sacrifices might be an appropriate term in certain aspects. First the wealth and goods in the world are meant for all (SRS, 42). Second, the rich and influential individuals and countries, who enjoy superfluous wealth while others suffer in destitution and either directly or indirectly cause the destitute to be enslaved, oppressed, and powerless for the sake of their interests, will be rewarded by being liberated themselves from the

[102] Bilgrien, *Solidarity*, 237.

[103] Bilgrien, *Solidarity*, 237.

[104] SRS, 45.

"dehumanization"[105] of greed and power. As a result of helping the less fortunate who are struggling against the very rapid process of dehumanizing condition of socio-political misery and chaos: "they overcome their oppressive impulses and become servants of the poor."[106] In solidarity, they relieve "one another's burdens."[107] John Paul II argues that a profound awakening to the deep interdependence which characterizes the whole world is required to change the attitude of both the poor and the rich as individuals and nations.[108]

In Summary

During his public ministry, Jesus Christ announced the coming of the Kingdom of God in which humanity would restore its intimate relationship with God and harmonious relationship with one another. He forgave the sins of the people who were pleading for God's grace, and healed sick people as a sign of the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, he demanded that his followers participate in his works by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in deeds of forgiveness and love as well as by preaching the Good News. Jesus brought this Good News to those afflicted by sin and suffering of various kinds. He was aware of the broken human condition more than anyone else and his concern and love were fully

[105] Ricardo Antonich, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: A Latin American Perspective," in *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical On Social Concern*, eds. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 211.

[106] Antonich, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: A Latin American Perspective," 226.

[107] Jon Sobrino, *Where is God?: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 18. [107] Ricardo Antonich commented on the Encyclical that it embodied a great deal of the theological reflection developed in Latin America. Its rootedness in the concrete reality is one of them. He argues that the methodical organization of the reflection in the order of seeing, judging, and acting is also the way of doing theology in Latin America. For more detailed analysis, see Antonich, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: A Latin American Perspective," 211-26.

[108] Ellsberg, "Introduction," in *The Logic of Solidarity*, x.

manifested in his compassionate words and activities in solidarity with the suffering peoples.

To acknowledge Jesus' compassion for and solidarity with humanity is not an option but an obligation for Christians. The Roman Catholic Church has always been aware of its participation in the mission given by Jesus Christ and has taught its members to practice charity and justice. In modern times, the Church has come to recognize more fully the cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of the human condition and their significant effects on human suffering, which have led in turn to a greater awareness of the fact that the problems of suffering and injustice in the world cannot be solved by efforts of any single individual or nation. Building upon this understanding, Catholic social teachings call for the need of urgent collaboration at the international level to relieve the burden affecting all of humanity. This collaborative task must be done in solidarity with all humanity. It must go beyond varied sorts of boundaries. It must be rooted in an awareness within human society that the life of humanity is interdependent. At every level of existence, all humanity is responsible for the lives of those afflicted by structural evils.

In conclusion, this chapter proposes that knowledge of the ethical norms of compassion and solidarity formulated from the life and teachings of Jesus, and articulated in modern times through the Church's profound understanding of the human condition and its willingness to promote cooperation among all humanity, can serve to inspire and initiate young adult Christians to participate in interreligious collaboration more willingly *and* help interreligiously cooperative young Buddhists to sustain their tasks more enthusiastically and with a greater knowledge of Christian foundations.

Chapter Three

The Buddha - the Four Noble Truths, Suffering and Compassion, and Recent Understandings of the Buddha's Teachings by Engaged Buddhists

Just as the image depicting Jesus, nailed to the cross, in acute pain and excruciating agony is a symbol of the imminent character of Christianity, the statue of the Buddha in a sitting posture of serene meditation manifests the transcendent character of Buddhism. Such contrasts, however, do not mean that Buddhism is indifferent to the reality of suffering, rather the image is suggestive of the manner in which Buddhism delves intensely into the ultimate problem of humanity. The composed and insightful eyes of the Buddha penetrate the true reality of life and the universe. Buddha's merciful eyes look over all sentient beings with profound compassion.

In this Chapter, an effort is made to demonstrate that Buddhism is a practical movement that is profoundly rooted in the reality of the human condition and greatly concerned with the well-being of humanity. It is not, as sometimes thought in the West, a speculative and meditative religion that stands aloof from a mundane life in pursuit of transcendent enlightenment. At the outset, Chapter Three presents the life and teachings of the Buddha. It then proceeds to offer some perspectives on modern interpretations of traditional Buddhist teachings which address the urgent need for socio-economic participation and political engagement to relieve pervasive suffering throughout the world.

3.1. The Buddha and the Four Noble Truths

The Life of Śākyamuni Buddha[109]

Buddha is not a personal name but an appellative term or title which denotes *one who has awakened* both in Sanskrit and Pali.[110] Naturally, the Buddha,[111] a historical figure revered by Buddhists, is a person who fully attained the goal of religious life - being enlightened to the truth of the life and the universe.

The person, who is referred to as the Buddha, was born in Lumbini, near the border of present-day Nepal and India, but he was raised in Kapilavastu, the capital of Śākya. His personal name was Siddhārtha (Sanskrit[112]; Siddhattha in Pali), which means *one who has achieved his aim*, and his clan name was Gautama (Sanskrit; Gotama in Pali). The Buddha is also referred to as Śākyamuni, meaning the sage (muni) of the Śākya.[113] The Buddha's chronological dates are hard to estimate because of lack of historical resources.

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[109] Just as much of Early Christian literature focused more on the significant events from Jesus' adult life and his teachings rather than reliable historical data regarding his childhood, so also, the ancient Buddhists who wrote the earliest texts did not give historical data regarding the origins and early life of the Buddha. Buddhist teachings were retained by memory and passed on orally for about five hundred years. The earliest Buddhist text was not written until the beginning of the Common Era (C.E.). The most famous and ancient account of the Buddha's life, *Buddhacarita* (Acts of the Buddha) - an epic poem composed in Pali language (a Sanskrit-based dialect) by Aśvaghoṣa was written in the second century C.E. several centuries after the Buddha's death. In the meantime, the life of the Buddha was embellished and mystified, making it almost impossible to reconstruct the historical Buddha. In offering a general understanding of Buddhist teachings, this chapter briefly reviews the life story of the Buddha as generally accepted by Buddhists. See Charles S. Prebish and Damian Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25-28. For the ancient biography of the Buddha see Aśvaghoṣa, *Life of the Buddha: Buddhacarita*, trans. Patrick Olivelle (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

[110] Charles S. Perbish and Damian Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 26.

[111] In Buddhism, anyone who attains enlightenment is considered a Buddha. Buddhism recognizes that there have been numerous buddhas over the course of an endless time span and in diverse realms of the universe. "The Buddha," however, refers to the historical founder of the Buddhist tradition.

[112] Henceforth, unless depicted otherwise, the Buddhist terms are in Sanskrit.

[113] Śākya was a vassal state of a much bigger kingdom, Kosala.

Nevertheless, historians agree that the historical Buddha lived sometime during the period between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E.. [114]

According to traditional accounts, the Buddha came from a royal lineage; his father was Suddhodana, the King of Śākya, and his mother was Queen Māyā. When Siddhārtha, the future Buddha was born, there was a prophecy about his future by a renowned Bramin ascetic. He foretold that the child would certainly become either an enlightened seer or a great world-conquering emperor. The Buddha's father, who wished his son to inherit his kingdom and to become a world-ruler, was afraid that Siddhārtha would leave the palace to become a religious teacher. The overprotective father therefore pampered his son, preventing him from experiencing any unpleasant misery of the world, which might motivate the young Siddhārtha to set out in a life as a wandering ascetic in search of the meaning of life and suffering. Although the king had arranged for the young prince not to encounter any disturbing sights, on the way to a park, Siddhārtha happened to be confronted by the sights of an old man, a sick man, and a corpse. These encounters provoked Siddhārtha to ponder the vulnerability of humanity and the transient nature of human existence. On another trip, Siddhārtha encountered a religious mendicant on a journey involving a spiritual quest. Inspired by the mendicant he decided to leave the

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[114] For more details regarding the chronological studies on the life of the Buddha, see Frank E. Reynolds and Charles Hallisey, "Buddha," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 2, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005), 1059-1071, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE%7CCX3424500416&v=2.1&u=mlin_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=GVRL.encrel&sw=w (accessed June 4, 2011).

palace as well as his wife and young son in order to become a wandering mendicant, looking for liberation from all sufferings and the transience of human existence.[115]

It is clear that the awareness of suffering in human life was an intriguing moment for the Buddha and the time that gave rise to a spiritual quest that led him to renounce his privileged and comfortable life. Siddhārtha sought out religious masters and underwent meditative disciplines as well as strict austerities. However, he failed to achieve what he sought, and ended up with a serious ailment. Abandoning the extreme self-denial of austere practices as well as the over-indulgent comforts of the life in the palace, Siddhārtha took a *Middle Way* by avoiding extremes of all sorts. After recovering his physical strength, he decided to seat himself under a banyan tree, later known as the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, India, and to meditate until he attained enlightenment. One particular night, he came to obtain three kinds of 'true knowledge.' In the first watch of the night, he obtained the power to see back into his past lives. In the second watch of the night, he attained the ability to see that all beings in the universe continue to rise and decline in accordance with their own bad and good karma. In the third watch of the night, he finally realized the Four Noble Truths and achieved perfect enlightenment. He truly became the Buddha.

At the realization of all existence and the true nature of all beings in the universe – along with the endless repetitious cycles of births and deaths in suffering - the Buddha was

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[115] The account of renunciation might be better understood as a parable rather than a historical event. People intend to live within a wall of self-complacency and self-delusion, shielding themselves from unpleasant truths. Humanity, however, cannot escape forever from the true nature of the human condition and the world, which endlessly challenges the self-established castle. Eventually, individuals happen to encounter an existential crisis which provokes them to suspect their own world view and to embark on the quest for a new life and meaning. For the spiritual interpretation of the renunciation account, see Martine Batchelor, *The Spirit of the Buddha* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 13-15; Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 31.

moved by compassion,[116] and decided to teach what he had come to learn about the world. Beginning by 'setting in motion the Wheel of the Dharma (Dhamma in Pali)'[117] with his first sermon to his five companions who had practiced austerities in Sarnath on the outskirts of Benares (now known as Varanasi), the Buddha travelled throughout northern India teaching people and also instructing his disciples to spread his teachings out of compassion for the world. After forty-five years of teaching and travelling, the Buddha finally entered the *Great Final Nirvana* (*Mahāparinirvāna*) at the age of eighty.[118]

The Four Noble Truths[119]

The first sermon preached in Sarnath is preserved in a Pali canon called *Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma* (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in Pali). The canon presents the essential teachings of the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths:

> *Bhikkhus*,[120] there are these Four Noble Truths. What four? The noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of

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[116] At the each attainment of true knowledge, the Buddha was moved by compassion for beings. *Buddhacarita* writes about the Buddha's compassion: "After recalling births and deaths in all the various rebirth states, that man, full of compassion, then felt compassion toward all beings (14.4) . . . As he witnessed the births and deaths of beings doing base and lofty deeds, his compassion waxed ever great (14.9)." Aśvaghoṣa, *Life of the Buddha: Buddhacarita*, trans. Patrick Olivelle (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

[117] The Dharma, the Buddha's teaching is likened to a wheel. The depiction of the Wheel of the Dharma with either four or eight spokes, representing the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Paths, is one of many symbols representing Buddhism. The world Dharma already was found in the brahmanical tradition before Buddhism emerged, where it signified the law of the universe and also the duty of each person. In Buddhism, the Dharma mostly refers to the Buddha's teachings, and sometimes to the way things work. See Batchelor, *The Spirit of the Buddha*, 29.

[118] For a brief review of the Buddha's life, this chapter is largely indebted to Prebish and Kweon's short rendering of the Buddha's life, which is derived from ancient texts with modern interpretations of the meaning of the Buddha's life. See Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 23-41.

[119] For the study of the Four Noble Truths, this chapter is indebted to Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 16-50; Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 42-58.

[120] Bhikkhu means a monk in Pali.

> suffering. These Four Noble Truths, Bhikkhus, are actual, unerring, not otherwise. Therefore they are called noble truths.[121]

The Buddha addresses the monks by saying that unless they understand and penetrate the depths of the Four Noble Truths as they really are, they cannot be released from the cycle of birth-and-death.[122] The Four Noble Truths are the most fundamental of Buddhist doctrines and serve as the cornerstone for all other Buddhist teachings. They are the ultimate fruit of sophisticated and advanced speculation and investigation on the human condition or the human predicament and its solution. Thus, the Buddha, who diagnosed the problem of suffering, can be compared to a physician, and his teachings can be compared to a medicine.[123]

The First Noble Truth: Suffering

Every process used to cure any illness begins with the recognition of abnormal or unpleasant symptoms which then leads to an exact diagnosis of the disease. Siddhārtha recognized the disturbing symptoms of human life in his encounters with aging, disease, and death. Even though he was a young, healthy, and rich prince, he still was not exempt from such sufferings. He was committed to finding out the true nature of suffering and determined to find the way to liberate himself from it. The Buddha, after attaining complete

[121] *Samyutta Nikāya*, 56. 27, in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya,* Vol. II, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi from the Pali canon (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 1855-56.

[122] "*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*: The Great Passion" (*Digha Nikāya*, ii. 90), in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikāya,* trans. Maurice Walshe from the Pali canon (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 239.

[123] "The formulation of the Four Truths is like that of a medical examination: first, the condition is diagnosed; second, its cause is sought; third, the physician makes a prognosis for recovery; and fourth, a course of treatment is prescribed." Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 43.

enlightenment, realized that suffering is the most fundamental truth of life for all beings and for the universe. He also asserted that the recognition of such reality is the foundation for finding the way to liberation. So then, what is the truth of suffering? The word *duhkha* (*dukkha* in Pali) is translated by scholars as suffering or pain. When the Buddha taught people the true nature of *duhkha* or 'the suffering of life and of the world', he gave to it a broad spectrum of meanings:

> Suffering, as a noble truth, is this: Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the loathed is suffering, dissociation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering — in short, suffering is the five [aggregates][124] of clinging objects.[125]

The Buddha first refers to physical pains; aging, sickness, and death. He then expands to psychological and emotional distresses, and further to the bothersome condition of humanity that people cannot always get what they want. Finally, the First Noble Truth ends with a reference to the five aggregates which introduces the doctrine of 'no-self'; these two doctrines claim that the nature of humanity is an aggregate that consists of incessantly changing parts so that in fact there is nothing to grasp at.[126] These two doctrines are further examined below.

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[124] Ñanamoli Thera uses the word 'categories'. On the other hand, many scholars use the term 'aggregates' instead of categories. The Buddhist doctrine of the *no-self* is closely related to these five aggregates, and in consistency with further discussion of the doctrine of the *no-self* the term categories is replaced by aggregates in this quotation. See Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 44. See also the translation of the same text by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html (accessed June 24, 2011).

[125] "*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*: Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth" (SN 56.11), trans. from the Pali by Ñanamoli Thera, Access to Insight, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.nymo.html (accessed June 24, 2011).

[126] Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 44.

The various kinds of suffering are also classified into three categories by Buddhist sources: suffering as ordinary pain or distress; suffering produced by change; and suffering as conditioned states.[127] All forms of physical, psychological and emotional suffering belong to the first category. As people experience pleasant physical feelings or feel contentment, they consider their lives happy. Everything is, however, impermanent and constantly changing, and when it changes, it causes pain, suffering, unhappiness. This vicissitude or transience is included in the second category of suffering. These two kinds of suffering are easy to understand since they are commonly experienced in daily lives of people. The final category of suffering is the basis of the other two sufferings and very subtle to perceive. In order to understand suffering as a conditioned state, knowledge of the five aggregates and the 'no-self' is required.

In his second sermon,[128] the Buddha elaborated upon the teachings of the five aggregates which he mentioned in the first sermon: "Suffering is five aggregates of clinging objects." The Buddha analyzed human nature in accord with five aggregates. The first aggregate is *form* or *matter*, denoting the faculties of six sense-organs[129] and their corresponding objects in the external world. The second one is *sensations* or *feelings*. This aggregate includes all the sensations, pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, experienced through the contact of physical or mental organs with the external world. After sensing

[127] *Samyutta Nikāya*, 38. 14.

[128] The second sermon of the Buddha is recorded in *Anattalakkhana Sutta*. "*Anattalakkhana Sutta*: The discourse on the Not-self Characteristic" (SN 22.59), trans. from the Pali by Ñanamoli Thera, Access to Insight, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.059.nymo.html (accessed June 26, 2011).

[129] In Buddhist philosophy, mind is considered not as a spirit opposed to matter, but as only a faculty or organ like the eye or the ear. Thoughts or ideas or conceptions are the external objects of mind. See Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 21.

external objects, a person recognizes the objects whether physical or mental. This is the third aggregate or *perceptions*. The fourth one is the aggregate of *mental formations*. An individual forms one's own mental habits or character based on personal experiences and reactions to them, and this mental formation involves the will or volition that discerns and make decisions regarding what to do. Different from sensations and perceptions, the volitional actions produce karmic effects.[130] The fifth one is the aggregate of *consciousness*. The usual understanding of consciousness - as a mental stream of consciousness - is one of its many modes. It is the power of perception that enables one to recognize an object. On the other hand, the fifth aggregate is a sort of awareness of the presence of an object.[131] This consciousness, according to Buddhist teachings, plays important function in the process of rebirth. Following death, the consciousness carries a karmic profile from the previous life and combines it with a newly formed physical body. The Buddha, however, emphasizes the fact that consciousness should not be misunderstood as a permanent, unchanging spirit or soul or self which transmigrates from one life to another. Consciousness depends on matter, sensation, perception and mental formation, and it cannot exist alone.

[130] According to Buddhist teachings, all sentient beings in the universe continue to be reborn in six different realms of existence until they attain full enlightenment and cease the cycle of rebirth to enter *Nirvana*. Amidst ceaseless rebirths, a sentient being's rebirth is determined according to the law of *karma*: Good actions result in a good rebirth and bad actions in a bad rebirth. This law of *karma* can work as an influential motivation for the moral and spiritual practice of people. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11-31; Prebish and Kewon, *Introducing Buddhism*, 17-23. Along with many moral vices, ignorance or idea of self is included in volitional actions and they can produce negative karmic effects.

[131] For instance, when a person sees a colored object, his/her perception recognizes the color and visual consciousness is a mere awareness of the presence of a color. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 23.

What is called the *I* or the *self* is nothing but a name or label given to the combination of five aggregates. They are impermanent and constantly changing. When the *I* is understood as a conditioned combination of the five aggregates, the *I* is subject to constant change in relation to the five aggregates in a flux of incessant arising and disappearing. The doctrine of the *no-self* is very hard to understand and poses many challenges to those who engage the doctrine with questions such as: "If there is no self, who thinks or feels?" The Buddhist teaching does not deny the existence of an individual who actually lives in the world. Nevertheless, the doctrine argues that there is no inherent, substantial self; the idea of *I* is only a physio-psychological product of mental formations combined with other aggregates. The Buddha, then, says that clinging to changing aggregates and the self is suffering or *dukkha*.

The Second Noble Truth: The Arising of Suffering

> The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is the craving that produces renewal of being accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that; in other words, craving for sensual desires, craving for being, craving for non-being.[132]

If a physician diagnosed the symptoms of a patient by means of the First Noble Truth, the Second Noble Truth examines the origin of suffering. The Buddha asserts that craving[133] produces suffering and even makes a being continue in the process of rebirth. The craving includes sensual pleasures, existence, and non-existence. Since the mind is considered as a

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[132] "*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*: Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth" (SN 56.11).

[133] *Tṛṣṇā* (Sanskrit) and *taṇhā* (Pali) is also translated as *thirst* and *desire*. Prebish and Keown suggests that desire can be used with both positive and negative implications, craving that implies repetitive, limiting, and cyclic desire, would be a more suitable translation for the original term with negative nuance. See Prebish and Kewon, *Introducing Buddhism*, 46; Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29.

sort of sense, the pleasurable fantasies or attachments to ideas or beliefs also are included in the first category of craving. A deep yearning for existence is an instinctual urge to all sentient beings and drives them to constant rebirths within *samsara*.[134] In varied ways, it is this craving that causes all forms of suffering and repetitive rebirths.

The Buddhist sources also attribute the arising of suffering to three causes. As the Buddha says; "Monks, these three are causes for the origination of actions. Which three? Greed is a cause for the origination of actions. Aversion is a cause for the origination of actions. Delusion is a cause for the origination of actions."[135] The doctrine of dependent arising or dependent origination[136] systemically analyzes how cognitive errors (such as ignorance or delusion) and inappropriate affection or emotions (such as excessive attachment or aversion) are involved with arising of suffering and rebirth. This doctrine is entirely rooted in the law of cause and effect and it asserts that every phenomenon is conditioned in dependence on causes without any intrinsic, substantial being of its own.

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[134] In Buddhist teaching, a sentient being is to continue its rebirths from one realm to another within samsara until it attains complete enlightenment and enters Nirvana. Samsara means literally 'wandering on' or 'cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth.' The Buddhist sources commonly speak of six realms; god, demi-god, human being, hungry ghost, animal, and hell being.

[135] "*Ninada Sutta*: Causes," trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu from the Pali, Access to Insight.

[136] "Monks, I will describe & analyze dependent co-arising for you. And what is dependent co-arising? From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering." "*Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta*: Analysis of Dependent Co-arising," trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu from the Pali, Access to insight.

The Third Noble Truth: The Cessation of Suffering

> Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is remainderless fading and ceasing, giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting, of that same craving.[137]

If all sorts of suffering arise in dependence on causes and the causes are thoroughly realized, being cut off from the causes would be the most efficient way to stop the effects or sufferings. This is the Third Noble Truth or the Cessation of Suffering and the state of emancipation, liberation from suffering and continuity of rebirths known as *Nirvana* (*Nibbana* in Pali). Nirvana literally means *blowing out*, so that it refers to the state in which the three *fires* or *poisons* of greed, hatred and delusion - the components of craving - are blown out and one no longer undergoes dependent arising. All ethical, intellectual, and meditative training for Buddhists aims at 'blowing out' the fires or at least weakening them. The Buddhist teachings, however, refute the idea that Nirvana is the result of cessation of craving or the result of spiritual transformation. They contend that Nirvana is beyond the law of cause and effect. Nirvana is the absolute reality and truth according to the manner in which life and the universe really are.[138]

The Fourth Noble Truth: The Path

> The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view [understanding], right intention [resolve or thought]; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.[139]

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[137] "*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*: Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth" (SN 56.11).

[138] For the more detail of the nature of Nirvana, see Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 40-44.

[139] "*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*: Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth" (SN 56.11).

The Buddha presented the Absolute Truth and Ultimate Reality as that which should be realized by those who go on a spiritual journey in pursuit of liberation from suffering and cyclic rebirths. Through the Fourth Noble Truth, the Buddha provided knowledge about the path to be followed which brings suffering to an end, enabling one to be freed from samsara so as to transition into nirvana. The path is known as the *Middle Path*, through which a spiritual seeker avoids two extremes: indulgence of sense-pleasures and self-mortification. This Middle Path is generally referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight factors are categorized into three: Ethical conduct (or morality), Mental discipline (or meditation), and Wisdom.

Right Speech means abstaining from lying, divisive or harsh speech, and empty gossip. Right Action aims at promoting moral, honorable and peaceful conduct. In negative terms, it aims at abstaining from destroying life, stealing, and inappropriate sexual conduct. Right Livelihood exhorts individuals not to make their living through a profession which can cause harm to others. These three factors are included in Ethical Conduct.

Mental Discipline consists of three other factors including Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration (or meditation). Right Effort is the energetic will to prevent negative thoughts and instead develop one's mind in a wholesome way. Right Mindfulness aims at developing constant awareness in physical activities, sensations or feelings, the state or mode of mind, and ideas or thoughts.[140] The third factor of Mental Discipline, Right Concentration means developing clarity and mental calm so as to enter

[140] The purpose of this discipline is not to recognize the sensations or feelings or thoughts but to be attentive to their vicissitudes - how they appear and disappear within oneself.

trance in which sensation or feeling, intellectual activities, the feelings of joy and happiness disappear gradually in accordance with the stages and finally only pure equanimity and awareness remains.

The third category, Wisdom includes Right View (or Understanding) and Right Resolve (or Intention). Right View is the understanding of things as they are – ultimate understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Right Resolve concerns developing right attitudes of selfless renunciation, of love for others, and of abstaining from hatred and violence toward others.

Over the course of forty-five years, the whole of the Buddha's teachings directly dealt with the Eightfold Path in some way or other. He explained it skillfully according to the developmental stages, intellectual abilities and spiritual capacities of his listeners. The eight factors which the Buddha taught throughout his life should not be considered as separate or distinct from one another. They are all linked together, interconnected and were developed more or less simultaneously. Pictured in the frame of three categories - Ethical Conduct, Mental Discipline, and Wisdom, they support others and help them to grow. Ethical Conduct serves as the foundation for Mental Discipline and Wisdom, which in turn strengthens Morality. Mental Discipline develops intellectual faculties so as to enter the depths of Wisdom more profoundly, which in turn supports meditation with a clearer understanding of the nature of meditative practices.[141]

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[141] Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, 53; Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 45-46.

Suffering for Buddhists

According to some observers, Buddhism advances the conviction that life is nothing but suffering. This view of life can lead many people to perceive Buddhism as very pessimistic since not everyone experiences his or her life as suffering or pain. Walpola Rahula, a prominent Buddhist monk and scholar of Sri Lanka,[142] refutes this pessimistic view of Buddhism. As he says: "First of all, Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. . . . It is realistic, for it takes a realistic view of life and of the world."[143] Humanity seeks to avoid suffering by pretending not to see it, by running away from it, or by manipulating it. What the Buddha tries to tell is this: Do not to look at the world as a miserable place full of suffering so as to become gloomy or angry. The Buddha admonishes people to see suffering as it is, without any affective reaction such as hatred, anger, or impatience with the natural inclination of people to crave for a pleasant or comfortable reality, or alternatively, to suppress or deny an unpleasant and uncomfortable reality. According to Buddhist teachings, the aversion to suffering is rooted in the delusion of the self. Buddhism asserts that "Mere suffering exists, but no sufferer is found."[144] The Buddha does not deny practical and actual sufferings. Rather, he suggests that through true

[142] For a brief review of his religious and scholarly achievements, see Paul Demiéville, foreword to *What the Buddha Taught*, by Walpola Rahula (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974), ix-x.

[143] Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 17. He also contends that the Buddha did not deny happiness in life when he spoke about the nature of the world as suffering and that the Buddha admitted different forms of happiness.

[144] Buddhaghosa, "*Visuddhimagga,*" quoted in Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 26.

knowledge of suffering people can be liberated from it. In this regard, it can be said that the Noble Truth of Suffering actually offers hope to people.[145]

Although Buddhism offer hope, joy, and happiness as well as an inner calmness and serenity as the result of religious practices that follow the Buddha's teachings, actual suffering continues to pose a question to people: Why do people suffer from certain types of suffering distinctively? According to the law of Karma, every action produces its karmic fruits or effects: Bad actions result in bad karmic fruits and good actions result in good karmic fruits. It is, however, not a mere action but an immediate intention that is involved with karma. Sentient beings, then, transmigrate between the six realms of rebirth according to their karma. Their accumulated karmic fruits also are manifested through fortune or misfortune in the present life. Nonetheless, people must not be blamed for their undesirable conditions such as poverty, illness, bad appearance and so forth. Good and bad rebirths are not *rewards* or *punishment* given by a transcendent being such as God, but rather, they are simply the results of certain kinds of actions. Although certain actions done in a past life may be related to a present condition of misfortune, the important thing to remember is how the person behaves in the present and how others treat him or her, in ways that lead to the accumulation new karma - bad or good.[146]

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[145] Prebish and Kewon, *Introducing Buddhism*, 46.

[146] The law of karma explains the present condition of a being. However, the belief in it must not degenerate into a form of fatalism. Instead, Buddhism emphasizes that each human being should be careful of his or her actions and of their effects. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 23. For the further study about karma, see Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 11-31.

Suffering and Compassion

The Four Noble Truths, which the Buddha taught, are actually teachings about suffering: the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the ceasing of suffering, and the path to cease suffering.[147] The whole spiritual journey in Buddhism begins with a clear acknowledgement of suffering and ends with the elimination of not only one's own suffering but also that of others.[148] When Siddhārtha Gautama achieved enlightenment and become Buddha, he attained two characteristics of an enlightened being: Wisdom and Compassion. Along with perfect insight into the reality of the life and the universe, he experienced a boundless compassion for all suffering beings. The Buddha's profound understanding of the reality of suffering evoked compassion within him. Compassion is inherent to the ultimate nature of beings;[149] so, it is natural that when people acknowledge the sufferings of others, compassion arises within them as does the desire to set others free from suffering.[150] When one gains insight into all three levels of suffering, and compassion – as a result of the insight - arises, it is for *all* sentient beings, because no sentient being in *samsara* is exempt from the pervasiveness of suffering.

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[147] Dalai Lama, *An Open Heart* (New York: Little, Brown, 2001), 7.

[148] In the cultivation of compassion for the suffering of others, the Dalai Lama recommends that it should begin from the recognition of one's own suffering: "One thing specific to the contemplation of suffering is that it tends to be more powerful and effective if we focus on our suffering and then extend that recognition to the suffering of others." Dalai Lama, *An Open Heart*, 54, quoted in John Makransky, *Awakening through Love: Unveiling Your Deepest Goodness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 163-64. In Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*, we also can notice that his reflection transfers from the understanding of oneself to others as he says: "Although my suffering does not cause pain in other bodies, nevertheless that suffering is mine and is difficult to bear because of my attachment to myself. Likewise, although I myself do not feel the suffering of another person, that suffering belongs to that person and is difficult for him to bear because of his attachment of himself." (Bca. VIII. 92-3)

[149] Ringu Tulku, *Path to Buddhahood: Teachings on Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003), 50.

[150] Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 157.

While there are three levels of suffering, Indian and Tibetan Buddhist masters teach that deepening the insight of the three kinds of suffering leads to the development of three distinctive levels of compassion on the path of enlightenment. According to John Makransky,[151] the first level of compassion, the practitioner empathizes with the obvious sufferings of other beings and wishes them to be freed from the misery. In the second level of compassion, the practitioner realizes that other beings suffer from holding on to transient things in order to satisfy a non-existent self and wishes them to be freed from such grasping. In the last level is compassion, the practitioner recognizes "the infinite, unchanging nature of the mind"[152] and understands that suffering results from the failure to recognize the nature of the mind. The practitioner who evolves to the third level and rests in "that unconditioned mind", radiates "a spontaneous will and energy of compassion" to all sentient beings who have not recognized the nature of their mind. Herein, wisdom and compassion ultimately are united. As Makransky observes; "This is non-conceptual compassion, a natural reflex of deep wisdom."[153] Makransky also quotes Nyoshul Khenpo who beautifully speaks of the third level as follows:

> When you realize the true nature of things, how can you not have incredible spontaneous compassion for all those who don't realize it? . . . Everywhere that suffering and delusion arise, compassion arises to release and alleviate

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[151] Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 176.

[152] The Mahāyāna tradition developed the idea of the *tathāgatagarba* or 'Buddha-nature' or 'the nature of mind'. The idea of the *tathāgatagarba* doctrine provided "the basis of a different way of conceptualizing the process of Enlightenment" and has a strong influence on Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. The doctrine asserts that all sentient beings even all phenomena have a *tathāgatagarba*, the inner essence of the Buddha and although it is covered with defilements, it can be revealed by purification. Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 104; Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 402-3; Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 144.

[153] Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 176.

> beings' suffering from that delusion. That is the spontaneous outflow of the genuine realization of the true nature.[154]

Thus, compassion arises in accordance with the understanding of the dynamics of suffering. On the other hand, according to Makransky, not only does wisdom empower compassion, but compassion also empowers wisdom. The boundless compassion, reaching out to all sentient beings beyond the obstacle of the distinction between *I* and *Others*, helps one's mind weaken the trapping self-centered frame, and the experience of no-self in great compassion empowers the mind to recognize the emptiness of the mind that does not have an intrinsic and graspable existence of the self.[155] Likewise, compassion and wisdom have a strong relationship of reciprocal assistance on the path of enlightenment.

3.2. Engaged Buddhism: Engagement with the Suffering World

Engaged Buddhism

In the twentieth century, a new Buddhist movement, which has been actively involved in social, political, economic, and ecological issues within society in a non-violent way, emerged throughout Asia, where the majority of Buddhists in the world live. The new movement is called "Engaged Buddhism." Many people in the West have an image of Buddhism, which is represented by world-renouncing monks meditating within a serene forest or in a tranquil temple. Hence, they consider Buddhists who protest against political injustice and advocate for the necessity of material welfare for poor people out of the norm or outside of the traditional sphere of Buddhism. Accordingly, the social engagement of

[154] Nyoshul Khenpo and Surya Das, *Natural Great Perfection* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1995), 86, quoted in Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 177.

[155] Makransky, *Awakening through Love*, 158.

Buddhists could be perceived as a result of the overwhelming influence of the West. Though admittedly, the leaders of Engaged Buddhism and their followers have been exposed to western culture, religion, ideas, and social systems, it is important to underscore the fact that *they were inspired to reflect on social issues on the basis of the Buddha's teachings and were urged to undertake action out of compassion*. Sallie B. King, an expert in Engaged Buddhism, advocates for the authenticity of Engaged Buddhism in light of a model for cross-cultural encounter:

> In the dialogue model, representatives of the two cultural/religious groups meet as equals, each side represents itself in its own words to the other side, and each listens respectfully to the other and then does whatever it wants (or nothing) with what it has heard. . . . Thus, if an Engaged Buddhist, in the course of learning about Western culture, hears an idea that sparks interest, it is as a Buddhist and from a Buddhist perspective that that idea sparks interest and from that perspective, again, that he or she responds to the idea and chooses what to do with it.[156]

Thus, as King asserts, Engaged Buddhism is not "separate from Buddhist spirituality, but is very much an expression of it."[157]

This new movement is not centralized, nor defined by geographical location, nor defined by sect. It came into being in various Asian Buddhist countries in response to particular problems confronting each country. In the twentieth century, multiple crises impacted Asia: the colonization of Asia by Western powers, Japan's exploitation of South Asia and East Asia, World War II, the Cold War, civil wars, and genocide destroyed millions of lives in Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Innumerable Tibetans had to leave their

[156] Sallie B. King, *Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 3-4.

[157] Sallie B. King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 1.

country; the impoverishment and political repression suffocated the peoples of Myanmar, Sri Lanka and other Asian countries. Modernization and industrialization devastated both culture and nature throughout Asia. Confronting these serious problems, Asian Buddhists tried to interpret and apply the Buddhist ethics and values to address contemporary problems.

In the edited volume, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia,*[158] Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King introduced Engaged Buddhism to the West. Regarding the subtitle of the book, the editors implied both the traditional meaning of liberation in Buddhism and its relatedness to Christian liberation theology or movements:

> Our subtitle, "Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia," requires clarification. Individually, the terms, "liberation" and "movement" seem fitting enough for Buddhism: Gautama's order of mendicants in India and its successors throughout Asia were by all accounts dynamic movements devoted to spiritual liberation through ethical, meditational, and devotional practices. . . . Like Christian "Liberation Theology," [The Buddhist liberation movements] are characterized by a fundamental commitment to making Buddhism responsive to the suffering of ordinary Buddhists. They are concerned to mobilize the Buddhist laity to address their own economic, social, political, and spiritual needs; to contribute to the amelioration of conditions that produce suffering for all living beings; and, finally, to reform, in light of the demands of modernity, Buddhist doctrines and institutions. It is, finally, their focus upon the relief of concrete economic, social, political, and environmental ills that qualifies these movements as "liberation movements," and it is their commitment to pursue this end on the basis of Buddhist spirituality and heritage that makes them "Buddhist liberation movements."[159]

[158] Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, ed., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), ix-x.

[159] Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism*, x-xi.

Engaged Buddhists, who realized the serious problems prevailing in society, were determined to be involved in worldly affairs to liberate people from concrete sufferings, rather than residing in a serene monastery for the sake of their own personal liberation. On the issue of social engagement of the Buddhist monk in public affairs, monks at a premier monastic college in Sri Lanka, in 1946, issued a declaration on “Bhikkus and Politics” which asserted that if the duty of bhikkhu (Buddhist monk) is to work for the welfare of the people, it is fitting for bhikkhus to be involved in activities for the people whether the activities are political or not.[160] In addition to this, before the national independence from the British, the eminent scholar-monk and activist from Sri Lanka, Walpola Rahula, advocated for monastic engagement in social and political affairs tracing such engagement back to the primitive *sangha* (a community of Buddhist monks or nuns) of the Buddha. He argued that the Buddha and his followers provided practical assistance to those who were “poor, illiterate, not very clean, and not healthy . . . [who] needed simple moral ideas conducive to their material wellbeing and happiness rather than deep and sublime discourses on philosophy, metaphysics, or psychology as taught in the *Abhidamma*.”[161]

While the Buddhist liberation movement is a “voluntary association of people”[162] who follow Buddhist teachings and gather together for the sake of welfare, peace, justice,

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[160] “Bhikkhus and Politics, Declaration of the Vidyalankara Pirivena, Passed Unanimously on February 13, 1946,” is Appendix II in Walpola Rahula, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu: A Short History of the Bhikkhu in Educational, Cultural, Social and Political Life,* (New York: Grove, 1974), 131-32, quoted in Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 14.

[161] Rahula, 3-7, quoted in Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 15. The *Abhidhamma* is one of three kinds of Pali cannons and greatly speculative one dealing with philosophical and psychological issues.

[162] Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 19.

and freedom of society, it has been "guided by exemplary leaders."[163] Among them, Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen monk and The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso are well known in the West for their nonviolent activities in the face of civil war and foreign invasion respectively. Besides these two monks, A. T. Ariyaratne in Sri Lanka, Aung san Suu Kyi in Myanmar, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Venerable P. A. Payutto, and Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand, Venerable Somdech Preah Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia, and Venerable Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan are notably important figures in the Asian movement of Engaged Buddhism within Asia.[164]

In the section that follows, the manner in which Engaged Buddhists draw together traditional Buddhist doctrines and ethics, interpreting them and applying them in accordance of the challenges and demands of modern society will be explored in greater detail.

Causality, Karma, and No-Self

The Buddha taught that every phenomenon is premised on causes or conditions. While the Buddha emphasized the doctrine of causality or dependent arising first of all for the liberation of individuals, Engaged Buddhists extend the application of the teaching to the problems of modern society. As A. T. Ariyaratne says:

> One of the unique teachings of the Buddha is the theory of dependent arising. Everything is related to every other thing. If there is no peace in a society, there should be a variety of interdependent and interrelated causes that brings about such a situation. All these causes have to be attacked

[163] Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism*, 19.

[164] King, *Being Benevolence*, 6-11.

> simultaneously and removed to make a reversal of the processes that have brought about a loss of peace in our society so that we can rebuild a culture of peace.[165]

Ariyaratne interprets the teaching of the Buddha that everything arises through causes and conditions outside itself, and applies it to the actual situations of society; if there are problems in society, they must be caused by other interdependent and interrelated causes. The law of karma, which explains the causal relationship between human actions and its consequences - whether the movement is from one realm to another within samsara or fortune and misfortune of life, is also applied to the social milieu. Sulak Sivaraksa suggests the idea of *social karma*:

> The world in which we live includes cultural, socioeconomic, and military structures as well as psychological realities. It follows that karma is simultaneously individual and social. Merely tinkering with one link in the complex circle of causation does not stop the process that leads to violence and warfare. Rather, the practice of Buddhism strives to address each aspect of the process in a holistic way. This requires not just a counter-psychology, but also a counter-culture, a counter-economy, and counter-policies.[166]

The life of an individual is not decided according to his or her own actions alone. An individual lives one's daily life interacting with numerous other individuals or being influenced by social structures. Therefore, to expect a better effect or a more peaceful and healthier life, it is not enough for individuals to transform their personal lives. It also is necessary for social institutions to be involved in a process of transformation so that their

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[165] A. T. Ariyaratne, "Sarvodaya Shramadana's Approach to Peacebuilding," in *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace*, ed. David W. Chappell (Boston, Wisdom Publications, 1999), 70, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 12-13.

[166] Sulak Sivaraksa, "Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends," in *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence,* ed. Kenneth Kraft (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 127, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 17.

actions may produce beneficial fruits for the well-being of humanity and the planet. Likewise, good karma at both the level of the individual and at the social level is required for a better society.[167]

By way of a concrete example, in Cambodia where many innocent people were slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge, the law of karma helped to prevent retaliating violence, and instead helped to promote reconciliation in the post-Khmer Rouge period. The *Dhammapada* writes: "'He reviles me; he injured me; he defeated me; he deprived me.' In those who harbor such grudges, hatred never ceases. . . . In those who do not harbor such grudges, hatred eventually ceases. Hatred does not ever cease in this world by hating, but by not hating; this is an eternal truth. (vv. 3-5)"[168] When people, who lost their beloved ones in the Killing Fields, keep hatred in their mind and seek revenge for these murders, they simply plant another karmic seed that will result in suffering in future. Being mindful of the eternal law that only undesirable suffering follows acts within a corrupt mind,[169] Dith Pran, a photojournalist and survivor of the Killing Fields,[170] asserts that the permeating acknowledgement of the law of karma was the reason why the violence of revenge was not widespread in post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia. As he states, "They don't want to suffer any more. They know that if they try to take revenge they are only going to suffer more, in the future. They don't want to suffer any more."[171] They suffered enough

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[167] King, *Being Benevolence*, 17.

[168] *The Dhammapada*, trans. and comm. Thomas Cleary (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), 8.

[169] "Everything has mind in the lead, has mind in the forefront, is made by mind. If one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, misery will follow, as the wheel of a cart follows the foot of the ox." *The Dhammapada*, 1.

[170] New York Times, March 31, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/31/nyregion/31dith.html.

[171] Dith Pran, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 16.

from hostility, violence, and insanity; and they knew that the best way to stop further violence was just to cease there so as to prevent and not to give cause for another miserable result.

Along with the understanding of karma, the doctrine of *anātman* or *no-self* helps to prevent revenge, to hold fast to a non-adversarial stance, and to practice non-violence which is the defining characteristic of Engaged Buddhism. According to the doctrine, there is no substantial self or no object to blame or hate. As Maha Ghosanada says, "there are only causes and conditions. Therefore, to struggle with others and ourselves is useless. The wise ones know that the root causes and conditions of all conflicts are in the mind."[172] Instead of wasting time and energy hating and criticizing the opponent, it is even wiser to identify the causes of the person's wrong doing so as to eliminate or change those causes.[173] When one can see clearly and distinguish others from their deeds, he or she will take a non-adversarial stance and forgive the opponent.[174]

Application of the Four Noble Truths in Two Levels – the Individual and the Society

The previous section of this chapter has briefly examined how Engaged Buddhists applied the Buddha's teachings - particularly the doctrines of cause and effect, karma, and no-self - to the modern context and used their insights to address problems not only on the individual level but also on the social level. Ariyaratne clearly states that the goal of his

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[172] Maha Ghosananda, *Step by Step: Meditations on Wisdom and Compassion* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1992), 64, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 20.

[173] King, *Being Benevolence*, 20; 75.

[174] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The Voice of Hope: Conversations with Alan Clements* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 135, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 20.

Engaged Buddhism movement focuses on the two levels of liberation. As he says, "In the Buddhist perspective, development is an awakening process. . . . It is a sustained effort to awaken in all aspects, spiritual and ethical as well as social and economic, the individual, the family, the community, rural as well as urban groups, nations and the world community."[175] Since the liberation of individuals relies on the liberation of society in which those individuals live and vice versa, both processes of liberation – of the individual as well as of the society must be undertaken simultaneously; an individual who lives one's daily life in a society – in material destitution, lacking morality as well as spiritual guidance, he or she is hardly able to realize one's own greed, hatred, and ignorance as problems. On the other hand, unless individuals are awakened to these problems, general changes to the social realm such as the alleviation of poverty as well as the establishment of peace and justice will be hard to achieve.[176]

In order to undertake the dual process of liberation, Ariyaratne interpreted the Four Noble Truths in a creative way. Sallie B. King explains how Ariyaratne applied the Four Noble Truths to analyze and solve the problem of rural villages as well as individual villagers in Sri Lanka:

> Thus, for Ariyaratne's purpose in developing Sri Lankan villages toward awakening, Noble Truth 1 states the problem: there is a decadent villages (characterized by conflict, disease, poverty, and so forth); Noble Truth 2 identifies the causes of the village's decadence (egoism, ill-will, disunity, and the like); Noble Truth 3 describes the hope (a village characterized by

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[175] Ariyaratne, "Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends." Address to the Sixth International Conference of the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies, Tacoma, Washington, August 2000 (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 2000), 5, quoted in King, *Being Bonevolence*, 18.

[176] George D. Bond, "A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement," in Queen and King, *Engaged Buddhism,* 129.

> cooperation, constructive activity, and equality); and Noble Truth 4 lays out the way to attain the goal (by means of spiritual development, education, and economic development).[177]

On the application of the teachings of the Buddha, Ariyaratne was concerned about the liberation of both the individual and the society, and at the same time, he approached the teachings with the intention of helping people to be liberated from mundane suffering as well as the spiritual suffering of the human condition. For Ariyaratne, the problem was both poverty and egoism; the cure was social, political, economic reform as well as moral, intellectual, spiritual development. Moreover, whether suffering is mundane or spiritual, or experienced on the individual level or the social level, every form of suffering or problem in the world is interconnected; therefore it is required to work for both individual and social development in integral ways in which all factors can be taken into account.[178]

In Summary

In both the journey of a mendicant sage's personal quest for Enlightenment as well as in the long itinerary of a spiritual master devoted to teaching, suffering plays a crucial role for Śākyamuni Buddha. The unavoidable human condition of suffering motivated a young prince to abandon his princely life and to begin a life as a wandering sage. After attaining complete enlightenment, so that he achieved the ultimate insight into the reality of suffering, his enormous compassion for suffering beings in the universe inspired him to edify all sentient beings so that they could be liberated from suffering. The Buddha understood that all kinds of suffering are caused by the craving for ever-changing desires

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[177] King, *Being Benevolence*, 18-19.

[178] King, *Being Benevolence*, 19.

and the impermanent self. The recognition of the origin of the problem opened the way to a solution. The Buddha suggested that people could cease suffering and liberate themselves from the incessant cycle of rebirths by cultivating ultimate insight into the real condition of the world and the procedure of arising of ignorance, greed, and delusion. He presented Nirvana, the cessation of suffering as the goal and the Eightfold Ways as a way to it. Thus, Buddhist teachings came to emphasize compassion, which is an inherent nature of humanity, as a natural consequence of the proper understanding of suffering and as a significant path in a spiritual journey to Enlightenment.

The teachings of the Buddha shed new light on the endeavor by modern Buddhists' to ameliorate the human condition of suffering in both its individual and social aspects. Engaged Buddhists in Asia argue that the Buddha himself was concerned with the concrete reality of human suffering and worked to alleviate it. They also assert that traditional Buddhist doctrines, such as causality, karma, and no-self, are the rationale for their socio-political involvement that is directed toward developing both the spiritual as well as mundane life of people. Based on the traditional teachings of Buddhism and a contextual analysis of contemporary Sri Lankan society, Ariyaratne undertook an integral movement which aimed at the development of spiritual and socio-economic life both in an individual and in a social level.

It is evident that spiritual and individual liberation has been at the center of religious practices of Buddhism. Nevertheless, as the Engaged Buddhists refute, compassionate concern for the suffering beings and active involvement in activities for their well-being is evident in the life of the Buddha in both spiritual and mundane ways.

Although Buddhists have traditionally walked in the Buddha's footsteps, active advocacy on the part of modern Buddhists and their fervent practice of socially engaged Buddhism, while distinctive, bears some similarities to the tendency manifested among modern Christians and their contemporary interpretations and applications of the teachings of Jesus as examined in Chapter Two. Building on these foundational perspectives, the next chapter of the thesis explores in further detail some of the ways in which modern Christian theologians and Buddhist leaders have developed the teachings of their particular religious traditions so as to address specific issues and concerns affecting modern and postmodern society in contextual and global ways.

Chapter Four

Solidarity, Compassion, Interdependence and Responsibility: Thinking in Action Interreligiously with Those who Suffer Some Noteworthy Contemporary Examples

Over the course of the past fifty years, there has been a global change in social circumstances and religious perspectives. Shifts have occurred with regard to politics, the expansion of economic horizons, the development of social sciences, natural sciences and technology. These shifts have demanded of Christians a response to the dynamics of change and its negative effects theoretically and practically. In a similar fashion, the impact of colonization, along with the rise and fall of various governments and regimes, has posed numerous challenges to Buddhists in Asia at both local and regional levels. Despite the differences in contextual situations and types of problems, the challenges facing Christians and Buddhists alike were ones that affected vast numbers of people - emotionally, psychologically, physically, religiously, socially, culturally, politically and economically. Suffering has abounded individually and collectively.

Conscious of these realities and their respective challenges, Chapter Four presents some noteworthy contemporary Christian theologians and Buddhist leaders who have endeavored to respond to the dynamics of human suffering by theoretically rooting themselves in their particular religious traditions and practically stressing the importance of active engagement with the world on behalf of and with those who suffer. Some selected exemplars include: Johann Baptist Metz (b. 1928) from the context of Europe after Auschwitz, Thich Nhat Hahn (b. 1926) from the context of Vietnam and its deteriorated by

war and division, the Dalai Lama (b. 1935), the religious and political context of Tibetans in exile, Jon Sobrino, S.J. (b. 1938) from the context of El Salvador during and in the aftermath of violent civil war, and finally, Byung-mu Ahn(b. 1922- d. 1996) and Minjung theologians from the context of South Korea who have undergone similar political and economic realities as El Salvador, but in a vastly different cultural and historical reality.

4.1. Johann Baptist Metz: Political Theology and Engaged Christianity

German theologian Johann Baptist Metz[179] recalls that the Holocaust at Auschwitz offered a turning point for his theology and also that of Christian theology. He asks why theology and human beings are apathetic to the innocent sufferings of others: "Why does one see so little (or nothing at all) of this catastrophe in theology - not to mention of humanity's histories of suffering in general?"[180] In answering the question, he points out that there has been no "subject" in the discourse of the history of suffering. There has been only "human-empty"[181] talk about being in theology. For Metz, Auschwitz has awakened people to encounter those who suffered in Auschwitz - face to face as subjects. Encountering the suffering others and realizing human existence's "embodiedness" or "dependence" on others form solidarity, with which one comes to care for the suffering of others without avoiding reality or hiding ourselves in diverse guises.

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[179] Johann Baptist Metz was born on August 5, 1928 in Auerbach, Germany. During the World War II, all of the soldiers of his company were killed by bombing. This personal experience and the communal memory of the Holocaust played a crucial role in the development of his theological reflection on those who suffer. Metz was a student of Karl Rahner; however, he explored a way of theologizing, which claims the primacy of praxis, a political theology – distinctive from his master's transcendent theology.

[180] Johann Baptist Metz, *a Passion for God*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 54.

[181] Metz, *A Passion for God,* 55.

Metz argues that theology must encounter those who suffer as subjects not as objects. Theologians must encounter others' suffering directly and be involved actively with them and in their situation. Metz insists that human beings as subjects - individually and collectively – must not be alienated from one another in the history of suffering. Mindful of the condition of human existence - embodied in history and society - he claims that humanity cannot attain salvation from suffering apart from others or from society. The recognition of humanity's mutual interdependence testifies to the necessity of solidarity among peoples. The following section provides an overview of how Metz developed his assertion of the necessity of active involvement in others' suffering as a result of his personal experiences, theological speculations, and critical observations of modern bourgeois society.

Embodiedness, Subject, and Solidarity

In Metz' anthropocentric view, the intrinsic and essential "embodiedness" is the most important reality of human existence. Metz defines embodiedness as follows:

> To be embodied means that the human spirit does not produce or possess itself absolutely; its self-realization is always enacted within the context of the prior situation in which it finds itself, and which it cannot ever exhaustively grasp intellectually or transcend.[182]

Because of this embodiedness, human beings are dependent on "the past and present decisions of others" in the world. Therefore, self-realization or the salvation of a human being cannot be achieved apart from others or the whole world: "'I' cannot be saved apart from the environing social-historical world (*Mitwelt*) because there is no justifiable method

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[182] James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 84.

whereby one could cleanly separate an 'I' from the socially constituted situation (its embodiedness) that permeates every person's being-in-the-world."[183] The fact that human beings are undeniably related to others leads Metz to assert that the human being's "irreducible element" is primarily "a social-historical reality" within the area of time and space.[184] The emphasis on embodiedness or interdependence among people can put individuals at risk in the name of history or community through "mythologization" or "totalitarianism." Admittedly, Metz tries to solve this problem by reestablishing individuals as "subjects" of history and society. In addition, while admitting at least the tension, which can arise in the clash between a subject and the socio-historical reality embodying the subject, Metz defines subjects as "subjects in diverse relationship with others." As he writes:

> "Subject" here does not mean the isolated individual, the monad, who only subsequently ascertains his or her coexistence with other subjects. Solidaritic-antagonistic and liberative-unsettling experiences with other subjects belong to the constitution of the religious subject right from the start, and here the question about the relation of the individual subject to other subjects seems rather forced, the product of an abstraction after the fact.[185]

In addition, the human subject's embodiedness in history and society is endowed with religious and spiritual meaning in "universal solidarity" not as "the absorption of individual religious subjects" but as "the way that these subjects exist - before God and through God"[186]: "all persons become subjects before God."[187]

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[183] Ashley, *Interruptions*, 85.

[184] Ashley, *Interruptions*, 85.

[185] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and society* trans. by J. Matthew Ashley (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 70.

[186] Metz, *Faith in history and society, 70.*

According to Metz, human beings are dependent on the past and the present decisions of others within the historical horizon. Accordingly, human solidarity must also not be limited to the present. The embodiedness of human beings in history extends the time span of solidarity from the present to the past and into the future. Solidarity as such should be "an openness" to the present that makes people involved in the socio-political praxis of encountering the suffering of the oppressed as real human beings, while keeping in mind future generations as well. In addition, human beings should not only "look forward" to the future but also "look backward" to the past in solidarity with "the dead and the vanquished."[188] Metz asserts that God is the God of the living and the dead. When humanity embraces even the dead as subjects before God, individual subjectivity will be well preserved. As he says:

> A society that has lost interest in their remaining subjects and has in general given up a constitutive community of interest with the dead will become more and more paralyzed in the historical fight for the living to be subjects and fall prey to an evolutionistically tinged apathy. The God of the living and the dead is the God of a universal justice that shatters the standards of our exchange society and saves those who died suffering unjustly, and who, therefore, calls us to become subjects or unconditionally to support others becoming subjects in the face of hateful oppression, and calls us to remain subjects in the face of guilt and in opposition both to the dissolution of individual identity into "the masses" and also to "apathy".[189]

In fact, in the modern world, when a human being is reduced to "a smoothly functioning machine" in the name of "evolution and process," he or she is endangered to become

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[187] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 208.

[188] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 67.

[189] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 80.

increasingly "faceless" and "nameless," that is, "subjectless."[190] Also, the distinction between 'public' and 'private', 'civil' and 'religious' as dictated by the Enlightenment promoted the privatization of the faith, which resulted in the "conceptualization faith as a reality that affects primarily or only our individual relationship with God or our direct, one-on-one relationships with other individuals."[191] As a consequence of this concept and attitude, people are inclined to hesitate to intervene in - or are totally indifferent to - social issues or the suffering of others.

The modern bourgeoisie are typically 'privatized' people. For them, religion becomes a "private matter" and their faith becomes isolated from praxis, where instead of compassion for the suffering of others, apathy increases. As Bonhoeffer critically observed, they "go on singing Gregorian chant during the persecution of the Jews without at the same time feeling the need to cry out in their behalf."[192] In this bourgeois Christianity, subject means the 'bourgeois subject,' which always stands apart from all human subjects before God. The bourgeoisie do not only separate private and public in religious faith, but also apply new rules to social relations, which is the principle of exchange. For them, the most crucial criterion of social or economic relationships is the profit or value which they can expect to get through their affairs. Therefore, they come to justify their indifference to others' suffering by relegating it into the area of private responsibility. In this bourgeois faith and social relationship, it is very difficult to find either a merely social solidarity among human beings or a religious solidarity as equal subjects before God.

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[190] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 80.

[191] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 80.

[192] Johann Baptist Metz, *Love's Strategy: The Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz*, ed. John K. Downey (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 48.

To resist a growing sense of apathy, human beings need to cultivate sympathy for the suffering of others, which extends even to past suffering, the dead, and the forgotten. Here, the 'memory' of suffering in history and 'narrative,' through which memory is transferred across time and space, enables people to remember the suffering of the past in order to pay attention to those suffering in the present time, so as to call forth a heartfelt response that leads to action.

Solidarity and Suffering

In his explanation of solidarity, Metz emphasizes the practical nature of solidarity. He defines solidarity as follows: "As a category in a practical fundamental theology, solidarity is a category of assistance, of supporting and encouraging the subject in the face of that which threatens him or her most acutely and in the face of his or her suffering."[193] As much as the suffering of others is concrete and direct, solidarity with them must be practical in such a way that people are actively involved with those who suffer.

In Metz' discourse on solidarity and suffering, three particular points are manifest. One is that as mentioned above, his speculation on suffering is not confined to the present pain and agony: "there is still pain, still mourning, still melancholy; above all there is still the often wordless suffering from the un-consoled suffering of the past, the suffering of the dead."[194] Metz warns that the history of suffering, which excludes those who died unjustly, the oppressed and nameless subjects, is merely the history of victors in which a universal solidarity is hard to find. Metz' understanding of solidarity and suffering is strongly

[193] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 208.

[194] Metz, *Faith in history and society*, 123.

connected to the sense of universality present in the history of suffering as written by the vanquished.

The second noticeable point is that Metz shifts the direction of the theodicy question. Early in its history, Christianity was transformed quickly from a religion sensitive to 'suffering' to a religion sensitive to 'sin'. As a result, theologians have endeavored to blame human beings for the prevalent suffering in history. In the process, God is excused from any accountability.[195] Metz argues that apologetic theology has suppressed the theodicy question so as to blunt "the sensitivity to the suffering of others" and the "apocalyptic uneasiness of calling God to account in the face of a human suffering." Now, he asserts that Christianity must relive the question of theodicy with people who suffer guiltlessly and who deserve to ask God for answers to the questions about why they are suffering.[196] However, this revival of the theodicy question does not exempt humanity from their responsibility in the history of suffering. With regard to Auschwitz, Metz says: "However, I would not want to overlook the fact that Auschwitz is not only a question of theodicy, but certainly also a very dramatic question of 'anthropodicy' to which attention frequently has been called."[197] In this sense, the Jews at Auschwitz could ask "where is humankind?" as well as "where is God?"[198] In this way, Metz questions the actual practice of solidarity with those who have suffered in human history to both God and humanity.

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[195] Johann Baptist Metz, "On the Way to a Christology after Auschwitz," in *Who Do You say That I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ,* ed. John C. Cavadini and Laura Holt (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 151.

[196] Metz, "On the Way to a Christology after Auschwitz", 151.

[197] Metz, *Faith and the Future*, 45.

[198] Metz, *Faith and the Future*, 45.

The third point, which is actually not original to Metz but is still evident in his understanding of suffering and solidarity, is the acceptance of suffering by the Incarnate Christ in solidarity with humanity.

> Christ entered into the flesh of sin, he became open to suffering; his "integrity" (as the power to give the whole of his being to the obedient love of God) is simultaneously his openness to suffering: his exposure to the fate which came upon him from outside, which is not simply summoned "from within"; a death to which he is not reconciled from the beginning as his own, but is the chalice that he asks to pass from him; temptation that must be answered by obedience, that is, by accepting the contradictory. . . . The "integrity" of Christ does not preserve him from the abyss of human suffering and human paradox, but is precisely the most acute possibility of undergoing to more radically, fully, and without compromise than we "concupiscent" men whose concupiscence is always at the same time also the *a priori* covering over of the radicality of the fact that our existence is open to suffering,"[199]

For Christianity, is the ultimate goal one of removing suffering from the world? Or, does God ultimately intend to relieve the world from all forms of suffering? If it is the case, then shouldn't Christ have eradicated all suffering in the world rather than suffering and dying on the cross himself? Jesus as the incarnate Christ accepted everything as a human being except sin, and entered into the concreteness of humanity. Christ was open to suffering as well as to the contradictory conflict between the will of obedience and the fear of death; and he totally renounced himself to God accepting suffering and God's will. As the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews* writes, Jesus himself really "likewise shared the same things" (Heb 2:14) with humanity both in human suffering and in the fear of death. Thus, Jesus Christ is considered as the exemplar of true solidarity with humanity.

[199] Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 30.

Two Dimensions of Solidarity

Metz confers on solidarity a universal character by expanding its applications to those who have been vanquished. Also, he adds onto solidarity "the mystical-political value": the remembrance of the dead. However, Metz' solidarity is focused on a solidarity among people, not with God, even though the subjects of that solidarity stand before God. Nonetheless, God does not participate in the reality of solidarity just as an observer, but through Jesus Christ, God Himself has a solidaristic relationship with individuals and with the whole of humanity. Metz insists that humanity is allowed to cry out to God and also to ask Him to make excuses for all the sufferings of history. The theological grounding on which people can claim the right to cry out to God is the supposition that a human being can encounter God as subject to subject, along with the fact of our total dependence upon God as origin as well as our end. The incarnation of God into the human condition is a manifestation of this human-God solidarity. Also, the incarnate Christ shows humanity through the example of his life and teachings that the sustenance of this solidarity requires human beings to be selfless in their obedience to God.

Metz in Summary

Suffering often makes people question why it happens, what the suffering means, and whether or not it will continue. For Metz, the philosophical and ontological questions of suffering in and of themselves do not matter much; instead, he stresses that humanity should see suffering as it is - without manipulating it or forgetting it by way of historicized

or scientific objectified explanations of what occurred,[200] or finding consolation by mythologizing or idealizing the context in which those who suffered lived.[201]

Christianity does not place an ultimate goal on the removal of suffering from the world. In fact, suffering can be viewed as a blessing to people in their efforts to follow the will of God, as Jesus Christ did. Christians recognize that suffering has meaning in "the way one responds to it and works with it."[202] While Metz does not deal with personal suffering, as far as others' suffering is concerned, his theological and spiritual ponderings make the claim that humanity is responsible for the sufferings of others, which is derived from the conviction that a human being - as a subject - is totally embodied in human society. Metz' claim of embodiedness extends from the past to the future, through which Metz tries to reestablish human beings as subjects in history without isolating anyone, even the dead. Through the assertion of embodiedness of human existence throughout history, Metz argues that solidarity with suffering others also must be extended to those whose suffering was ignored and to those who may suffer in the future. This awareness of universal solidarity including the past and the future helps people cultivate more active concerns for those who suffer in the present since their suffering is closely connected to the suffering of the past and the future.

Based on the concept of human embodiedness in history and society, Metz calls for the active engagement in social issues in order to relieve the sufferings of others. This idea

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[200] Metz, *A Passion for God,* 64-65.

[201] Metz, *A Passion for God,* 66.

[202] Thomas Ryan, "Catholic and Buddhist monastics focus on suffering ," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 23 (2003), 144.

of embodiedness or dependence is actually one of the core doctrines of Buddhism. In fact, some modern Buddhist leaders urge their followers to be engaged in social concerns more actively, using as a point of reference the doctrine of interdependence. In the section that follows attention is given to the ponderings of Thich Nhat Hahn and the Dalai Lama and the ways in which they have developed their respective claims regarding peace, nonviolence, universal responsibility and necessity of cooperation based on traditional Buddhist teachings.

4.2. Thich Nhat Hahn and Engaged Buddhism (Vietnam – Mahāyāna Buddhism)

In most East Asian Buddhist countries, Buddhist monastics were rarely involved in social actions. Vietnam was no exception - until colonial oppression by a foreign power and the subsequent massive suffering caused by domestic conflicts and wars that affected the lives of Vietnamese, including Buddhist monastics and laypersons. At the time of the crisis, Thich Nhat Hahn,[203] who had suffered the consequences of hatred and violence as a Zen Buddhist master, got involved in a new movement advocating for the reform of Buddhism in the face of significant challenges facing Vietnamese society. He became the most

[203] Thich Nhat Hahn was born in Vietnam in 1926. At the age of sixteen he entered a Zen (*Thien* in Vietnamese) monastery. He was trained in a unique Buddhist tradition which involves both the Theravada Buddhist tradition of South Asia and the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition of China. During the Vietnamese war, he founded the School of Youth for Social Service and the Tiep Hien Order in South Vietnam to teach and practice the path of compassion to others. After the war ended, Nhat Hahn has lived in exile in France, traveling all over the world for conferences and retreats to promote peace in the world as well as helping Vietnamese refugees. Leo D. Lefebure, *The Buddha and the Christ: Explorations in Buddhist and Christian Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 145-47; Sallie B. King, "Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Buddhist Church," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movement in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 321-25; Sister Annabel Laity, "Introduction: If You Want Peace, You Can Have Peace," in *Thich Nhat Hahn: Essential Writings*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 1-16.

important proponent in both theory and practice of Engaged Buddhism[204] in Vietnam and in the world as well throughout his life in exile.

From his early life as a Buddhist monk, Nhat Hahn insisted that Vietnamese Buddhists must be more actively involved in modern society. Already during his course of studies, Nhat Hahn suggested that the Buddhist education institute, where he was educated, needed to add modern subjects such as philosophy, literature and foreign languages to the class curriculum. At the time his suggestion met with failure rather than success. In 1950, Nhat Hahn and Thich Tri Huu founded Ung Quang Temple in Saigon; this later became the foremost center for Buddhist studies and for the Engaged Buddhist movement in South Vietnam. In 1964, Nhat Hahn was actively involved in the establishment of Van Hahn University for Buddhist higher education; and in 1965 he founded the School of Youth for Social Service which functioned as the primary vehicle of Engaged Buddhism during the Vietnamese war helping victims of the war by educating and aiding refugees. Confronting the divisive conflict and destructive war which caused his people enormous suffering, Nhat Hanh tried to teach and apply resources from the Buddhist tradition – namely, wisdom and compassion which are the core of Mahāyāna Buddhism – to the contemporary situation as a dynamic response to pervasive human suffering.

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[204] The term "Engaged Buddhism" is attributed to Thich Nhat Hahn, who published a book by that title in 1963. For more references regarding the emergence of the term "Engaged Buddhism" or "socially engaged Buddhism," see Christopher S. Queen, "Introduction," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movement in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 34, n. 6.

Meditation - Seeing Clearly

In the turmoil of violence and division, Thich Nhat Hahn and his people deeply longed for an end to conflict and the recovery of peace. Nhat Hahn insisted that one needed to *be peace* in order to make peace in society or to help people to be peace. Nhat Hahn asserts that in order to transform society, individual transformation through spiritual practices is required.[205] Drawing upon his own experience during the rescue of Vietnamese boat people, Nhat Hahn underscores the role of meditation and mindfulness practice for the social activities. He writes:

> The suffering we touched doing this kind of work was so deep that if we did not have a reservoir of spiritual strength, we would not have been able to continue. During these days, we practiced sitting and walking meditation, and eating our meals in silence in a very concentrated way. We knew that without this kind of discipline, we would fail in our work. The lives of many people depended on our mindfulness.[206]

Meditation has been key to self-transformation in the Buddhist tradition, and contemporary Engaged Buddhists make use of it as a tool both for self-transformation and for the transformation of society; for Nhat Hahn, the practice of mindfulness is the key meditation practice.[207] Nhat Hahn suggests that living mindfully leads people to peace and joy: "Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment."[208] Unless one attains peace and

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[205] King, *Being Benevolence*, 27.

[206] Thich Nhat Hahn, "Ahimsa: The Path of Harmlessness, in *Buddhist Peacework*, ed. Chappell, 161-62, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 27-28.

[207] King, *Being Benevolence*, 32.

[208] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, ed. Arnold Kotler (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 5. For further information on mindfulness meditation by Thich Nhat Hahn, see this book.

joy within oneself, his or her actions for society would be no avail and for the worse could cause more trouble in the world.[209]

In 1966, Nhat Hahn founded a religious order called The Order of Interbeing (*Tiep hien* in Vietnamese). He provided Fourteen Mindfulness Meditations as the spiritual and social guidelines for all members of the order. In explaining the name of the order, he points out that mindfulness training most of all aims at achieving a deep awareness of reality – both of the mind and the world. Meditation practitioners are to "be aware of the processes of their inner life" and to find the "wellspring of understanding and compassion" that actually belongs to buddhas and bodhisattvas; they are also to be in touch with the world by looking clearly and deeply at the wonders of life as well as the realities of suffering.[210] When one overflows with understanding and compassion, and, at the same time sees the world clearly, then, one acts with firm resolve to alleviate the suffering of others. Therefore, for Nhat Hahn, any effort for peace and justice in any realm – political, religious, or economic – must be rooted in the clear awareness of the reality through meditation.[211]

Interdependence

Mindfulness training helps meditation practitioners to deepen their understanding of the reality of the mind and the world. Then, what is the reality to be understood? Thich Nhat Hahn stresses that people must attain profound insight into the ways in which

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[209] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*, ed. Fred Eppsteiner (Berkeley, CA: Parallex Press, 1998), 5.

[210] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Interbeing*, 3-4.

[211] Lefebure, *The Buddha and the Christ*, 156.

everything in the universe is interconnected. As he writes, "the teachings of interdependence, interbeing, and interpenetration – that the one is the all and the all are the one – are some of the deepest teachings of Buddhism, though they are not easily understood."[212] Traditional Buddhist teachings insist that everything is related to every other thing and everything comes into being through causes and conditions outside of itself in accordance with the doctrine of dependent co-arising.[213] Thich Nhat Hanh explains the dependence of beings using the allegory of paper: "If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating on this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either."[214] Enumerating the further needs for sunshine, the river, the heat, the logger and so forth for a sheet of paper to exist, Nhat Hahn insists that everything is *inter-be* with everything else. Therefore, nothing in the universe can be just oneself alone. Furthermore, Nhat Hahn uses the allegory of paper to awaken in people an awareness of their connectedness to and responsibility for the suffering of others in society.

> Just as a piece of paper is the fruit, the combination of many elements that can be called non-paper elements, the individual is made of non-individual elements. . . . The paper is made of all the non-paper elements to the extent that if we return the non-paper elements to their sources, the cloud to the sky, the sunshine to the sun, the logger to his father, the paper is empty. . . . Empty, in this sense, means that the paper is full of everything, the entire cosmos. . . . In the same way, the individual is made of non-individual elements. How do you expect to leave everything behind when you enter a meditation center? The kind of suffering that you carry in your heart, which

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212 Thich Nhat Hahn, *Thich Nhat Hahn: Essential Writings*, 53.

213 King, *Being Benevolence*, 13.

214 Thich Nhat Hahn, *Thich Nhat Hahn: Essential Writings*, 55.

> is society itself. You bring that with you, you bring society with you. You bring all of us with you.[215]

Every human being in society lives in "the condition of interdependence within society," and every thought, every word, every action, and every deed including sitting for meditation make an impact on others within society.[216] Especially, in the modern world, the interconnectedness of all human life and the universe is even more intensified than in the past. The growth of the global market and the revolutionary progress of transportation and communication technologies have increased the mutual interdependence among peoples in their economy, culture, and politics. In addition, as the modern industrial society requires more resources from nature, the interdependence between human beings and the natural environment becomes more intensified.[217] Thus, human lives are intertwined much more complexly. Mindful of this situation, everyone must do one's best to reduce suffering in the world by taking responsibility for it. Mindful of the fact that modern "individualism" tends to deny "interconnectedness" and keep individuals separate from the societies in which they live, Thich Nhat Hanh warns of the growth of individualism in the West:

> In the West, people have the impression that their body belongs to them, that they can do anything they want to their body. They feel they have the right to live their lives however they please. And the law supports them. This is individualism. But according to the teaching of interbeing, your body is not yours alone. Your body belongs to your ancestors, your parents, and future

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[215] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987), 45-47, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 15.

[216] King, *Being Benevolence*, 13.

[217] King, *Being Benevolence*, 14.

> generations, and it also belongs to society and all other living beings. All of them have come together to bring about the presence of this body.[218]

In the West, individualism is rooted firmly in the concept of "a separate and independent existence of self."[219] Therefore, the idea of 'no-self' and the 'interconnectedness of beings' can work as antidotes to preventing people from chasing after their own interests, and to inspire people to be more concerned about the society to which they belong.

Thich Nhat Hahn lived in a society struggling with antagonism and violence wherein each political side insisted upon its rights and criticized others without any sincere concern for the suffering of innocent people. In this context, based on the Buddhist teachings that there is no separate and independent self and that every life and circumstance is interconnected, Nhat Hahn called people to abandon hatred and to hold fast to a non-adversarial stance toward others since everyone is at the same time a perpetrator and a victim. The poem, "Please Call Me by My True Names," expresses this claim in a beautiful and sentimental way.

> I am a mayfly metamorphosing
> on the surface of the river.
> And I am the bird
> that swoops down to swallow the mayfly.
>
> I am a frog swimming happily
> in the clear water of a pond
> And I am the grass-snake
> that silently feeds itself on the frog
>
> I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,
> my legs as thin as bamboo sticks.

[218] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living* (Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1992), 89, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 91.

[219] King, *Being Benevolence*, 91.

And I am the arms merchant,
selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl,
refugee on the small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean
after being raped by a sea pirate.
And I am the pirate,
my heart not yet capable
of seeing and loving.

. . . .

Please call me by my true name,
so I can wake up
and the door of my heart
could be left open,
the door of compassion. [220]

According to Nhat Hahn, when one understands clearly that the other, who does wrong and harms people, is not a separate self but "a composite" and recognizes that his or her actions are "a result of numberless causes and conditions which have come together,"[221] instead of condemnation and hatred "the door of compassion" will be opened widely and peace and joy will be brought inside and outside.

Thich Nhat Hahn in Summary

The foundation and goal of Thich Nhat Hahn's Engaged Buddhism movement in Vietnam is manifested clearly in the charter of the Order of Interbeing. The charter reads: "The aim of the Order is to actualize Buddhism by studying, experimenting with, and

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[220] Thich Nhat Hanh, "Please Call Me by My True Names," in *Thich Nhat Hanh: Essential Writings*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 80-1: Thich Nhat Hahn wrote this poem in 1978 during the time when he was helping the boat people.

[221] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Thich Nhat Hahn: Essential Writings*, 79.

applying Buddhism in modern life. Understanding can only be attained through direct experience. The results of the practice should be tangible and verifiable."[222]

Nhat Hahn's profound understanding of Buddhist teachings and his deep concern for his contemporaries who suffer - from conflicts rooted in rigid attachment to particular political ideologies or religious doctrines - encouraged him to bring the core teachings of Buddhism to modern society. He believed that the realization of the true reality of the mind and the world which is non-dualistic, interconnected and interdependent would help people to find relief from hatred, to have compassion and to take responsibility for the suffering of others and the world. Throughout his life in Vietnam and in exile, he has taught this and practiced it himself.

4.3. The Dalai Lama and Engaged Buddhism (Tibet – Tibetan Buddhism)

The Dalai Lama and Tibet

Along with Thich Nhat Hahn, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama is the most well-known Buddhist monk in contemporary times. He is regarded as a religious leader of Tibetan Buddhism as well as a political leader of the Tibetan government in exile. Throughout the whole of his life from a young age on, he has devoted himself to learning thoroughly the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as well as the classics of modern Western civilization. He has contributed to the formation of a democratic Tibetan government and to the reform of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Furthermore, his influence as a spiritual master as well as an advocate of peace and love reaches to every corner of the world beyond geographical, political, cultural, and even religious boundaries. This is because his teachings - though

[222] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Interbeing*, 7-8.

rooted deeply in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition – have a universal appeal. Likewise, his character and the way in which he teaches and approaches to people are most engaging. Above of all, his words and calls for peace and non-violence are greatly persuasive, for his convictions have emerged from an undeniable reality of suffering known to himself and to his Tibetan people.

Tibet is a Buddhist country located in the very heart of Asia, with China to the east and India to the west. Tibet has been politically ruled by Dalai Lamas,[223] who are heads of Tibetan Buddhism. The country hidden within the Himalayan Plateau was Buddhist in every realm of the society. Then, in 1949, the Chinese invaded Tibet in order to slowly establish dominion over the country; and in 1959 the overthrow of the Tibetan government by the Chinese army led the Dalai Lama along with 100,000 of his people to flee into exile in India. The Tibetan culture, people, and land underwent enormous destruction and suffering during and following the Chinese takeover of the country. Meanwhile many Tibetan refugees died on the journey into exile or suffered during the struggles involved in their resettlement as refugees in India. To this day, many Tibetans continue to undergo political and religious persecution. Tibetans who fled from their homeland are now scattered all over the world. The Dalai Lama continues to insist upon the independence of Tibet from China and persists in denouncing the policies of the Chinese government which have devastated the culture and destroyed the environment of

[223] Dalai Lama is a titular name for a head of Tibetan Buddhism and the incumbent Dalai Lama is the fourteenth successor to the position.

Tibet while violating the basic human rights of the Tibetan people.[224] Nevertheless, the Dalai Lama exhorts his people not to hate the Chinese, but instead to have tolerance and respect for them. He acknowledges that hatred will not bring about independence for Tibetans. Instead, he asserts that love and compassion are the answer to the problem in the long term. As he says, "Anger, jealousy, impatience and hatred are the real troublemakers; with them problems cannot be solved. . . . When we face problems with compassion, sincerely and with good motivation, it may take longer, but ultimately the solution is better, for there is far less chance of creating a new problem."[225]

The Dalai Lama's idea of non-hatred or non-violence is based upon his deep understanding of the doctrine of interdependence or no-self as well as the emphasis placed on compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Especially, for the Dalai Lama, compassion is considered as the most important principle of his philosophy of social transformation along with universal responsibility, both of which are closely related. Following upon Thich Nhat Hahn's understanding of interbeing or interdependence, the next section provides insight into the traditional understanding of compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in particular the Tibetan tradition, as it examines some of the ways in which the Dalai Lama has drawn upon traditional Buddhist values and doctrines in order to respond to the problems of the modern world.

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[224] José Ignacio Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement," in *Engaged Buddhism*, 295-99.

[225] Dalai Lama, *Kindness, Clarity and Insight*, eds. J. Hopkins and E. Napper (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1984), 62, quoted in Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement," 305.

The Ideal of the Dalai Lama: Bodhisattva

One of the ways in which the Mahāyāna tradition distinguishes itself from the Theravada tradition is found in the concept of the Bodhisattva.[226] In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is a being who has taken a vow to be reborn, even if such rebirth would continue innumerable times, in order to liberate not only oneself but also all sentient beings from suffering and ignorance.[227] The Dalai Lama considers the bodhisattva as his ideal.[228] For him, the most important ethical source is found in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*),[229] a classical Mahāyāna text written by Śāntideva, a seventh century Indian Buddhist scholar. "*The Spirit of Mahāyāna Compassion*"[230] is the basis and motivating force of the Bodhisattva-path, as impressively conveyed in the text:

> May the virtue that I have acquired by doing all this
> relieve every suffering of sentient beings.
> May I be the medicine and the physician for the sick.
> May I be their nurse until their illness never recurs.
> With showers of food and drink may I overcome the afflictions of hunger and thirst.
> May I become food and drink during times of famine.
> May I be an inexhaustible treasury for the destitute.
> With various forms of assistance may I remain in their presence.
> For the sake of accomplishing the welfare of all sentient beings,
> I freely give up my body, enjoyments, and all my virtues of the three times.[231]

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[226] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 393.

[227] Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 123.

[228] Dalai Lama, *My Spiritual Journey: Personal Reflections, Teachings, and Talks*, ed. Sofia Stril-Rever, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 75.

[229] Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement," 302.

[230] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics,* 124.

[231] Bca. III. 6-10, Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life(Bodhicaryāvatāra),* translated by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1997); Bca. is abbreviation of *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

Since compassion is one of the most important principles of enlightenment, in Buddhist spiritual training the development of compassion is emphasized. Then how can one develop compassion? Compassion is the initiating factor of the *bodhicitta*, which is the aspiration to strive for the Buddhahood to liberate and release from suffering not only oneself but also all sentient beings.[232] Therefore, the method of arousing the *bodhicitta* would be compatible with the development of compassion. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, there are two meditations, derived from Indian texts, to help people develop compassion for the suffering of others.[233]

The first meditation begins with producing a feeling of "equanimity" or "equality," "an unbiased attitude" towards all sentient beings. Since each being has infinite births in the past, one can imagine that each of them has a chance of being one's mother at least once, or more, regardless of the kind of realms. Most people tend to think that mothers are enormously kind and self-sacrificing for their children and undergo great sufferings and troubles for their children's sake. When one acknowledges that all sentient beings in the present time were at one time his or her mother and are now suffering from diseases, agonies, and ignorance, wouldn't he or she want to free them from such suffering? In the light of this reflection, great love arises: "May these mother sentient beings have happiness, and its causes."[234] Great compassion is also simultaneously generated: "May they be free from suffering, and its causes."[235] Then, the meditator decides to help others out of

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[232] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics,* 126.

[233] Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 197.

[234] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 197.

[235] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 197.

compassion. However, the meditator soon comes to realize his or her lack of ability to save all sentient beings. To accomplish this task, he or she must become a fully enlightened Buddha. Now, the meditator begins to generate the *bodhicitta*: "the altruistic aspiration to perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.[236]

The second meditation, which refers to *Bodhicaryāvatāra* Chapter Eight, also reflects on the common desire that all beings long to be happy and to avoid sufferings.[237] Śāntideva says:

> One should first earnestly meditate on the equality of oneself and others in this way: "All equally experience suffering and happiness, and I must protect them as I do myself."
>
> I should eliminate the suffering of others because it is suffering, just like my own suffering. I should take care of others because they are sentient beings, just as I am a sentient being.
>
> When happiness is equally dear to others and myself, then what is so special about me that I strive after happiness for myself alone?
>
> When fear and suffering are equally abhorrent to others and myself, then what is so special about me that I protect myself but not others?[238]

The meditator, who admits the importance and preciousness of all others since others are greater in number than one person, comes to consider others as more important than himself or herself; "If the suffering of many disappears because of the suffering of one, then a compassionate person should induce that suffering for his own sake and for the sake of

[236] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 197.

[237] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 198.

[238] Bca. VIII. 90; 94-96.

others."[239] In addition to it, the reflection on the different results of the desires for one's own happiness and the desires for the others' happiness, which are unhappiness and happiness respectively,[240] will provoke the meditator to work for the benefit of others.[241] As a result, he or she would "exchange his or her own happiness for the suffering of others."[242]

In fact, the Dalai Lama has been considered to be the physical manifestation of Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of compassion, by the Tibetan people. Putting aside such a religious status as the Dalai Lama, The Dalai Lama states as a monk that he tries to live his life following the bodhisattva ideal as his personal religious practice.[243]

Universal Responsibility

The core of the Bodhisattva ideal is a selfless commitment to the welfare of others even onto the sacrifice of one's own interest. This resolve can be motivated only by deep insight and conviction regarding the idea of interdependence and no-self. As Thich Nhat Hahn argues, however, individualism based on the idea of self prevents a person from practicing selfless compassion. Along with individualism, human rights, which is highly acknowledged and advocated in the modern world, in the West as well as the East, is viewed with some degree of caution by Buddhists.

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[239] Bca. VIII. 105.

[240] Bca. VIII. 129.

[241] Bca. VIII. 130.

[242] Bca. VIII. 131.

[243] Dalai Lama, *My Spiritual Journey*, 79.

Some Buddhist scholars refute the idea that human rights are compatible with Buddhism. They contend that the concept of human rights is rooted in individualism which is in direct opposition to the doctrine of no-self. Also they argue that the demand of human rights necessarily requires an adversarial stance with respect to conflict which even the Engaged Buddhists denounce.[244] On the other hand, Engaged Buddhists advocate human rights in accordance with Buddhist teachings. They hold up their arguments by relying on the Buddhist emphasis which is placed upon human equality, the innate capacity for enlightenment, and precious opportunity of human birth which is considered the highest potential form of life to achieve the Buddhahood. In addition, the ethical norm of nonviolence and compassion support human rights. Thus, Engaged Buddhists consent to and advocate the idea of human rights. However, both traditional Buddhist ethics and contemporary Engaged Buddhist ethics stress duties or responsibility over human rights.[245]

The Dalai Lama also advocates and calls for protecting and promoting human rights. Acknowledging the common human desire to pursue happiness and avoid suffering, he asserts that it is an ethical duty not to interfere with other's happiness. Beyond the duty to respect other's rights, the Dalai Lama urges people to move forward: to do good to others. He takes it as what we *should do*, or as "universal responsibility."[246] The Dalai Lama states that respecting human rights is not enough to save the world; in addition to respect,

[244] King, *Being Benevolence*, 133.

[245] King, *Being Benevolence*, 132.

[246] King, *Being Benevolence*, 159.

compassion or universal responsibility is required to improve the world:[247] "universal responsibility is the real key to human survival."[248] Embracing both human rights and responsibility, Engaged Buddhists summarize the Buddhist path referred to as *Dhammapada,* as one of the most important canons:

> Refraining from doing evil
> Doing only good
> Purifying the mind
> This is the Heart of Buddhism.[249]

Therefore, for Engaged Buddhists, action on behalf of others is an "imperative."[250] In this regard, the Dalai Lama urges people to reorient their heart and mind from self toward others.[251] Likewise, modern Engaged Buddhists insist that one must put oneself second and others first. Instead of making a claim for one's right to happiness, one should assume one's responsibility for the care of others, in particular, those who are helpless, unprotected, and oppressed.[252] Also, the relationship between individuals and society requires mutual responsibility. As social animals, an individual's responsibility for society corresponds to human nature.[253] On the other hand, the rationale for society's responsibility toward

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[247] King, *Being Benevolence*, 161.

[248] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People: A Conversation with the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics, and Life as It Could Be* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 141.

[249] *Dhammapada* 183, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 82; A Mahāyāna variant of the verses is as follows: "avoid evil, cultivate good, save all beings," in king, *Being Benevolence*, 82.

[250] King, *Being Benevolence*, 82.

[251] King *Being Benevolence*, 94.

[252] King, *Being Benevolence*, 95.

[253] King, *Being Benevolence*, 93.

individuals is compassion for the suffering of others.[254] Therefore one should have both responsibility and compassion for others.

Whatever is happening in the world is not irrelevant to anyone in the world. Before blaming someone else for the miseries and sufferings in the world, one should feel co-responsible for the world as Thich Nhat Hanh comments in his poem: "If you take a gun and shoot the pirate, you shoot all of us, because all of us are to some extent responsible for this state of affairs."[255]

Addressing the imminent global scale of problems, the Dalai Lama asserts that universal responsibility is inevitable in a world that is more and more globalized so that interdependence among individuals and nations is increasing.[256] Every act of individuals, societies, and nations affects other entities in the world, which are greatly interdependent on others. The Dalai Lama urges the world to act with responsibility out of compassion for others. He believes that human nature is basically compassionate.[257] He also emphasizes that the conduct of compassion in daily life is much more important than discussions on what compassion is.[258] For this reason, the Dalai Lama urges business people, individual nations, and even the field of modern science to practice altruism out of compassion and not for the sake of its own benefits. He explains that it will be the most beneficial way for everyone in the long run. When the rich and developed countries begin to help the

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[254] King, *Being Benevolence*, 95.

[255] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace,* 66, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 100.

[256] Bharati Puri, *Engaged Buddhism: The Dalai Lama's Worldview* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55-73.

[257] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People*, 26.

[258] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People*, 145.

developing countries stabilize themselves economically and politically, large multinational corporations will also begin to stop exploiting the developing countries' cheap labor and resources. Though this might seem to forfeit their benefits, it will be the way in which the whole of humanity will prosper in the long run.[259] In addition, the Dalai Lama stresses that the motivation behind advances in technologies and sciences must be to learn about more about reality and to improve the quality of life. As the result of imprudent development of technologies, humanity has confronted serious environmental damage as well as ethical confusion on the issue of life.[260] Most of all, the Dalai Lama does not exempt the world religions from responsibility:

> The purpose of religion is not to build beautiful churches or temples but to cultivate positive human qualities such as tolerance, generosity, and love. Every world religion, no matter what its philosophical view, is founded first and foremost on the precept that we must reduce our selfishness and serve others. Unfortunately, sometimes religion itself causes more quarrels than it solves. Practitioners of different faiths should realize that each religious tradition has immense intrinsic value and the means for providing mental and spiritual health.[261]

The Dalai Lama points out that the sense of responsibility must be derived from compassion: "It is clear to me that an authentic sense of responsibility can emerge only if we develop compassion. Only a spontaneous feeling of empathy toward others can motivate us to act on their behalf."[262] Thus, an increase of compassion and awareness of the interdependence of the world will strengthen the sense of responsibility among people,

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[259] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People*, 146.

[260] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People*, 146.

[261] Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, *Imagine All the People*, 146-47.

[262] Dalai Lama, *My Spiritual Journey: Personal Reflections, Teachings, and Talks*, ed. Sofia Stril-Rever, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 114.

which will encourage people to cooperate for the welfare of humanity beyond their own self-interest.

The Dalai Lama in Summary

When the historical crisis of China's invasion overwhelmed his country, the people of Tibet urged the Dalai Lama to get socially and politically engaged with regard to the liberation of Tibet and the development of the lives of Tibetans. Facing divisive conflicts and aggressive wars causing enormous suffering not only to his Tibetan people, but also to innumerous people throughout the modern world, the Dalai Lama chose to confront the challenges, not with violence and hatred, but with a spirit of non-violence and compassion that is rooted deeply in Buddhist teachings. The Dalai Lama drew philosophical and ethical foundations for his claims and activities from the basic Buddhist doctrines and ethics; dependent arising, interconnectedness, no-self, non-violence, equality, enlightenability, compassion, and most of all, the Buddhist imperative to act for the welfare of all beings. Every single act or event in the world affects others in a certain way; therefore, one has responsibility for what is happening in the world whether it occurs near or far. Based on this understanding and out of deep compassion springing up in the encounter with the suffering of others, the Dalia Lama continues to urge the people around the world to cooperate for peace and justice as well as for the welfare of the impoverished, oppressed and alienated people throughout the world.

4.4. Jon Sobrino and the Crucified People of History

In Chapter Two, the dynamics of human suffering as depicted in the Bible was explored. Forms of human life have changed significantly over time; however, humanity still confronts the reality of suffering, and the fundamental forms of suffering, which - as Jon Sobrino, S.J. observes - are present in every era. Sobrino categorizes suffering as follows:

> One's own suffering (centered on one's self), the suffering of others, the suffering of individuals (of the self or its equivalent, a close friend), collective suffering (of peoples, races, sexes, castes . . .), spiritual suffering (doubts, guilt, failure, meaninglessness), corporeal-social suffering (serious problems in directing one's life or basic threats to life), historical suffering (the pain that occurs within historical process), metaphysical suffering (the absurdity of history).[263]

Among these diverse types of suffering, Sobrino addresses historical suffering as the fundamental form of suffering for his theological enterprise[264] because, as he states, "Historical suffering is massive, affecting the majority of humanity, making it practically impossible for people to direct their own lives, causing a poverty that brings death slowly and violently."[265] So, what is the reality of historical suffering in the world?

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[263] Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as *Intellectus Amoris*," trans. José Pedrozo and Paul F. Knitter, in *Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective*, ed. Paul F. Knitter (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 155.

[264] As he develops his theological enterprise on suffering, Sobrino begins by determining the "fundamental form of suffering." Sobrino states: "Theologies react to suffering by seeking to determine the fundamental form of suffering." Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World," 155.

[265] Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World," 156.

Into the Reality of the Poor

The most obvious historical suffering is widespread poverty in the world. Almost half the world's population - over 3 billion people - live under the poverty line on less than $2.5 a day; 22,000 children die each day due to poverty; about 72 million children of primary school age in the world do not benefit from formal education; an estimated 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, with 3 million deaths in 2004, mostly in Africa. While the majority of humanity suffers from poverty and afflictions pertinent to poverty, a few rich countries and a small portion of the world's population possess the vast portion of the world's wealth. The richest 20 percent of the world's population accounts for three quarters of the world's income, on the contrary the poorest 40 percent accounts for only 5 percent of the global income. More surprisingly, just 497 people (approximately 0.000008 % of the world's population) possess the wealth of over 7 percent of the world's wealth in 2006.[266] As being evident in the statistics, the poor people consist of the majority of humanity. Nevertheless, they are considered as "nonpersons."[267] Latin American liberation theologians bring up these nonpersons and their situations on the central stage in their theological reflections on the reality of the world.[268]

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[266] See http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats (accessed May 10, 2011).

[267] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation,* trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1988), xxi.

[268] The poor have existed in human society at all the times but they have been actually absent, meaning of little or no significance in society and in the church. However, liberation theologians, acknowledging the overwhelming reality of the suffering of the poor and reminding themselves that the poor and oppressed people were the primary concern of Christ's mission and a sort of sacrament of presence of Christ, make a preferential option for the poor in their theological reflection. Gustavo Gutiérrez describes the situation as the "irruption of the poor." See Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," trans. Robert R. Barr, in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll,

In the 1960s and 1970s when theologians in Latin America began to speculate on the reality of their continent, the majority of the Latin Americans were suffering from material poverty as well as social, political, economic and cultural injustice, which prevailed across the continent. In this context, liberation theology emerged as "an interpretation of Christian faith out of the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor, a critique of society and the ideologies sustaining it, and a critique of the activity of the church and of Christians from the angle of the poor."[269] As clearly shown in the definition of liberation theology, the poor, or the poverty that they suffer, is the main issue for theologians to investigate and answer for. Here, poverty is not limited to the socio-economic aspect. Rather, it implies all the dehumanizing conditions which hinder people from living with human dignity. According to Gustavo Gutiérrez,

> Poverty means death: lack of food and housing, the inability to attend properly to health and education needs, the exploitation of workers, permanent unemployment, the lack of respect for one's human dignity, and unjust limitations placed on personal freedom in the areas of self-expression, politics, and religion. Poverty is a situation that destroys peoples, families, and individuals; Medellín and Puebla called it "institutionalized violence."[270]

The *locus theologicus* is the place of the poor,[271] and Jon Sobrino claims that the Gospel message as a whole will be illuminated with new meanings when Christians try to look into

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NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 22-37; Jon Sobrino, *Jesus The Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 11-22.

[269] Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co LTD, 1987), 6.

[270] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxi.

[271] Dean Brackley, "Theology and Solidarity," in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 8-10.

the world and the Gospel "from below,"[272] from the "perspective of the poor."[273] The critical questions for the unjust situation of the society and the role of the church was raised by the priests, sisters and lay people who served the poor, marginalized, and oppressed people in deprived rural parishes and in wretched urban slums.[274]

Honesty and Fidelity to Reality

The slums are the shadowed areas of the city's skyline, a soaring landscape, that reveal the acute reality of human poverty. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, urban slums are rapidly expanding due to urban immigration and rapid population growth in these regions, and the slum dwellers live in inhumane conditions: they lack decent shelters, adequate sanitation, clean water supply, education, and health services; they also confront long-time unemployment, domestic violence, and social marginalization. In 2005, approximately 1 billion people lived in slum conditions.[275] Provocative as it may be, there exists slum tourism, or Slumdog tourism,[276] which arranges tours of city slums for rich tourists curious about the real life of the poor. Kennedy Odede, a Kenyan journalist, describes his own experience of observing the slum tour in his hometown, Kibera, a Nairobi slum:

> A former schoolmate of mine started a tourism business. I once saw him take a group into the home of a young woman giving birth. They stood and

[272] Brackley, "Theology and Solidarity," 5.

[273] Brackley, "Theology and Solidarity," 9.

[274] Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, 13-15.

[275] United Nations, "The millennium Development Goals Report 2007," http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf (accessed May 11, 2011).

[276] It is named after a British film entitled with "Slumdog Millionaire" which tells the life story of a slum boy in Mumbai, India. The film was produced in 2008.

> watched as she screamed. Eventually the group continued on its tour, cameras loaded with images of a woman in pain. What did they learn? And did the woman gain anything from the experience?[277]

Many people, who are rich or at least not poor, are *blind* to the reality of poverty and the suffering of the poor. They make themselves blind by ignoring it, covering it up, or distorting it, because it terrifies them. It makes them uncomfortable and challenges them to do something to solve the problematic situation. They are also blind inasmuch as while they may see something, they don't actually see the reality. Reflecting on the experience of 'blind' slum tourists, Odede observes that, "People think they've really seen something - and then go back to their lives and leave me, my family and my community right where we were before."[278] This blindness, indifference or forgetfulness is "truly a scandal and a shame to humanity."[279] Sobrino suggests three reasons for the scandalous attitude toward the uncomfortable truth:

> One reason is subjective: human beings are severely lacking in the will to truth, and therefore in concern for "honesty toward reality." On the objective side, the global information system does not fully communicate the truth of reality and its tragedies.[280] Worse yet, it does not provide an adequate

[277] Kennedy Odede, "Slumdog Tourism," The Opinion Pages, *The New York Times*, August 9, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/10/opinion/10odede.html (accessed May 9, 2011).

[278] Kennedy Odede, "Slumdog Tourism."

[279] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 12.

[280] The advance of communication technology has enabled people to access the world in real time. People watch wars break out the other side of the world, and news media delivers live the misery of the man-made catastrophe. However, people see only what is shown to them, and someone or some invisible social system decides what they will see. For example, the Bush administration moved the caskets of dead soldiers and injured soldiers late at night to avoid the media pursuit. See "The Hidden Cost of Bush's War," Middle East, *The Independent* (London), November 14, 2003, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-hidden-cost-of-bushs-war-735663.html (accessed May 11, 2011).

framework in which to interpret what is really happening and why; rather, the frameworks it often lead to misinterpretation and facilitate deception.[281]

In order to overcome the personal and social obstacles which push people to ignore or forget the reality of human suffering, Sobrino insists that people must look directly at reality with honesty. As a way of *looking at reality*, Sobrino urges people to *hear the word of reality*. As God participated in history in response to "the word of reality" which was delivered by the "cry of suffering human beings" (Ex 3:7), humanity should seek out and listen to the word of reality.[282] Listening and accepting the reality spoken throughout history is the way of recognizing the "signs of the times" which Vatican II emphasized.[283] In this regard, Ignacio Ellacuría[284] calls on the intelligent to be a voice for the "voiceless" and to "take flesh intellectually among the poor."[285]

In the honest encounter with reality, people cannot help but realize that the distress of the poor and oppressed people as well as the suffering of the afflicted people by natural catastrophes are evident all over the world, in particular, in the poor and underdeveloped countries. There are always many people who are affected by the suffering of others, yet,

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[281] Sobrino, *Where is God?,* 13.

[282] Sobrino, *Where is God?,* 43. Not only listening to the cry of others, everyone should be a voice of God and voiceless people as Monsignor Romero insists, "every one of you would have to become a microphone for God, every one of you would have to become a messenger, a prophet." (Homily of July 8, 1979), quoted in Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 10, n. 9.

[283] Sobrino, *Where is God?,* 44.

[284] Ignacio Ellacuría was murdered with five other Jesuits and two women by the soldiers of the Salvadorian military on November 16, 1989 at the University of Central America residence in San Salvador, El Salvador. Jon Sobrino states that he is indebted to Ellacuría for his thoughts: about the necessity of honesty toward reality and the will to the truth; the poor and oppressed people as the crucified people and the need to exercise mercy on behalf of them. See Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 11. 49-57, and Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 47.

[285] "Discurso de graduación en la Universidad de Santa Clara, 12 de Julio de 1982," quoted in Sobrino, *Where is God?,* 45.

not everyone is. There are people who have a sort of "existential immunization against the victims' suffering."[286] Sobrino identifies a variety of reasons for this indifference to the suffering of others: individual limitations and malice, partly justified feelings of hostility and even a desire for revenge, as well as a general ignorance and even contempt toward the fate of people considered inferior.[287] Those people would find it difficult to acknowledge the truth of Saint Paul's statement, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor 12:26) precisely because they do not have a sense of the community of humanity.

Sobrino asserts that the ultimate response to the suffering of others is "compassion for them, co-suffering with them, living and pouring out life for an end to their suffering."[288] If humanity can be compassionate to others' pain, then, why are so many people indifferent to others' suffering? Sobrino contends that those who are not moved by the suffering of others are not moved because they have not yet really been confronted with the truth of reality with honesty. Moreover, when people come to face the reality courageously, they still need the spirit to maintain their honesty regardless of what the result might be. Sobrino calls this "fidelity to the real."[289] Those, who are empowered to remain faithful - no matter where the initial honesty with reality carries them - will allow themselves to be "carried forward by the real."[290] When people encounter suffering honestly without any

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[286] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 109.

[287] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 109.

[288] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 109.

[289] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology,* eds. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 683-85, quoted in J. Matthew Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor" in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 66.

[290] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 685f, quoted in Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor," 67.

hindrance of emotional prejudice, moral judgment, and the veil of diverse ideologies, they cannot help but be moved by compassion. In addition, fidelity to reality leads people to engage the reality of suffering and guided by compassion to remove it.[291] Thus, the honest encountering of the reality shall result in "personal transformation, or conversion."[292]

Jon Sobrino himself admits that he, like slum tourists, had been blind to the reality of El Salvador, but his face to face encounters with the truly poor and the victims of the world brought about in him an "awakening from the sleep of inhumanity." Once awakened, Sobrino could see the sufferings of people not as a result of individuals' sin but of the whole of humanity's sin.[293] He points out that the suffering which afflicts the impoverished, socio-politically marginalized, and vulnerable people is beyond their control. He also attributes the cause of suffering to injustice penetrating regional and international levels that compound even the ordinary sufferings of life.[294] Thus, Sobrino concerns himself as much with the sufferings that are socio-political and economic in nature as the personal sufferings of individuals who are the poor and oppressed.[295] Referring to the crucified Christ and implying the shared theological ideas and concerns of the suffering people with Ignacio Ellacuría,[296] Sobrino calls the afflicted peoples whether by natural disasters or

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[291] Ashley, "The Mystery of God and Compassion for the Poor," 66; also see Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 36-37.

[292] Brackely, "Theology and Solidarity," 6.

[293] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 1-11.

[294] Paul G. Growley, "A Note on *Taking the Crucified Down from the Cross,*" in *Hope & Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 16.

[295] Growley, "A Note on *Taking the Crucified Down from the Cross,*"16.

[296] Growley, "A Note on *Taking the Crucified Down from the Cross,*" 18-20; see also Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 49-57.

"man-made"[297] institutionalized violence, "the crucified peoples" and "Yahweh's suffering servant today."[298] First of all, the claim of "the crucified peoples" has a Christian point of view. God manifested himself in Christ and the crucified people are "the actualization of Christ crucified, the true servant of Yahweh."[299] Naming "the crucified peoples," Sobrino implies that their sufferings have been caused by powers beyond their control in history. He contends:

> It is useful and necessary language at the historical-ethical level because the *cross* expresses a type of death actively inflicted. To die crucified does not mean simply to die, but to be put to death; it means that there are victims and there are executioners. . . . The crucified peoples do not fall from heaven. . . . However much people try to soften the fact, the truth is that the Latin American peoples' cross has been inflicted on them by the various empires that have taken power over the continent: the Spanish and Portuguese yesterday, the U.S. and its allies today; whether by armies or economic systems, or the imposition of cultures and religious views, in connivance with the local powers.[300]

Paradoxically, Sobrino insists that the crucified peoples, especially in the so-called Third World, have the capacity to bring light and salvation to the West or to the so-called First World: The crucified peoples offer great love as shown by Latin America's innumerable martyrs; they are ready to forgive their oppressors; they offer a powerful example of how

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[297] Chukwuemeka Emmanuel Umeh, an African Liberation Theologian, also empathizes that the situation of suffering, oppression, and exploitation prevalent in Africa are not "God's ordinance but man-made." Chukwuemeka Emmanuel Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2008), 91.

[298] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 49-57; Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 254-72.

[299] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 51.

[300] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 50.

to be church and how to be Christians so as to humanize the world; finally, they generate solidarity.[301]

Solidarity with the Crucified Peoples

The unveiling of the real condition of the poor has served to force individuals and groups to question the social dimension of their responsibility: every human being's life depends partly on the death or misery of others. Also, the reality of the poor challenges Christians to meditate on God's question to Cain, "Where is your brother?" (Gen 4:9) and "What have you done with this world?"[302] Answering the questions and taking "co-responsibility" as "an ethical demand" in response to the pain and suffering of the poor and oppressed peoples, one takes on solidarity with the crucified peoples and takes appropriate actions to alleviate and remove others' suffering.[303] Sobrino describes action in solidarity as "bearing one another's burdens."[304] By the term, "one another's burdens," Sobrino asserts that solidarity is not one directional but a mutual response:

> Solidarity is *helping one another*, those who give and those who receive. This means several things. Giving must be judged not only by the donor's criteria, but with the recipients in mind. Above all, the givers must be open to receiving - the victims' will to live, their dignity, creativity, and hope, and often their forgiveness - with the joy that comes from belonging to one human family.[305]

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[301] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 54-57.

[302] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 18; see also *The Principle of Mercy*, 150-51.

[303] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 18; see also *The Principle of Mercy*, 150-51.

[304] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 18.

[305] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 19.

Solidarity means not only giving but "self-giving," letting oneself be affected by the suffering of others, sharing their pain and tragedy, and building "the fabric of fraternal human relationships."[306] From the Christian point of view, when one begins to take the crucified peoples down from cross, he or she engages in "the praxis of resurrection."[307]

Taking on Solidarity in the Interdependent World

Sobrino argues that the honest encounter with the reality of suffering would motivate people to give themselves in freeing the sufferers from their burdens. Along with the honest encounter, the realization of how much the sufferings in the world, which are invisible and seemingly irrelevant to someone and nations, can be closely related to them, will stir people to feel responsible for the sufferings of afflicted people and "evoke solidarity"[308] with them.[309]

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[306] Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 18-20.

[307] Crowley, "A Note on *Taking the Crucified Down from the Cross,*" 21.

[308] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socials* (December 30, 1987). http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html (accessed January 20, 2011).

[309] Jon Sobrino discusses how the US government is explicitly and implicitly involved in many wars and violations of human rights in the world. As an example of the indirect relation of the US to another nation's tragedy, Sobrino offers an account of the December 11, 1981 massacre in El Mozote, El Salvador through which a thousand civilians were murdered by the Salvadorian military. Sobrino points out that those merciless soldiers were trained by the US military. In the economic arena, the case of Nike and child labor can evoke an awareness of the interdependence of human rights violations and injustice in the world. Nike used child workers receiving low wages to produce soccer balls, clothing and so forth in the developing countries in Asia and made it possible for people in developed countries to buy those products at considerable profit to Nike. There arises a debate on the issue of child labor since it could benefit poor people who otherwise may remain in a more destitute situation. However, the whole community of humanity is not exempt from such responsibility even for the destitute situation. See Sobrino, *Where is God?*, viii-xiv; and Steve Boggan, "Nike Admits to Mistakes over Child Labour," *The Independent* (London), October 20, 2001, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/nike-admits-to-mistakes-over-child-labour-631975.html.

Considering the fact that the vast majority of the world's population live in inhuman conditions, the suffering of human beings is an unavoidable reality. The pain and suffering of people is caused by social, environmental, economic, cultural, and political forms of oppression in local communities, and by greed and injustice as well on the global level. Although the natural response to the suffering of others must be to engage the reality of the suffering guided by compassion, some people are likely to avoid the uncomfortable reality or to manipulate it. Against this dehumanizing tendency of humanity, Jon Sobrino insists that people should look at the reality with honesty and allow themselves to be carried forward no matter where the reality leads them which would result in self-giving in solidarity with the crucified peoples.

Jon Sobrino in Summary

All sorts of sufferings are pervasive in human society. Despite this fact, many people are inclined to be evasive or blind to the undeniable reality. Sobrino attributes this to the lack of honest encounters with the reality, which can make people feel unsettled or guilty. And so, people do what they can to avoid or manipulate reality in such a way that they do not need to be responsible for it. Sobrino first urges Christians to encounter the uncomfortable reality and be faithful to the reality since God manifested himself in the crucified Christ as well as the crucified peoples who are the poor, oppressed, and suffering peoples. In this interdependent world, nobody is irrelevant to the sufferings of others; so, Sobrino insists that all humanity must strive to be compassionate and to be in solidarity with those who suffer. Most of all, Sobrino emphasizes praxis as a faithful response to the challenging reality.

As Sobrino was discovering the suffering Christ in the Salvadoran people suffering from social, political, and economic injustices in Latin America, on the other side of the world, Korean Christian theologians also were striving to find the meaning of suffering in the midst of their people through Bible study and reflection on their particular historical, cultural, and social context. Mindful of the insights provided by the theological reflections of Jon Sobrino, the following section turns attention to Korean Minjung theologians and the ways in which they addressed the reality of suffering Koreans and responded to such suffering within their own context.

4.5. Minjung Theologians and the Minjung of History

By comparison with Buddhism, the introduction of Christianity into Asia, specifically, in Korea is a recent event. Nevertheless, Christian teachings and activities have challenged the traditional values and social structures in dynamic ways, whether as a consequence of religious persecutions or through the introduction of social reform movements. Most of all, the active involvement of Christians in the social arena was distinctive from the traditional religions in Korea.

One of the most important protagonists of Minjung Theology, Byung-Mu Ahn (1922-1996) was greatly interested in the discovery and reestablishment of the "historical" Jesus; however, he eventually admitted that it was impossible to reconstruct a purely historical Jesus.[310] Instead, in his exegetic studies of the Gospel of Mark,[311] Ahn discovered the

[310] Volker Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion: Korean Minjung Theology Revisited* (Boston: Brill Academic Publisher, 2010), 73, http://site.ebrary.com.proxy.bc.edu/lib/bostoncollege/docDetail.action?docID=10419784 (accessed July 10,2011).

intimate relationship between Jesus and the people who suffered in the politically, economically, and religiously oppressive circumstances of his time. In Ahn's exegetical argumentation, he pointed out that Mark distinctively used the word *ochlos* to refer to the people. On the other hand the term *laos* was mostly used for the people in the Old Testament in which the word consistently indicated the people of Israel as the people of God. Ahn claimed that those *ochlos* corresponded to the minjung in Korea; and based on his exploration of the *ochlos* in the Gospel of Mark, he defined the minjung as people belonging to "a class of society which has been marginalized and abandoned."[312] Ahn also asserted that Jesus always sided with the *ochlos* without rebuking them for their sins and that God of love would stand along with the minjung completely and unconditionally.

Another distinctive point of Ahn's studies on the Gospel of Mark is the Jesus event. Ahn argues that unlike Paul,[313] Mark concentrated on the traditions of the historical Jesus; he focused on the life of Jesus before the Resurrection. He contended that Mark belonged to the narrative tradition of the Jesus event rather than the kerygmatic tradition; the former was transmitted by the institutionalized Church and the latter by the minjung respectively.[314] The narrative of the concrete suffering of Jesus on the cross, his being abandoned by God was transmitted by the minjung as "a rumor."[315] The minjung identified

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[311] Byung-Mu Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark" in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. CTC-CCA (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 138-52.

[312] Byung-Mu Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," 150.

[313] Since the Epistles of Paul were written ten years before the Gospel of Mark and put a primary focus on the kerygma, Ahn compares Paul and Mark to distinguish Mark's intention from that of Paul. See Byung-Mu Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," 139-40 and Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 72-73.

[314] Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 71-72.

[315] Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 71.

themselves with the suffering of Jesus and derived hope from his resurrection;[316] and Ahn interpreted hermeneutically the relationship between the event of Jesus and the minjung of the early Christian history in such a way that the minjung of modern times could recognize their own suffering in the Passion of Jesus as Minjung theologians encountered the suffering Christ in the suffering minjung.[317] As Ahn says, for Minjung theologians the life and the abode of the minjung is where they see Christ and do theology:

> In the beginning we did not want to start a new theological school; we wanted to live. But then life offered us a different perspective. . . . I have always looked at things from above and now I regard them from below. I have always handled things intellectually, but now I see everything from the perspective of the lives of the minjung, from the perspective of those who suffer.[318]

Minjung Theology from the Korean Context

For Ahn, the development of a new theology was never intended; instead, the emergence of a new Korean contextual theology was the result of Korean Christians' theoretical and practical struggle for democracy and human rights as well as economic justice throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[319] Therefore, it is necessary to understand by way of background the political and economic context of Korea in the 1960s in order to understand the emergence of Minjung theology.

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[316] Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 72.

[317] Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 74.

[318] Byung-Mu Ahn, interview by Volker Küster, Seoul, South Korea, July 20, 1988, quoted in Küster, *Protestant Theology of Passion*, 73-74.

[319] James H. Cone also says, "[Minjung theology] is human reflection arising out of the church's attempt to understand the meaning of God for a particular time and context." James H. Cone, preface to *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. CTC-CCA (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), x.

Amid the turmoil of the powerful expansion of Western countries and Japan on the Asian continent, Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, and remained so until the end of World War II in August 1945. The joy of independence from Japanese colonization was soon interrupted by the division of Korea into North and South. In 1945, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed on the division of Korea under the pretext of disarming the Japanese troops in Korea. In 1950, the Korean War broke out between North and South Korea. This war was the most traumatic experience in Korean history and left indelible scars in the heart of the Korean people, and politically, deep distrust between the two Koreas. Since 1953, when the three-year Korean War ended, the South Korean government persisted in its anti-communist policy, which continued to be manipulated as a method and justification for banning basic human freedoms and democratic rights. This was called "National Security Ideology."[320] The first president, Rhee, resigned as a result of large scale demonstrations in April 1960, led by students against corruption and fraudulent practices during the elections. For a short time a new government was established. Unfortunately, the new government could not control the political crisis, so the army, led by Park Jeong-Hee staged a coup d'etat on May 16, 1961, and he continued his powerful regime until his assassination in 1979. Park initiated and fostered economic development in South Korea at the expense of factory workers as well as farmers; at the same time, he justified the denial human rights and freedom in the interest of defending and maintaining National Security.

[320] Peter Schűttke-Scherle, *From Contextual to Ecumenical Theology? : A Dialogue between Minjung Theology and 'Theology after Auschwitz'*(Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang GMbH, 1989), 9.

Minjung as Subjects of the History of Korea

In this political and socio-economic context, some Korean Protestant missionaries began to live among factory workers in order to evangelize them during the early 1960s. Soon after initiating their missionary work, the industrial missionaries realized that they were far too distant from the situations and experiences of workers, which hindered the missionaries from communicating the Gospel to the workers. After examining the situation, the missionaries decided to work as laborers in factories, sharing the common experiences of fatigue, pain and anger.[321] The "somatic incarnational experience"[322] of the industrial missionaries helped them to discover the "face"[323] of Korean factory workers, and later of farmers and the other oppressed people. This concrete experience of sharing life with suffering people opened up their eyes to find "the body of Jesus Christ among the workers themselves."[324] Thus, the Korean indigenous theology, Minjung Theology,[325] emerged out of the realization of the concrete reality of the Korean people. Working and living with people gave the missionaries and theologians a chance to discover their culture, and to listen to their stories as well as to understand their internal and external sufferings. Kwang-Sun David Suh says:

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[321] Kwang-sun Daivd Suh, "Korean Theological Development in the 1970s," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. CTC-CCA (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 38.

[322] Kwang-sun David Suh, "Korean Theological Development in the 1970s," 38.

[323] Kwang-sun David Suh, "Korean Theological Development in the 1970s," 38.

[324] Kwang-sun David Suh, "Korean Theological Development in the 1970s," 38.

[325] Minjung Theology is a "Korean theology defined by the culture and history of Korean." Therefore, although its commitment to the politically and economically oppressed is the key character as found in other Third World liberation theologies, this contextualized theology on Korean soil should be understood only "through its biography, its story, its hope and suffering." See Cone, xiv.

> As the Minjung Theologians listened to the rumors and the stories of the jailbirds, the young workers, the teenage street girls, and the broken farmers – those who were marginalized and outcast in the process of industrialization, modernization and development – they told their own stories in theological statement, declarations of human rights in Korea, and manifestos of Christian faith . . . Through the telling and hearing of the stories and rumors of the Minjung, we were shocked and conscientized and changed; we began to see and feel the world from the perspective of the people.[326]

Here, *minjung* literally means the mass of people in Korea; however, Minjung theologians define the term in various ways:

> First, *minjung* are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socially, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. Second, *minjung* are those who have been treated as mere objects by those in power throughout history but, paradoxically, who have been the true subjects of history and the carriers of culture. Third *minjung* can be identified with those "*Ochlos*" whom Jesus favored, identified with and chose as the heirs to his kingdom in the Gospel of Mark.[327]

Han **– The Interiorized Outcry of Suffering**

While living among minjung and listening to their stories, theologians began to meditate upon the history and culture of the minjung, and rediscovered *han*, a crucial element of the culture and feeling of the minjung. Any effort to understand the minjung is impossible without comprehending the inner reality of the minjung – *han*.[328] When the missionaries and theologians experienced the oppressed, exploited, alienated and despised reality of the minjung, they also experienced the *han* of the minjung.

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[326] Kwang-sun David Suh, "A Theology by Minjung," in *Theology by the People. Reflections on Doing Theology in Community*, eds. Samuel Amirtham and John S. Pobee (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 70, quoted in Schŭttke-Scherle, 28-9.

[327] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 135.

[328] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 136.

Minjung theologians understand *han* as an underlying feeling of the Korean people: "It is a feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness (Nam-dong Suh), grudge or resentment (Dong-hwan Moon), angry and sad sentiments turned inward (Chi-ha Kim), helplessness and hopelessness (Kwang-sun Suh)."[329] In Korean literature, *han* can be categorized into two streams of thought: one, called *jeong-han,* is an individual, sentimental, lyrical, pessimistic and regressive emotion corresponding to defeat, resignation, nothingness, sadness, hopelessness, longing for the loved one and so forth; the other, called *won-han,* corresponds to anger, grudges, and resentment.[330]

This discovery of *han* is the starting point of Minjung Theology.[331] Theologians could not address the reality of *han* with traditional Western theology which evolved on a different soil. As a consequence of Minjung theologians not being able to find the appropriate term for minjung in Western theological language, they had to find their own way of naming their theological reflection in order to explore and articulate the problem of *han*. Nam-dong Suh urged Korean theologians to do theology using the themes and language of Korean peoples:

> Let me conclude by making an appeal to my fellow theologians in Korea. Let us hold in abeyance discussions on doctrines and theories about sin which are heavily charged with the bias of the ruling class and are often nothing more than the labels the ruling class uses for the deprived. Instead, we should take *han* as our theme, which is indeed the language of the minjung and signifies the reality of their experience. If one does not hear the sighs of

[329] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 138.

[330] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 15-16.

[331] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 136-37.

> the *han* of the minjung, one cannot hear the voice of Christ knocking on our doors.[332]

Han is the unique inheritance of the Korean cultural and historical tradition. Through serious reflection on *han*, theologians brought together Korean culture and history. Thus, Minjung theologians focused on the *han* of minjung rather than addressing their direct sufferings because *han* involved not only the personal and collective suffering of the minjung but also their emotional response to it, which was internalized in both positive and negative ways.

Han is caused by repression or suppression[333] in facing external oppression or suffering, which affects Koreans both individually and collectively. As Kwang-sun Suh relates, this involves "repression to the *han* of the individual and suppression to collective *han* on a social and political level."[334] While admitting that there are two levels of *han*, minjung theologians primarily address its social and political level. Therefore, they focus on socio-political aspects of *han* even when dealing with the individual *han.* As Kwang-sun David Suh says, "This is not just a sickness that can be cured by psychotherapy. This is a collective feeling of the oppressed. This sickness of *han* can be cured only when the total structure of the oppressed society and culture is changed."[335] Based on this understanding,

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[332] Nam-dong Suh, "Towards a Theology of *Han*" in *Minjung Theology*, 68.

[333] Repression and suppression, both are Freudian concepts concerned with removing unwanted or unpleasant memories from one's consciousness. Repression differs from suppression in that it is not consciously engaged. Whereas suppression involves the conscious desire to forget, repression happens subconsciously.
http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/374718/what_is_psychological_repression.html?cat=72 (accessed December 2, 2010).

[334] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 139.

[335] Kwang-sun Daivd Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in *Minjung Theology*, 25.

their efforts were focused mainly on the transformation or revolution of socio-political situations. However, the minjung feel *han* individually in responding to their external conditions. They are "subjects" of *han*.[336] When the subjectivity of *han* is ignored the minjung can be in danger of losing their position as subjects of history, which Minjung theology advocates. Jae Hoon Lee warns: "If *han* is objectified by being identified with historical and social conditions, minjung becomes the object of history rather than the subject of it."[337]

Han has both negative and positive aspects. Minjung theologians also acknowledge this: "The feeling of *han*, however, also has a negative element. It is a repressed murmuring, unexpressed in words or actions. It does not change anything."[338] It could erupt as "revenge" or end in "submission or resignation to fate."[339] Regarding the positive aspect of *han*, when Minjung theologians paid attention to the socio-political aspect of *han*, they discovered the potential energy of anger which can be transformed into the collective energy for the achievement of protection of the nation from foreign invasions or for protesting against social injustice, both of which are evident in the history of Korea.[340] Nonetheless, Jae Hoon Lee pointed out that theologians should try to examine both the negative and positive aspects of *han*.[341] The lack of balance in the understanding of *han* can cause a biased discernment of *han*. Jae Hoon Lee acknowledges the contribution of Minjung

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[336] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 140.

[337] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 141.

[338] Kwang-sun David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," 25.

[339] Kwang-sun David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," 25.

[340] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 13.

[341] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 143-44.

theology in that it tried to alert the theological consciousness of theologians to the unjust and oppressive social, political, and economic reality as the source of suffering among the minjung. Then, he observes that Minjung theologians tried to heal the wounds of the people's hearts with love at the personal level:

> Now Minjung theology is invited to a practice of healing that wipes the tears from the eyes of minjung and heals the wounds in their hearts. Slogans and statements about the *han* cannot heal the wounds of *han*. What bring forth healing is love that is strong and spacious enough to contain the aggression of the wounded hearts so that the healing process can start.[342]

Minjung Theologians' Solidarity with Minjung in Summary

As manifest in the integration of *han*, Minjung theology emerged with the discovery of *han*, and its evolution involves the treatment of *han*, whether through reform in socio-economic and political arenas or through the care of people in the personal arena. However, Minjung theology began with industrial missionaries' plunge into the real life of the suffering and oppressed people. It was an action of solidarity. Being with them helped open the missionaries' eyes to realize the actual reality of minjung. They not only stayed with them but they also experienced the weariness and hopelessness that marked the life of the minjung, which in return reinforced their solidarity with the minjung. Living among the minjung urged the Christian activists and theologians to reflect in the light of the Bible on the people who were exploited and denied justice. They rediscovered Jesus, who stood by the side of the minjung (*ochlos*), as well as enduring persecution, suffering and execution on behalf of his beloved people. As Jesus' deeds of solidarity with the *ochlos* and his criticism against the political and religious rulers provoked the oppressors into persecuting

[342] Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds-Han*, 162.

Jesus, the Minjung theologians and Christian activists challenged the dictatorship and interest-seeking businessmen who opposed democracy, human rights, and socio-economic justice in Korea. These courageous deeds resulted in much suffering, including the torture and imprisonment of righteous people. All of these realities brought to birth Minjung theology, as Kwang-sun Suh writes:

> Theology of minjung is a creation of those Christians who were forced to reflect upon their Christian discipleship in basement interrogation rooms, in trials, facing court-martial tribunals, hearing the allegations of prosecutors, and in making their own final defense.[343]

In conclusion, solidarity with the people evoked compassion in Christian activists and theologians on the emotional level, and also led them to suffer along with (*com-passio*) those who were burdened by poverty, injustice, and exploitation. The emotional empathy and physical sharing of the weariness of life strengthened the bonds of solidarity with the minjung, which motivated and encouraged the activists and theologians to step forward to address problems and to call for social reform by confronting political and economic leaders for the sake of the people. Thus, solidarity, compassion, and action gave way to reciprocal relationships in this Christian movement.

4.6. In Summary

Suffering is an existential part of humanity. Although forms and causes of human suffering may differ from person to person or from group to group, it is clear that suffering has been and remains a part of human experience. Chapter Four presented five contemporary exemplars and explored the diverse ways in which they reflect upon their

[343] Kwang-sun David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," 16.

particular historical contexts of human suffering and endeavored to respond it in accordance with their own religious traditions – Christianity and Buddhism.

One feature which distinguishes contemporary endeavors from traditional understandings and responses to human suffering is the emphasis placed on the necessity of active engagement in social, political, economic, and cultural realms in order to have a better understanding of the nature and causes of human suffering as well as to ameliorate it. This proved to be true among both Christians and Buddhists. In addition to this, they also shared a common conviction regarding humanity's need for an increase of interdependence – locally, regionally and internationally. Mindful of this need, they urged others to overcome boundaries in order to cooperate in the alleviation of human suffering. Most of all, these socially engaged Christians and Buddhists insisted that people should honestly encounter the unsettling reality of human suffering, so as to see the reality clearly, and undertake actions out of compassion in solidarity with those who suffer.

In the following chapter, an assessment of commonalities and distinctions between Buddhist and Christian perspectives is provided. Some of the concepts to be examined include suffering, compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility as discussed in Chapter Two, Three and Four.

Chapter Five

Realizing the Dream of Interreligious Cooperation: Responding to the Suffering Peoples of Asia Interreligiously

Throughout the previous chapters, this thesis provided two religions' – Christianity and Buddhism - particular understandings of the nature and causes of human suffering and diverse responses to it. Along with the differences in theories and practices between these two religious traditions, the thesis also observed that contemporary Christians and Buddhists share a common concern for the reality of suffering which originates from socio-political, economic, and religious injustice in this greatly interdependent world. Based on the previous chapters, Chapter Five begins by engaging these two religious traditions in dialogue about suffering, compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility. Then, the chapter examines the ways in which compassion serves as a foundation for interreligious cooperation using the theory of James E. Gilman. Finally, building on selected documents of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference (FABC) the chapter concludes by asserting that solidarity with the poor and upholding the value of religious harmony in Asia are foundational for Asians to work together for the sake of their suffering peoples.

5.1. The Dialogue between Christians and Buddhists

Suffering

Some mistake Buddhism as pessimistic because of its foundational teachings such as the existence of suffering, the causes of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. It is true that suffering is a primary focus in Buddhism. However,

when the Buddha taught about suffering, he instructed his followers about more than pain, agony, and death which make human life difficult and burdensome. In the Buddha's teachings, suffering also refers to impermanence, emptiness, lack of perfection, so that it denotes the general nature of the universe, rather than particular emotional and physical afflictions.[344] Nevertheless, the encounters with obvious forms of suffering such as disease, old age and death provided a motivation for Siddhartha to renounce everything in his quest to understand the reasons for suffering and the way to liberate himself from it. The Buddha realized that there were always causes or conditions which could be found in every being and in every event in the universe. Accordingly, if there is suffering, there must be something that causes the suffering. The quest for the causes of suffering led the Buddha to the truth of no-self. He realized that attachment to the inherent self, which does not exist, actually causes all forms of sufferings in the world.

As evidenced in this brief review of Buddhist teachings, for Buddhists, questioning the reason for suffering is inevitable. On the contrary, Christians have focused on how to deal with suffering rather than focusing intently or exclusively on the reason for and the nature of suffering, which, they conclude, remains in the realm of mystery. In fact, in spite of all the crucifixes hung in the churches and the homes of Christians, Christianity is more than a religion of suffering that is focused on the cross; it also is a religion of victory over death as glorified through resurrection.[345] Christians understand suffering in the light of

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[344] Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, 240.

[345] Ulrich Luz and Axel Michaels, *Encountering Jesus & Buddha*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 117. However, many of the modern Christian theologians argue that suffering on the cross took a central place along with the resurrection of Jesus in the life and teachings of Jesus. Upon this claim, they have endeavored to raise the suffering of those who are poor, oppressed and marginalized to the central stage of their theological enterprises and praxis.

their experience of encountering the resurrected Jesus. In this regard, distinct from the Buddhist goal of finding liberation from suffering in the world, Christians do not consider emancipation from suffering as their ultimate goal. Admittedly, suffering can be a blessing for devout Christians who are eager to follow the will of God as Jesus Christ did: the martyrdom of those who willingly accepted to be executed serves as an example. Even so, suffering is still a negative reality; sometimes, so concrete that it suffocates the hope of resurrection. In Christianity, suffering has been interpreted in the light of the resurrection; however, most Christians have not yet experienced the resurrected Jesus. Many sorts of suffering in daily life are more evident and imminent than a far-sighted resurrection after life. Therefore, the question of suffering should be asked continually - theologically and practically in Christianity – so that those who suffer are not alienated both in the discourse of Christian theology and in the practice of love and justice, which helps them to experience truly the resurrection of Jesus Christ in their life - in the present moment.

Not only do Buddhist and Christian understandings of suffering differ from each other, but their respective responses to suffering also have taken different tracks in the history of the two religions. Buddhists - asserting that all kinds of suffering are eventually rooted in ignorance of the reality of the universe, impermanence and dependent origination - have concentrated on eliminating ignorance mostly through philosophical and meditative training. For Buddhists, the concept of suffering is a problem of epistemology.[346] On the other hand, Christians differ from Buddhists in their response to suffering. The Christian understanding of suffering involves concrete forms of suffering and social aspects

[346] Luz and Michaels, *Encountering Jesus & Buddha,* 121.

of suffering – including such sufferings as hunger, poverty, illness, war, social economic injustice, and abuse of religious norms. In addition to this, Jesus' command to care for the oppressed and poor people has called for activities of charity and justice since the beginning of Christianity; that is to say, Christians have concentrated on a practical approach to suffering rather than a solely theoretical one.

Compassion

Despite the distinctive understandings of suffering, both religious traditions respond to suffering in a common way, which is compassion. However, there still exist differences in the concept of compassion as understood respectively by Buddhists and Christians. The Sanskrit term *karuna*, the Buddhist equivalent to the English term 'compassion', denotes the "state of mental attitude which sees a problem or suffering of other sentient beings, and develops a strong wish to remove or to put an end to that suffering."[347] While the biblical term *splánchnon* implies that a compassionate person shares the suffering of sufferer emotionally as well as physically within one's own spleen, the Buddhist *karuna* has more or less of a transcendental characteristic.

Nevertheless, both Christians and Buddhists agree on the ethical value of compassion. Buddhists acknowledge that everyone wants to avoid suffering and desires happiness. Therefore, not only should one stop harming others, but one should help others to be freed from sufferings. Buddhists also insist that compassion is inherent to every being; compassion arises naturally when people acknowledge others' suffering. In Buddhist

[347] Samdhong Rinpoche, "On Compassion: The Buddhist Approach," in *Compassion in the World's Religions: Envisioning Human Solidarity*, ed. Balslev, ed., 11.

practice, compassion, along with wisdom, consists of two core elements. A profound understanding of suffering and the reality of the universe evokes greater compassion towards all beings in the universe; compassion which arises in this way in turn helps one to dissolve the concept of a separate self - ultimately leading one to realize no-self, or emptiness.

While the Buddhist idea of compassion is closely related to wisdom, Christian compassion is more closely related to emotion. When Jesus had compassion for the suffering and oppressed people, he was emotionally moved by their pain and agony; he felt the same way as they did. This identification of suffering with others, and the ethical norm of loving one's neighbors as well, urge people to be actively engaged in the task of helping others to be relieved of their burdens. Through the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus Christ, God explicitly manifests His deep compassion for humanity; and also God in turn commands humanity to be compassionate as He is.

Solidarity

Along with compassion, another way to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation is through God's solidarity with humanity. There is no clearer manifestation of God's solidarity with humanity than becoming human. Solidarity, being with those who sufferer, consoles the afflicted and empowers them to endure and to overcome their suffering.[348] In Christianity, God's vertical solidarity with humanity expands to a horizontal solidarity among human beings. Jesus introduced God as 'our Father'; thus, the whole human community became sisters and brothers of one another as God's children. Accordingly, the

[348] Richard, *A Kinetic Christology*, 234.

world consists of “the family of God.”[349] In modern times wherein the remarkable advance of technologies has prompted frequent communication and travel between regions and nations, the term ‘the world family’ or ‘the world neighbor’ have become more compelling to all. Furthermore, the world has become greatly interdependent in all realms: economy, politics, culture, and religion. However, The Catholic Church warns that this interdependence can be manipulated so as to satisfy a small number of people’s greed for power and money.[350] Here, the virtue of solidarity is required in order to direct their awareness of interdependence for the good of the world.[351]

Although Christianity has emphasized solidarity among churches and Christians since the beginning of the Church, paying attention to interdependence among human beings beyond religious boundaries is a relatively recent concern for Christians. For Buddhism, interdependence or interconnectedness among beings has been foundational in its teachings. Consequently, despite the fact that the Buddhist tradition does not mention solidarity explicitly, the idea of solidarity deeply permeates Buddhist teachings. While the Christian concept of interdependence remains distinct and focused, the Buddhist understanding which is also ontological deals with the nature of beings and the way in which all beings exist. Furthermore, Buddhist solidarity extends to all beings in the universe beyond humanity. In this context, harmony with and respect for nature is greatly emphasized both in the religious, social and cultural dimensions of Buddhism.

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[349] *Gaudium et Spes*, 32.

[350] SRS, 39.

[351] Bilgrien, *Solidarity*, 108.

Contemporary Christians and Buddhists – Interdependence and Universal Responsibility

This thesis has juxtaposed the traditional understandings of suffering, compassion, and solidarity from two religious perspectives. Based on the fundamental teachings of each tradition, contemporary Christians and Buddhists have endeavored to reflect on ways of confronting problems within their own contexts. Political theology, Latin American Liberation theology and Minjung theology correspond to Christian endeavors; and Engaged Buddhism is the result of the modern Buddhists' theoretical and practical reflection on social problems in Asia. As much as their traditions have owned their uniqueness and shared commonalities, the contemporary new movements of both religions show distinctive, yet at the same time, common approaches in the encounters with and responses to social problems.

While Christianity has endeavored to relieve imminent and direct suffering by diverse charitable activities throughout its history, modern Christians have begun to pay more attention to the fundamental causes of suffering since the nineteenth century; and they have addressed the ways in which individual and collective suffering is greatly influenced by social, political, economic, cultural, and religious injustice. Within this context, some Christians set out to protest against the structural injustice that has taken place on national and international levels. On the other hand, Buddhists began to pay attention to the concrete suffering of people as well as the epistemological understanding of suffering. At the same time, motivated by Christian charitable activities, they have become involved in activities to relieve imminent suffering. They also have been engaged in social issues such as development for the impoverished, defense of human rights, democracy, and anti-

discrimination activities, which they perceived as sources and means for alleviating individual and collective suffering.

Active engagement in social issues represents an evolving consciousness over the long span of both religions' histories. Behind the similar response to suffering as social engagement, there is a common realization that human beings have a social existence and are interconnected to one another so that all human beings must be responsible for one another. However, there is still a difference in the concept of interdependence between the two religions. Christians stress that the world is a closely connected community and where people are dependent upon one another. Here, the awareness of interdependence is confined primarily to human society.[352] On the other hand, the understanding of interdependence by Engaged Buddhists includes all sentient beings in the universe; consequently, they claim universal responsibility not only for humans but also for nature. In the industrialized world in which destruction and pollution of nature emerge as a new source of suffering for the planet, the Buddhist claim of universal responsibility is greatly compelling. Through such discourse, the recognition of interdependence has prompted people to be concerned with the suffering of others'; therefore, religious leaders and teachers of both religions must make more efforts to help their members to understand the deep interconnectedness of the world as well as degrees of responsibility. In the light of their faiths and doctrines, more people should realize their particular responsibility to alleviate the suffering of others through solidarity.

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[352] Although Christian theologians and social activists are concerned about environmental issues, it is a recent trend and the issue has not been treated significantly in comparison with the Buddhist tradition.

5.2. Compassion as the Heart of Interreligious Cooperation[353]

In the book *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, a serious inquiry into the issue of suffering in the world religions, John Bowker explains the book's title in the following words: "The title of this book refers to 'problems of suffering' in the plural, because there is no single, definable 'problem-of-suffering' which appears in all religions in the same form."[354] As we have seen in the study of suffering from Christian and Buddhist perspectives, the ways in which each religion interprets suffering and defines it as a problem differ from one another based on their respective teachings and traditions. However, as Bowker insists, whatever each religion develops as its theories, suffering, as it is, is one of the most obvious and common experiences for humanity, and suffering could be an "important cause of religion."[355] The obvious and concrete fact of suffering triggers people to speculate on the "problems of suffering," and also to act in ways that address the problem of suffering.

As much as religions have dealt with the problems of suffering differently, the theoretical concepts of compassion and the responses to others' suffering in diverse religions are distinctive.[356] However, whether compassion is conceived as a transcendental, a temporary method to achieve enlightenment as in Buddhism, or it implies an emotional and physical sharing of pains and mental distress as in Christianity - as far as religions are

[353] For this subsection title, I am indebted to James E. Gilman, "Whose God? Which Religion? Compassion as the Heart of Interreligious Cooperation," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 40 (3, Summer 2003), 267-95.

[354] Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, 2.

[355] Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, 1-3.

[356] See Balslev, ed., *Compassion in the World's Religions*.

concerned, they share in common the value of compassion in their desire to relieve others from suffering. Furthermore, James E. Gilman argues that beyond what they theorize about compassion, what really matters in making judgments about any tradition is "whether their beliefs or traditions promote and practice merciful compassion toward all people, neighbor and enemy alike."[357] He insists that the practice of compassion could be a universal and unifying factor applicable to all religions; he says: "[I] reject the familiar metaphor, 'all paths lead to the same spiritual end,' arguing instead that all traditions, religious and secular, travel on the same path,"[358] which is the practice of compassion. In this regard, practicing compassion, whether by imitating Jesus Christ or the Buddha, Gilman asserts, must be "the normative basis for interreligious conversation and cooperation."[359]

This thesis provides some support for Gilman's thesis in that the practice of compassion is viewed as the normative basis for interreligious conversation and cooperation. First, Gilman argues that "interreligious conversation and cooperation are found . . . in the universal particularity of emotional intersubjectivity, in the mutuality of shared emotions."[360] Human beings of diverse races, genders, cultures, religions, and places, share common emotional experiences, so that, one can open oneself to share in another's emotions. This is emotional intersubjectivity. Before developing his argument further, Gilman introduces three elements of emotion with regard to the cognitive status of

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[357] Gilman, 267.

[358] Gilman, 267.

[359] Gilman, 295.

[360] Gilman, 270.

emotions: judgments, projects, and energy.[361] He correlates three constitutional elements of emotions in this way:

> Emotions arise at all because a judgment is made about an intentional object. Remove that judgment, and the emotion dissipates. . . . Emotions involve practices or projects that are triggered by emotional judgments, are socially constructed, and very often are moral in character. . . . Emotions, as we know from our own experiences, consist not simply of judgments and projects but also of potent forces, of passionate energy that invigorates our lives and empowers us to put into practice those emotional judgments and projects.[362]

Compassion is this kind of emotion, and it does not refer to a single feeling, rather a complexity of diverse feelings such as care, anger, guilt, mercy so on; and most of all, it is "something specific and concrete."[363] Although compassion is a universally accessible common feeling, each community or religion has its own unique ways of interpreting, expressing, promoting, and practicing compassion. This is the "paradoxically intersubjective character"[364] of compassion as an emotion. Someone may contend that this paradoxical character of compassion can hinder the interreligious conversation and cooperation. However, Gilman insists that instead, each religion's particular way of dealing with compassion can help its believers to practice compassion cooperatively. As he writes:

> In order to share more fully and faithfully in the common, universally accessible feelings of compassion . . . a person must participate more fully and faithfully in the distinctive beliefs and practices of one's local, tribal community. In and through a community's nourishing, comforting arms, in and through its cultic practices and local stories is one inspired and

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[361] Gilman, 270.

[362] Gilman, 270-71.

[363] Gilman, 273.

[364] Gilman, 272.

> empowered to venture beyond one's backyard into the public square, beyond ones' tribal community into the global community.[365]

In this way, people, while faithfully participating in their faith community, can converse and cooperate with peoples of other faiths in the practice of compassion, and Gilman answers the question, which arises in this multi-religious world: "How is it possible to protect and preserve religious diversity and, at the same time, promote a common, normative criterion for interreligious conversation and cooperation?"[366]

Gilman's argument evolves on the basis of the idea of compassion as a kind of emotion. However, as seen above, the ideal Buddhist concept of compassion is the state and attitude of mind with no emotional feelings involved. The serene statue of Sakyamuni Buddha depicts well the Buddhist understanding of compassion. Nonetheless, ordinary practitioners of Buddhism - who have not yet attained full realization of no-self so that they still remain attached to emotions and delusive thoughts – actually perceive compassion as emotion. Moreover, Buddhists also agree on the claim that the compassionate mind should be realized in action; when one is in need, he or she appreciates not a compassionate mind but compassionate deeds and words.

On the other hand, as Gilman argues, compassion consists of various feelings, even including misery and anger. This explication can be contradictory to the Buddhist perspective, which considers anger or hatred as one of three poisons including greed and delusion, which causes beings to wander continuously within *samsara.* Accordingly, Engaged Buddhists always prioritize non-violence and non-hatred in their socially engaged

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[365] Gilman, 274.

[366] Gilman, 268.

movements. Christians also advocate non-violence, keeping Jesus' teaching and his example forefront in their minds. Therefore, both Christians and Buddhists should be fully aware of the fact that their compassionate activity must arise from love and sympathy not from anger or judgmental hatred.

In conclusion, whether it is to quench "the thirst"[367] of Jesus as Mother Teresa confessed, or to become "Kwan-yin's watchful eyes and useful hands"[368] as Cheng Yen proposes, the practice of love and compassion itself is universal, beyond the differences of religions. Compassionate Buddhists meet Compassionate Christians through the cooperative working out of compassion in solidarity with those who suffer.

5.3. FABC Documents on Diverse Ways of Interreligious Dialogue and Collaboration

In the previous section of this chapter, the practice of compassion was presented as an essential way to connect peoples of different faiths, in particular Buddhists and Christians. Asia is the continent in which peoples of diverse religions live their daily lives next door or shoulder to shoulder or under one roof with people of different faiths. This section presents the way in which Asian Christians living in a multi-religious context, reflect on their situation. Seen through the eyes of Asian Catholic Bishops, the following prayer captures the reality:

> Today, as every day of this year,
> I come before you

[367] Brian Kolodiejchuk, ed. and com., *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light-The Private Writings of the "Saint of Calcutta"* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 40-3

[368] Cheng Yen, "Performing Good Deeds Is More Important than Shunning Evil Ones," *Inspirational Extracts*, May 1, 2001, quoted in King, *Being Benevolence*, 5. Kwan-yin or Kuan-yin is a Buddhist deity who is beloved throughout East Asia as the Boddhisattva of Compassion; Cheng Yen is a Taiwanese Buddhist master-who runs charitable facilities all over the world.

in the name of my brothers and sisters of Asia
those who know you,
and those who do not.
May they all today
rejoice in your love.
Give peace to every home.
Let no one remain hungry today;
may no sick person lack necessary medicine;
may no one's heart be closed by pride, hatred or jealousy,
to the needs of his brothers and sisters.[369]

This excerpt is from the prayer "A Daily Prayer for Asia," which has often been used at Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). This prayer has enabled Catholic bishops to begin their meetings with a prayer on behalf of all their Asian brothers and sisters. Today, when the bishops pray for Asian peoples, they do not keep in their prayer only their fellow Christians, which constitute only 8.5 percent of the Asian population.[370] In most Asian countries, except South Korea[371] and the Philippines,[372] Christians form a minority. The Catholic leaders plead to God for all people in need whether they are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Shinto adherents, Chinese religion adherents, or even atheists.

[369] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *For all the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arévalo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), xiii.

[370]Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds. *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 7.

[371] One quarter of the South Korean population is Christians, and half of religious adherents are Christians, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html (accessed April 4, 2011).

[372] More than 85% of the Philippines population is Christians, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html (accessed April 4, 2011).

The Reality of Asian Peoples

Influenced by the Second Vatican Council, 180 Asian Bishops agreed with the necessity of "an increasing communion among the local Asian churches"[373] in a meeting with Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970.[374] As a consequence of this meeting, they formed the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) and began to reflect on how the Asian Churches can proclaim the Gospel in the Asian context. For this reason, the first task was to know what is the reality and context of not only Asian Churches ,but also of Asian peoples: "FABC documents clearly and explicitly affirm that the church's missionary proclamation and activity must be in close dialogue with the realities of this context and must seek to respond to the 'signs of the times.'"[375] Based on the realization of concrete reality, Christians and theologians can interpret their context with the help of the Gospel message.

The Asian Bishops tried to look upon "the face of Asia" and especially depicted two faces of contemporary Asian peoples.

> First of all, the face of Asia, continent of the teeming masses. Asia is nearly two billion people,[376] almost two-thirds of mankind. It is a face largely marked with poverty, with under-nourishment and ill health, scarred by war and suffering, troubled and restless. . . . There is, too, the face of the Asia that is the continent of ancient and diverse cultures, religions, histories and traditions, a region like Joseph's coat of many colors.[377]

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[373] C. G. Arévalo, S.J., "The Time of the Heirs" in *For all the Peoples of Asia*, xv.

[374] Arévalo, "The Time of the Heirs," xxiii.

[375] Arévalo, "The Time of the Heirs," xix.

[376] As of 2010, the Asian population is about 4.1 billion out of 6.9 billion world population; *Atlas of Global Christianity,* 136.

[377] Message and Resolutions of the Asian Bishops' Meeting (Manila, Philippines, 29 November 1970), in *For all the Peoples of Asia*, 3.

Asia is an immense and extremely complex continent with a huge population and diverse races, languages, cultures, religions as well. Moreover, in modern history, Asians have experienced a swift current of changes in every corner of their lives with most populations being overwhelmed by these realities. Economically, the Asian continent is characterized by extremes. Some countries, such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea are so advanced in technologies and industries that they rival those advanced countries in Europe and North America. On the other hand, some countries, such as North Korea, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan are counted among the poorest countries on earth. According to the data issued by the World Bank, as of 2005, 74 percent of South Asian people supported themselves on less than two dollars a day.[378] Among the poor, women and children are the poorest in Asia. Female illiteracy is much higher than male, and female babies are more likely to be aborted than male ones. Rapid population growth and urbanization push people to rush to big cities; slums grow and women and children are exposed to violence and exploited by cheap labor. In some tourist areas, women and children fall prey to prostitution.

The persistent reality of poverty and the abuse of the powerless are not confined to economic matters. Although some Asian countries enjoy political freedom and stability, still many countries are governed by dictatorial, military or theocratic regimes with political, religious, economic freedom, and human rights limited or sometimes fully forbidden. This political and social oppression worsens the life of the poor.[379] In this regard, the Asian

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[378] http://www.worldbank.org (accessed April 4, 2011).

[379] For a brief description of the economic and political context of Asia, see Phan, 116, and Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, which was promulgated November 6, 1999,

bishops, in order to be more truly the church of the poor, have resolved to share their poverty, to stand in defense of the poor and to conduct a prophetic function despite the threat to the institutional security by local authorities.[380]

While poverty characterizes one face of Asia, “pervasive religiousness” characterizes another face of Asia. Aloysius Pieris, a Sri Lankan Jesuit theologian, states that Asian Christianity must undergo a double baptism to be reborn as a truly Asian Christianity: at the Jordan of Asian religions and on the Calvary of Asian poverty.[381] Asia is the cradle of the world’s major religions - Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is also the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism. Although there exist tensions and violent conflicts related to religious issues, John Paul II notes in his Apostolic Exhortation to the Asian bishops, *Ecclesia in Asia*, that “Asia has often demonstrated a remarkable capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures.”[382] The pope also exhorts bishops to respect and be faithful to the spirit of “complementarity” and “harmony,” which permeate the tradition and soul of Asia.[383]

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http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia_en.html (accessed April 3, 2011).

[380] Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference, *For All the Peoples of Asia volume 2: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences Documents from 1992 to 1996*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Manila: Claretian Publications, 1997), 197.

[381] Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 62-63. For Pieris, I am indebted to Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 125.

[382] *Ecclesia in Asia*, 6.

[383] *Ecclesia in Aisa*, 6.

Harmony and Collaboration

Throughout the long history of co-existence of diverse cultures and religions, Asians have learned how to live altogether in harmony so as to avoid harmful conflicts and divisions. This quest for harmony characterizes religions which have originated in Asia. Hinduism seeks a harmonious integration of the whole and the parts; Buddhism teaches adherents to take the middle way by avoiding extremes; and Confucianism stresses the harmonious interplay between yin and yang.[384] The harmonious life, which Asians have been seeking, is not only to be lived among human beings, but also between humanity and nature. This Asian search for harmony proceeds from "a world-view that is organic, interactive and cosmic,"[385] which we could observe already in the thoughts and lives of Buddhists. The Asian bishops hope that the culture and spirit of harmony, pervasive in the Asian cultures and religions, will relieve the problems facing Asia: economic exploitation and poverty, oppressive forms of government and social control, religious, cultural and communal conflicts, ecological and environmental crisis, abuse of science and technology.[386]

However, the problematic situations in Asia cannot be solved only by Asian Christians. It is an arduous task requiring the harmonious collaboration among all Asians beyond religious boundaries. Fully aware of this, the Asian bishops urge the Asian churches to participate in the dialogue of mutual understanding and collaboration, and FABC

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[384] For further understanding of harmony in Asian traditions, see *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 143-65.

[385] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 232.

[386] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 233-41.

suggests four types of dialogue: First, the *dialogue of life*, whereby believers in each religion live out their religious values and ideas fully, and at the same time, respect neighbors of other faiths in pursuit of harmony and mutual esteem; Second, the *dialogue of action* which promotes the form of action whereby basic human communities work together for the good of all, rather than only for the benefit of one's own group; Third, the *dialogue of discourse* which contributes to a better understanding of other faiths; Fourth, the *dialogue of sharing religious experience*, in which, while remaining firmly rooted in their own faith, people can attain mutual enrichment through the help of traditions of mediation and spiritual discipline of other religions.[387]

From the beginning of its establishment, FABC has encouraged various approaches to dialogue with other religious traditions. Among them, the Formation Institute for Inter-Religious Affairs (FIRA), a formation program sponsored by the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the FABC, reflected in its third meeting in 2000, *action* for humanity is believed to be more fruitful through *dialogue*: "We are also convinced that interreligious dialogue will be more fruitful if we move away from theological issues which divide and focus on commonalities which unite. In particular we believe that interreligious dialogue ought to focus on issues of social justice and the option for the poor, oppressed and the marginalized."[388] In collaboration with believers of other faith traditions in pursuit of alleviating suffering and minimizing oppression, regardless of the race or religious affiliation of the victims, Christians emulate "Jesus as our model of dialogue, compassion,

[387] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 169; see also Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously*, 125.

[388] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1997 to 2001 Volume 3*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002), 137.

and understanding."[389] Meanwhile, dialogue on the intellectual level and in the sharing of religious experiences also must be encouraged in the church. In particular, prayer together promotes mutual understanding and respect and deepens the realization of human solidarity as one human family.[390]

A Call for Harmony among Buddhists and Christians

Appreciating the importance of harmony which can transform the immense diversity and pluralism of Asia into richness and creativity, Asian Catholic leaders held a series of meetings to dialogue with believers of different religions about the theme of harmony. The meetings were sponsored by the FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA). The participants in these meetings shared their own understanding of harmony in each religious tradition, and resolved to work together for the harmony of Asia.[391] In particular, OEIA sponsored a meeting among Buddhists and Christians under the title of "Working Together for Harmony in Our Contemporary World" in Thailand in April 1994. The document from this meeting acknowledged that there were different analyses of the causes of disharmony, different emphases on the means of promoting harmony, and different motives for inspiring them. Nevertheless, both Christian and Buddhist participants agreed to collaborate in the common pursuit of harmony for all, individuals, societies, and cosmos.[392]

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[389] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 3*, 136-37.

[390] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 3*, 141.

[391] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 149-77.

[392] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 151.

The Buddhist tradition has promoted an "atmosphere of religious tolerance and universal compassion" throughout its history.[393] Given this positive characteristic of Buddhism, Peter Phan asserts that in the contemporary world wherein religions, sometimes, can be causes of disharmony and armed conflicts, Buddhism along with Confucianism can offer helpful means for achieving justice, reconciliation, and peace.[394] In fact, East and South East Asian countries, where Buddhism is a dominant religion or exercises a strong influence within society - not denying there have been slight tensions, it is hard to find violent conflicts. In addition, the fact that that region claims the most diversity among religions can be evidence for the prevailing Buddhist influence on religious tolerance in East Asia.[395]

This general situation, coupled with the tolerant attitude of traditional Buddhism and an increasing awareness of the practical action of compassion by Engaged Buddhists, provides very appropriate grounds for encouraging a fruitful collaboration between Buddhists and Christians in East Asia. The realization of their identity as Asians as well as the religious duty of commitment to the ethical teaching of each religion also may prompt people to work together in solidarity.

5.4. In Summary

Chapter Five first reviewed and compared some selected Buddhist and Christian understandings of suffering, compassion, solidarity, interdependence and responsibility.

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[393] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 151.

[394] Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously*, xxvi, also see Phan, 199-209.

[395] According to *Atlas of Global Christianity*, South Korea, Viet Nam, and Singapore have more than four religions which have believers that constitute more than 10 % of the national populations. *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 32-3.

Secondly, the chapter explored Gilman's argument that the practice of compassion can be a universal criterion for judging the truthfulness of religions and a common initiative for interreligious dialogue and cooperation. Thirdly, the chapter provided relevant background information on the Asian Catholic bishops' insistence on concern for the poor and oppressed peoples of Asia as well as the promotion of an atmosphere of harmony among religions. Harmony has been inherent in the Asian culture and soul, and is necessary for cooperation beyond religious boundaries in order to confront the imminent problems which engender suffering in the lives of innumerable Asians. At the FABC-sponsored meeting on interreligious dialogue which was held in Thailand in 1994, the Buddhist and Christian participants came to agreement on their mutual need for dialogue and a call to action. The document of the meeting states:

> We need to promote non-exclusive, multifaith groups and organizations at all levels, local, national and international, which will engage in the multiple dimensions of dialogue. The ideal locus of such dialogue will be their collaboration in promoting justice and freedom, peace and harmony among people, upholding their rights, especially of the poor and the oppressed, with the particular attention to women and children and the environment, not hesitating to condemn injustice wherever it is done.[396]

In Asia, particularly East Asia, the Buddhist tradition has inherited compassionate concerns for the wellbeing of humans and cosmos as well as religious tolerance. Additionally, the renewed awareness of Engaged Buddhists about the concrete and specific problems of the world lays the foundations which will allow Buddhists to collaborate with Christians for the good of all.

[396] *For All the Peoples of Asia vol. 2*, 153.

Suffering is a concrete reality which no one can deny. Compassion is a universal value which all should embrace and practice. All human beings are, in a certain way, neighbors, and family; this fact contributes to solidarity among people. Everyone and every event are interconnected and interdependent; this fact places the responsibility for the sadness and sufferings of others in the hands of those who dare to be neighbors.

Conclusion

Before I became a Christian seminarian and began to study theology, I had devoted myself to the study of meteorology. As time passes on, much of the scientific knowledge I acquired earlier in life has slipped away from my memory; but one thing still remains in my mind and continues to fascinate me: the so-called 'Butterfly effect.' It denotes "the sensitive dependence on initial conditions;"[397] where a very minor alteration in weather patterns can cause great changes at a later point in time, for example, the flapping wings of a butterfly in New York can lead to a typhoon in China. This scientific theory sheds significant light on human society, particularly with regard to an understanding of 'sensitive dependence'. Indeed, it is a mystery how a minor event in the past impacts the present life of someone; also, it is a great challenge to realize how a seemingly inconsequential behavior of one person can affect the lives of others – individually or collectively – resulting in lives lived in misery and inhumane conditions. For example, a cup of morning coffee might be the product of the exploitation of plantation workers in Columbia or a pair of Nike shoes might be a manufacturing outcome of the abuse of child laborers in Pakistan.

The reason why the butterfly effect has fascinated me so much and the reason why I readily apply this meteorological phenomenon as a way of envisioning life and the world may have something to do with the way in which it resonates with the Buddhist perspective on life which already is part of my upbringing. Long before natural sciences recognized the 'sensitive dependence' of natural phenomena and social sciences traced the many factors contributing to the wretched life of a child in Asia as well as to his emergence

[397] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly_effect (accessed Aug 11, 2011).

as someone who now lives comfortably in America, I, like many Koreans, have been immersed in a cultural ambiance that is convinced of the profound interconnectedness of every deed or event in human life. No Christian in Korea can deny the fact that he or she has been influenced by other religious traditions whether consciously or unconsciously. Prior to turning to religious institutions and their interreligious efforts to foster dialogue and collaboration, I believe that individual Koreans first need to dialogue interreligiously inside of themselves. This thesis is a reflection of my own personal quest both as a Franciscan priest as well as an aspiring theologian who as a child and young adult grew up within a religiously pluralistic environment. With this thesis, I hope to extend an invitation to young Korean adults - both Christians and Buddhists - who in their everyday lives encounter many of the same challenge as I did – both interiorly and externally. The invitation is to learn as much as they can about their own traditions as well as the traditions of others for the purposes of interreligious cooperation in the service of those who suffer.

This thesis concentrated on interreligious cooperation among Buddhists and Christians. Through the exploration of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Buddha as well as some noteworthy examples of modern Christian theologians and Buddhist leaders, the thesis illustrated how compassionate concerns for suffering people resonates with both religions, while at the same time, identifying the distinctive perspectives of each religion which can serve to enrich and enlighten others. The deep insight of interconnectedness present in Buddhism offers Christians a new way of seeing the need for developing a stronger sense of interdependence among of children of God for the sake all

humanity and all of creation; through Christianity's more concrete and practical approaches to understanding and addressing the causes and conditions of human suffering Buddhists are offered a new way of seeing the need for more direct engagement in human service activities. Most of all, their recognition of the urgent need for shared efforts to relieve the burdens imposed upon suffering people, encourages young Christians and Buddhists to work together to achieve the same goal. Through interreligious dialogue and interreligious understanding of other religious traditions, young people can strive to integrate themselves interreligiously as they come to realize that the religion of another may not be so foreign, but actually may play a part in their respective understandings of their own religious and cultural perspectives. In addition, collaborative efforts among adherents of different faiths help to integrate society - interreligiously. As a human being, compassion for other human beings who suffer is a fundamental characteristic of human solidarity. The feeling of compassion that arises in the human heart when faced with the suffering of another should take precedence over every social, cultural, national or religious identity that confines, limits, separates or divides; there should be no restriction in the practice of compassion and no hindrance to the cooperative efforts as human beings acting together for the sake of others.

In conclusion, this thesis advances the position that religious leaders and teachers – particularly in Asia and more specifically in Korea – are in a privileged position to edify their young followers to practice compassion. By modeling for the next generation the importance of working with others - beyond the boundaries of their own religious communities – leaders and teachers can promote and inspire among young people

authentic expressions of solidarity with all those who suffer, expressions that move them beyond the boundaries of their own beliefs. In this way, young Christians and Buddhists can realize what it means to truly be inspired to practice their own faiths in ways that enable them to commit themselves faithfully to their own particular religions. In addition, their collaboration and commitment has the capacity to ameliorate the ever-present danger of narrow-minded religious exclusivism and fundamentalism, as together they give interreligious witness to the compassionate upholding of *universal concern for* and *solidarity with* all of suffering humanity.

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