Can Christians Make a Difference? A Critical Practical Theology of Peacebuilding in Burma

By: Si Thu Tun

May 19, 2020

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in Practical Theology

St. Thomas University
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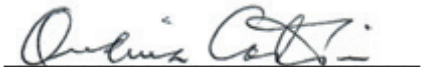

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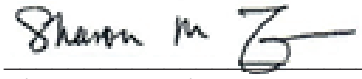

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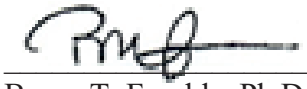

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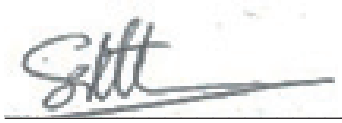

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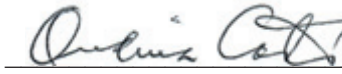

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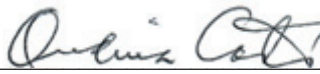

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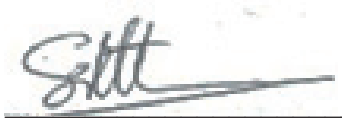

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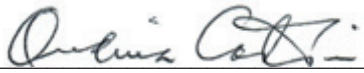

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Abstract

This work is about Christian peacebuilding in Burma in relation to the ongoing militarization in that country. It proposes a public practical theology of peacebuilding for Burma. Militarization has victimized many people there. Burma needs peace. Christians can contribute to the peacebuilding work in Burma. This work explores how Christians make a difference in this process.

Using practice-theory-practice method, this work navigates through a thick description of the past and present situation of conflict in Burma, and then addresses the reasons that kept Christians from becoming actively involved in this situation. Through a theology of peace and peacebuilding, it offers biblical foundations for Christian social commitment. After a critical assessment of peacebuilding practices by Christians in Burma, this work proposes a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding. This process of peacebuilding seeks to move Burma beyond the ceasefire phase into a permanent peace through right relationship among all the people of this country.

Keywords: Burma, militarization, peace, peacebuilding, practical theology, theology of peace, victims.

Acknowledgement

The list of people I would like to thank for their support and prayers in my journey as a Ph.D. student is a very long one. This means that many people have been a blessing to me in so many ways. Unfortunately, I can mention only a few of them in this acknowledgement section as space is limited here. I would like to thank my dissertation committee chair Dr. Ondina Cortes for her guidance, support, encouragement, and prayers throughout my time at St. Thomas University. My heartfelt thanks also go to other committee members: Dr. Bryan Froehle and Dr. Sharon Tan. All three of them have made me to become a better scholar and person. I also would like to thank my classmates and friends at St. Thomas University for being my friends and helpers.

My wife Augustina Welti and our daughter Naw Htar Tha Yu deserve a special thank. I thank them for the sacrifices that they have made for me in this journey, understanding, support, love, and prayers. To be a foreign student in the United States of America is challenging, especially if that student has a family. I would like to thank the Karen Baptist Churches in the USA and many friends from Burma's diaspora community for their support and prayers. I and my family would not have reached where we are now today without your support and prayers.

Back home in Burma, there are a lot of people who have been praying for me, my studies, and family. I cannot thank them enough. My special thanks go to the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary community in Burma for their support, prayers, and understanding. I would like to end my acknowledgement here, but my thanking continues and extends.

Foreword

I grew up in Burma in a government-controlled area. None of my immediate relatives were insurgents. However, I was aware of the evil of militarization of Burma. The evil of this militarization became clearer to me when I became an undergraduate student at the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary in Burma. At that seminary, I met with people from conflict zones. Their stories of suffering made me sad and angry.

I was convinced that change had to come to stop the suffering of innocent people. The more I tried to understand about the militarization of Burma, it became clearer to me that violence is not the answer to the problems we have in Burma. The only way for us to overcome our problems in Burma is to build peace.

This work is about Christian peacebuilding work for Burma. I am a Baptist Christian, and I am a Karen. The Karen are one of the ethnic minorities in Burma. My Karen Baptist tradition in Burma does influence this work. I do see, interpret, and assert things in this work with the influence of my faith tradition. When it comes to peacebuilding, I rely on John Paul Lederach's understanding of peacebuilding. I decided to use Lederach's understanding of peacebuilding because there is the theological connection between his Mennonite tradition and my Baptist tradition. However, this work concerns with all Christians of any denomination and nondenominational Christians. When I speak of Christians, I include anyone who believes in Jesus as the Son of God.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to our three parents who always forgive me pray for me, my family, and ministry.

I also dedicate this work to my father-in-law, Peter Patrick Welti, who always forgave me, prayed for me, my family and ministry.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

This work is about Christian peacebuilding in Burma in relation to the ongoing militarization in that country. This work will develop a public practical theology of peacebuilding in Burma by exploring the intricacies of the conflict in that country, the theological grounds for Christian involvement in the work of peace, and how Christians can make a difference in the peace process in Burma. The first chapter of this work focuses on the history of militarization in Burma. That chapter will also include the statement of the problem and research question. The second chapter will talk about the suffering of the people in Burma under militarization. It will also discuss Christian involvement in societal issues in Burma.

The third chapter is about the method and methodology of this work. That chapter will focus on practical theology, practical theological method, and public theology. It will also explain why this work is a public practical theology. The fourth chapter focuses on theology of peace and peacebuilding which is grounded on Jesus' teaching of the kingdom of God or the reign of God. It presents best practices in the work of peacebuilding. The fifth chapter will explore the peacebuilding practices that some Christians in Burma have implemented in recent history. It will make an assessment of these peacebuilding efforts, so that in chapter six suggestions can be offered for new strategies and greater implication of Christians in the peacebuilding work of Burma.

CHAPTER ONE. SETTING THE SCENE

The purpose this chapter is twofold. The first one is to provide the statement of the problem, research question, significance, assumptions and limitations, and expected outcomes of this dissertation. The second one is to provide a historical background of Burma in relation to militarization there.

The Statement of the Problem

Militarization of the society has created serious divisions in Burma. The longest civil war in the world, with numerous insurgent groups, in this country has created a lot of divisions in Burma. By the 1980s and 1990s, there were about forty ethnic rebel groups,[1] and as of 2011, there are seventeen major insurgent groups active in Burma.[2] It is unthinkable that there are that many rebel groups in a country that is about the size of the state of Texas.[3] In this militarized society in Burma, Christians have both the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to peacebuilding in Burma.

Christians claim that the God they worship is the source of peace, and this God wills peace for the whole creation. This God also wants Christians to seek peace.[4] Therefore, Christians who believe in this God seek peace. Some Christians in Burma seem to understand their responsibility to offer their efforts to the peacebuilding process in Burma. For instance, Daniel Buttry (an American Baptist peacemaker) points out that he has worked with a Kachin Baptist leader who works as a mediator

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[1] David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 44.

[2] Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A reference guide 2014*, (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2013), 4.

[3] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, xxvii.

[4] Paulus Widjaja, "A Foundational Theology of Peacebuilding," in *Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers*, ed. Donald E. Miller et al. (Telford: Cascadia, 2007), 39.

for the conflict in Burma.[5] In the same way, Andrew Myan Han — former Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Myanmar — has acted as a mediator between the central government in Burma and a Karen insurgent group.[6]

Some Christians in Burma, along with other people, may have contributed to the peacebuilding process in Burma, but peace is still out of sight there. Militarization in Burma has not come to a halt despite peace efforts.[7] This indicates that the peacebuilding process in Burma in relation to the militarization demands more efforts and new strategies.

Research Question

The central research question of this work is: How can Christians contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma? The best way to answer this central question is to answer the following three sub-questions in this work.

Sub-question 1: Why do Christians need to contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma?

Sub-question 2: What is the Christian understanding of peace and peacebuilding, especially in the light of militarization experiences in Burma?

Sub-question 3: How can Christians in Burma contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma, and what are the possibilities and challenges?

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[5] Buttry does not provide the name of this Kachin Baptist leader. He does not provide this person's name possibly because of safety concerns for this person. See Daniel L. Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994), 183.

[6] Alan Saw U, "Reflections on Confidence-building and Cooperation among Ethnic Groups in Myanmar: A Karen Case Study," in *Myanmar: State, Society, and Ethnicity*, ed. N. Ganasen and Kyaw Yin Hlaing (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 222.

[7] Amnesty International, *Annual Report: Myanmar 2016/2017*, accessed May 26, 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/report-myanmar/.

The Significance of the Study

This proposed research will benefit both the church and society in Burma. When it comes to peacebuilding in Burma, most scholarly works come from political and social perspectives. This work will look at the issue from a different and particular perspective. Since this work will look at the issue from a Christian perspective, this work will provide an interpretation of the issue and suggestions from a Christian perspective. This work, thus, will become one scholarly source for those who want to understand and tackle the issue from a different point of view. Most existing substantial works that focus on militarization and peacebuilding in Burma were done by outsiders. Since the researcher of this work is from Burma, this work will provide an insider voice on the issue.

There is not much substantive theological literature that deals with Christian contribution for peacebuilding in Burma. This work directly deals with this topic. Those who want to explore Christian understanding of peace and peacebuilding in the context of Burma may find this dissertation to be a good source. This work will help churches and Christians in Burma to understand how they can become better disciples of Jesus when they become more effective peacebuilders. This work will also serve as a reminder and encouragement for churches in Burma to spend their time and resources not only within their churches' walls or compounds, but also on one of Burma's most pressing issue: peacebuilding.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

This research will consult mostly the works of Christian scholars from the West, especially on theological understanding of peace and peacebuilding. The assumption here is that though Burma is in South East Asia, the works of people with different cultural backgrounds and experiences can still be relevant for Christians in

Burma because they are all Christians. This research will draw on the works of Christian scholars from different denominations though the majority of Christians in Burma are Baptists. This work assumes that there are not major doctrinal issues when it comes to Christian understanding peace and peacebuilding.

The lack of field research is the main limitation of this research. The sources for this work will mainly come from secondary sources. The availabilities of secondary sources can be challenging for some topics. For instance, sources that will provide information on the position of Burma's churches on the civil war, peace, the government, and insurgents can be difficult to find as churches in Burma have mostly kept a very low profile and avoided publicity on these issues.

Expected Outcomes

The findings of this work will benefit churches in Burma in two ways. First, it will provide a public practical theology of peace and peacebuilding for Burma in the light of militarization experiences in Burma. Churches in Burma are in great need of this kind of theology because they have been called to be the witness of Jesus in a country with the longest civil war in the world that has imposed enormous suffering on the populace. A public practical theology of peacebuilding for Burma explores existing practices, reflects theologically on this reality, and proposes a new praxis.

Second, this work will propose a Christian rationale for becoming involved in the peacebuilding efforts in Burma. This work will be an encouragement for Christians in Burma to advance participation in the peacebuilding process in Burma, because this work will help them see that they can be a difference for peacebuilding in Burma.

The society at large in Burma will also benefit from this work. Peacebuilding in Burma has been developed by Christians more than by any other religious groups.[8] This work would be a source for those who want to know how Christians understand and practice peace and peacebuilding. They can also modify those practices as they see fit to build peace more effectively.

The next section will provide a historical background of Burma in relation to militarization there. The following account of the history of militarization in Burma will make clearer why Burma is in desperate need of peace.

Historical Background of Burma

The researcher is a citizen of Burma and will refer to his country as Burma throughout this dissertation, except in direct quotations, though the official name of his country is no longer Burma. In July 1989, a ruling military government changed the name of the country to Union of Myanmar. Before that, the name of the country was Union of Burma, and later, the Socialist Union of Burma. Still, on March 30, 2011, the name of the country became Republic of the Union of Myanmar.[9]

The United Nations and most countries use the name Myanmar. However, political opposition groups still refuse to accept this change of name.[10] Since a military government changed the name of the country, opposition groups argue, this change was illegitimate.[11] The researcher does not regard himself as an opposition, but as a private citizen who feels that it was inappropriate to change the name of the

[8] Aron Tegenfeldt, "In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding: Burma and Beyond" (master's thesis, Universtiy of Victoria, 2004), 5, accessed April 15, 2018, http://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/538.

[9] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, xxi.

[10] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, xxi.

[11] David I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), xi.

country without the consent of its citizenry. That is why the researcher will refer to his country as Burma.[12]

As this work concentrates on militarization and peacebuilding efforts in Burma, this account of historical background of Burma is not exhaustive, but rather focuses on the experience of militarization there. One can divide the history of Burma into three different periods: (1) the pre-colonial period, (2) the colonial period, and (3) the post-independence period.

Pre-Colonial Burma

The regimes of pre-colonial Burma mostly centered in the capital cities and their administrative power faded in distant places. None of the pre-colonial dynasties ever managed to regulate the daily lives of their subjects in a centralized manner, though powerful dynasties ruled occasionally.[13] The best that these powerful rulers achieved was only to become patrons for other smaller kingdoms in Burma.[14] Different ethnic groups occupied different parts of the modern-day Burma before the British came. Historians agree that Mon people of lower Burma came into the country first. The second settlers were probably Karen and Chin groups. Bamar[15] migration took place after these two groups migrated into Burma. Shan people came into Burma

[12] However, this research will use names of places such as states, cities and towns as they are commonly used in Burma today. When it comes to the names of people groups or ethnic groups, it will use the names that each group refer to themselves most of the time either in their own language or English language.

[13] Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 13.

[14] Matthew J. Walton, "Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 6 (2008): 893, accessed April 3, 2017, doi: 10.1525/as.2008.48.6.889.

[15] This research will use the word "Bamar" for the majority ethnic group in Burma who are most of the times referred to as Burmese or Burmans. In many instances, the name Burmese is also used for other non-Bamar groups in Burma. Therefore, the use of the name Burmese is confusing. The Bamar people called themselves "Bamar" while many westerners call them Burmans. This research will use the name "Bamar" for this group simply because they call themselves Bamar.

after the Bamar migration. Many other different groups also came into Burma after Shan migration.[16]

As different groups came into pre-colonial Burma, multiple kingdoms were formed. These kingdoms (or groups) went to war against each other frequently. As a result, the power center shifted between kingdoms quite often. Burma was never a unified country in the pre-colonial era, and all groups in Burma came under a unified control only when the British occupied all of Burma.[17]

Colonial Burma

Burma became a British subject in 1885 and gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. Within that period, the Japanese occupied the country for three years during the Second World War (1942-1945).[18] Burma was only marginally important to the British, and their main concern in the region was India. In fact, the British invaded and occupied Burma ultimately out of their concerns for India.[19]

The British fought three wars to gain control of Burma. The British secured control over Arakan (Rakhine state in modern day) and Tenasserim (also called Tanintharyi) regions from Burma after the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). The British gained control over the whole lower Burma after the second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-1853).[20] The third and final Anglo-Burmese war began in 1885[21] and the annexation of the whole Burma completed by January 1886.[22]

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[16] Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 32.

[17] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 983.

[18] Hla Aung, "The Effect of Anglo-Indian Legislation on Burmese Customary Law" in *Family Law and Customary Law in Asia: A Contemporary Legal Perspective*, ed. David C. Buxbaum (Dordrecht: Springer-Science+Business Media B.V, 1968), 67.

[19] Smith, *Burma*, 40.

[20] Smith, *Burma*, 40.

[21] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 28.

[22] Smith, *Burma*, 40.

Nation building[23] never became a priority for the British during their occupation of Burma.[24] In fact, Burma was only part of India administratively, and it became a separate colony only in 1937.[25] In the attempt to control Burma, the British used direct and indirect rules together. This British strategy divided Burma in to two: The Ministerial Burma and Frontier Areas.[26] Although this division of Burma took place for administrative reasons, it influenced the relationship between different groups who inhabited these different regions in significant ways.[27] Majority ethnic Bamar people happened to be the majority in the Ministerial Burma, and ethnic minorities lived in the Frontier Areas.[28]

One important contributing factor that widened the gap more between the majority ethnic Bamar and ethnic minorities was the British recruitments of native populations for armed forces. The British recruited soldiers from minority groups such as Arakanese (or Rakhine), Mon, and Karen. They did this during the wars to fight the Bamar King, and after the wars to defend British territories in Burma.[29]

As Burma was part of India under British rule for many years[30] the British brought in British-Indian Army and military police (almost all Indians with British officers in commanding positions) to suppress unrests and rebellions in Burma. In addition to the use of these foreign forces, the British sometimes also used some ethnic minority levies to suppress rebellions, that came largely from the Bamars.[31]As

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[23] Mary P. Callahan differentiates between state building and nation building. State building takes care of the establishment of structures and institutions that will operate a nation while nation building ushers in the sense of connectedness among a given populace. Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 13.

[24] Smith, *Burma*, 40.

[25] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 30.

[26] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 892, 893.

[27] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 893.

[28] Lipi Gosh, "Minority, Polity and Governance in Myanmar: Dynamics of Change," *India Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2008): 42, accessed February 27, 2018, doi: 10.1177/097492840806400402.

[29] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 33, 34.

[30] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 30.

[31] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 29, 30; and Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, 2nd ed. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1999), 47.

a result, many Bamars viewed ethnic minorities as British collaborators. Minorities inevitably made it to the Bamars' enemy list.[32]

Bamar nationalists were already complaining about the exclusion of Bamars from the Indian Army in the early 1920s. At this time minorities such as Karen, Kachin, and Chin comprised 83 percent of the homegrown portion of armed forces under British rule around this time.[33] However, this British recruiting pattern continued.[34] Though Bamars were the majority, there were only about 475 Bamars in the regular armed forces at the beginning of Second World War in 1938. On the other hand, there were 1448 Karens, 868 Chins, 881 Kachins, and 168 from other minority ethnic groups were in that regular armed forces.[35]

Ethnic relations in Burma became more complicated when the Japanese invaded Burma in December 1941.[36] When the Japanese came into Burma, many Bamars joined the anti-British Burma Independence Army (BIA).[37] Some Burmese nationalists (famously known as Thirty Comrades) went to Japan secretly in 1941, and the Japanese provided military training to these nationalists. They came back to Thailand and formed the BIA on December 28, 1941. The BIA entered Burma along with the Japanese army three days later.[38]

Though there were only twenty-eight members in the BIA initially, more Bamars joined the BIA in Thailand and in the Thai-Burma border area. By the time they reached central Burma, there were already thirty thousand BIA members.[39] The BIA enjoyed at least ten thousand (or probably about fifty thousand) members by the

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[32] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 893, 894.
[33] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 35.
[34] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 40, 41.
[35] Ardeth Maung Thawnghmung, *The Other Karen in Myanmar: Ethnic Minorities and the Struggle without Arms* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 33.
[36] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 46.
[37] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 38.
[38] Smith, *Burma*, 59.
[39] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 44.

time the Japanese military campaign against the British in Burma was over in June 1942.[40] On the other hand, the British received help from ethnic minorities. During the Japanese invasion in 1942, the British were able to mobilize about 2,000 Karens along with a smaller number from Kachin and Lahu ethnics to fight as guerrilla forces against the Japanese.[41]

Therefore, the alliance that the Bamar nationalists made with the Japanese widened the traditional rift between them and other minorities.[42] In addition, the rift got wider when the predominantly Bamar BIA troops mistreated minorities in the BIA control areas. Indians, Chinese, and Shans suffered at the hand of BIA, but Karens endured the greatest harm.[43] In many instances during this time the BIA troops killed Karens simply for being Karen.[44] While the majority-minority relation in Burma kept deteriorating Burma, the British started to recruit some ethnic minorities in Burma for military offense against the Japanese from India.[45]

The British, together with the Allied forces, launched their effort to retake Burma in 1945.[46] Minorities such as Karen, Karenni, Kachin, and Chin peoples provided valuable assistance to the British and Allied forces.[47] The Bamar nationalists fought with the Japanese to end British rule in Burma as they believe that the Japanese would grant them an independent Burma. However, later they found out that it was not the Japanese's real intention, but to control Burma. In addition, they

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[40] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 53.
[41] Thawnghmung, *The Other Karen in Myanmar*, 33.
[42] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 76.
[43] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 75.
[44] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 75. However, it is important to note some acts of retaliation did come from Karens against Bamars. See Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 75. It is also important to note that not all Bamar nationalists were happy with what these BIA troops did. Among Bamar nationalists, Aung San, Than Tun, and Thakin Soe tried to improve the situation. Col. Suzuki, the Japanese commander of the BIA also intervened to stop the atrocities. See Smith, *Burma*, 62, 63.
[45] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 71; and Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 68.
[46] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 80.
[47] Smith, *Burma*, 63.

realized that the Japanese's power was fading in relation to the Allied forces in India. They, therefore, switched side and started to attack the Japanese on March 27, 1945.[48]

Therefore, now the British along with the Allied forces, ethnic minorities, and Bamar troops were fighting the Japanese. This combined attacked on the Japanese gives the impression that different ethnic groups in Burma were united for the first time. This was not the reality though. In this war, different ethnic groups fought the Japanese mainly along racial lines as the British mainly recruited soldiers from Kachin, Karen, and Chin groups while the Bamar nationalists' Burma National Army (BNA) — BNA was a new name for BIA — was predominantly Bamar.[49] In fact, British officers and ethnic minorities troops unenthusiastically agreed to regard the Bamar nationalist troops as allies in their fight against the Japanese.[50]

To expel the Japanese was the British's immediate goal when they tried to regain control over Burma. However, they never gave a serious thought to what the future of Burma would look like. Bamar nationalists were already eying for independence from the British by this time.[51] On the other hand, some U.S. and British officials had promised prizes such as power and independence to the minorities during the war.[52] Some Bamars believed that the British used divide-and-rule strategies as they wanted to isolate minorities from the political aspirations of the Bamars. This could be the case, but even before that, various minorities in Burma regarded Bamars as their arch-enemies.[53]

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[48] Smith, *Burma*, 61, 62; and Robert Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 236, 237.

[49] Smith, *Burma*, 63. Martin Smith argues that Burma was unified at this point for a short time even only in name. Smith, *Burma*, 63.

[50] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 894, 895.

[51] Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 895.

[52] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 85.

[53] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 47.

The rift between Bamar nationalists and ethnic minorities made it difficult to persuade minorities to join a future Union of Burma that the Bamar leaders wanted upon independence. Among major minority groups, the Karens did not want to see the British go, and wanted a separate Karen state. The Kachins also hoped to gain an independent country for the Kachin people. The British granted the Shans a great amount of autonomy after they annexed the whole Burma, and the Shans did not want to give this up. The Karrennis were never under the British control, but independent. Bamar politicians were aware of the problem and started to persuade minorities to join a future independent Burma. At the same time the Bamar politicians were negotiating with the British for independence.[54]

On the other side, the minorities were not sure about joining a future independent Burma. Even at dawn of independence, many minorities, especially the Karens, believed that they had the right to self-determination regardless of the results of the negotiations between Bamar politicians and the British.[55] The negotiations continued and the British government reached an agreement with Bamar politicians on January 27, 1947: the British agreed to grant Burma independence.[56] The negotiations produced an important agreement, but there were no ethnic minority representations in the process.[57]

Months before the British and Bamar politicians reached the agreement for independence, some ethnic minorities were trying to safeguard their interests against the Bamars, whom they always looked with suspicion. The first meeting to discuss this issue among some minorities took place in March 1946 in Panglong in Shan State. Some Bamar politicians too attended the meeting, and they urged the minorities

[54] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 76-79.
[55] Smith, *Burma*, 72.
[56] Smith, *Burma*, 77, 78; and Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 80.
[57] Smith, *Burma*, 77, 78.

to join them in a future independent Burma. The problem was only a few of major ethnic minorities participated in this meeting. Only major minority groups such as Kachin, Shan, and Chin sent their leaders to this meeting. The Karens, one major minority group, participated only as observers as they were planning to directly appeal to the British government in London for their interests.[58]

After the British and Bamar politicians reached the agreement for Burma's independence, some leaders from ethnic minorities met for the second time in Panglong. This time Aung San — a leading Burmese politician who negotiated with the British for independence — attended the meeting and asked minorities to join Bamars in the bid for independence from the British. On February 12, 1947, Aung San and twenty-three minority representatives from Shan, Kachin, and Chin ethnic groups signed the historic Panglong Agreement. Basically, in this agreement the minorities agreed to join Bamar politicians and asked for independence from the British together.[59]

These twenty-three representatives from three major ethnic groups from Burma decided to join Bamar politicians in the quest for independence from British rule and join a future Union of Burma because Aung San promised equality for minorities in a future independent Burma.[60] Aung San famously stated that "if Burma receives one kyat, you will also get one kyat."[61] This agreement granted the Shans the right to secede from the Union of Burma after a ten-year trial period. It granted the same right to the Karrennis as well though this group was not one of the signatories. It

[58] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 77-79.
[59] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 80.
[60] Smith, *Burma*, 78.
[61] Smith, *Burma*, 78. Kyat is Burma's currency.

also promised the creation of a Kachin state, but gave no right to secede for Kachins.[62]

Panglong agreement is very important in the history of Burma, but it had many serious shortcomings. No representatives from other major minority ethnic groups such Karen, Karrenni, Arakanese, and Mon were present there (four Karen participated only as observers). In the same way, this second meeting at Panglong did not bother to discern or address the concerns of smaller minority groups such as Pao, Wa, and Naga.[63] These weaknesses of Panglong agreement further precipitated more problems in the constitution adopted seven months after the agreement. For instance, this 1947 constitution granted Shans and Karrennis the right to secede after a ten-year trial period while it guaranteed the formation of Kachin State which would not enjoy the right to secede.[64]

The constitution indicated to determine the territory and political rights of the Karens only after independence. This 1947 constitution did not give any important recognition to two major minority groups, Mons and Arakaneses. These two groups were already eager to start their rebellion by this time.[65] Thus, the 1947 constitution "was a recipe for disaster"[66] for future independent Burma.

This brief review of the colonial period of Burma makes clear that there were a lot divisions in Burma, especially, along ethnic lines. These divisions, arguably, became most intense and visible in the years and months leading up to the independence in January 1948. Ethnic enmity existed before the British came to

[62] Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 81.
[63] Smith, *Burma*, 79. Walton, Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma, 899-903.
[64] Smith, *Burma*, 79. Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, 81. The Kachin gave up the right to secede for the inclusion of two major towns in the future Kachin State. Smith, *Burma*, 79.
[65] Smith, *Burma*, 80.
[66] Smith, *Burma*, 79.

Burma and the colonial rule exacerbated that enmity.[67] It does appear that the British favored some ethnic groups over others, and this caused further damage to ethnic relations in Burma.[68] This ethnic tension in Burma was largely responsible for the civil war that broke out in Burma after independence.

Post-Independence Burma

Burma gained independence from the British Empire on January 4, 1948,[69] about eleven months after Panglong agreement was signed. U Nu (a Bamar) became the prime minister of this new nation.[70] The seeds for militarization in post-independence Burma started to grow since the early days of Nu's government. Militarization in Burma, in this work, means military efforts in Burma in relation to the divisions in the society. One faction of the Communist party in Burma started armed rebellion even before independence and the rest rebelled about three months after independence.[71]

Karen leaders were not happy with the 1947 constitution, and made up their mind to start armed rebellion when the British left.[72] Ultimately, the Karen rebellion started about one year after independence.[73] About at the same time, other major

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[67] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 72. Whether the British intentionally used the existing ethnic tension for their own benefit is a matter of debate.

[68] Smith, *Burma*, 46. Whether the British intentionally used divide-and-rule principle to take advantage of the existing ethnic tension, especially when it comes to British's armed forces recruitment patterns in Burma, is a matter of debate. See Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 34. David Steinberg believes that the allegation that the British used divide-and-rule tactics to pit one ethnic group against another is true only to a degree. He argues that the British did not need these tactics to govern Burma as they had enough power to control different groups in Burma. They used it rather for administrative convenience. Steinberg, *Burma*, 183.

[69] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 42, 43.

[70] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 116.

[71] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 44; and Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 114.

[72] Smith, *Burma*, 77.

[73] Ardeth Maung Thawnghmung, *The Karen Revolution in Burma: Diverse Voices, Uncertain Ends* (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2008), 8.

ethnic groups such as Arakanese, Mon, and Karrenni too launched their armed struggle against the government.[74]

There are seven major minority ethnic groups in Burma.[75] Four of these groups started their rebellions after a year or so of independence. Shans and Kachins, who are among these seven groups, started their rebellion against the government in 1958 and 1961 respectively. Chins, who were the last among these seven groups to take up arms, began their rebellion in 1988.[76] By the 1980s and 1990s, there were about forty ethnic rebel groups,[77] and as of 2011 there were seventeen major insurgent groups active in Burma.[78] Burma, unfortunately, qualifies to be the home of the longest civil war in the world as it started in 1948 and still continues.[79]

The militarization of post-independence Burma is not simply the result of the sheer number of insurgent groups and the length of civil war in Burma. It is also the result of long military rule in Burma. Numerous insurgent groups that sprang up in post-independence Burma did enjoy support from some local populations. As a result, the military leaders of post-independence Burma came to the conclusion that politicians did not have the capacity to prevent the union from disintegration, and viewed citizens as potential enemies.[80] On March 2, 1962, General Ne Win — then

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[74] Ashley South, *Ethnic Conflict in Burma: States of Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 26.

[75] John G. Dale, *Free Burma: Transnational Legal Action and Corporate Accountability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 45.

[76] Iftekharul Bashar and Kyaw San Wai, "Myanmar," in *Handbook of Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Rohan Gunaratna and Stefanie Kam (London: Imperial College Press, 2016), 167-169, 177.

[77] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 44.

[78] Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A reference guide 2014*, 4.

[79] Harvard Bergo, "Is 60 Years of Civil War Coming to an End in Myanmar?" *Global Risk Insights*, January 11, 2014, accessed October 13, 2016, http://globalriskinsights.com/2014/01/is-60-years-of-civil-war-coming-to-an-end-in-myanmar/.

[80] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 190.

Chief of Staff of the armed forces at that time—led a coup with the declared intention to save the union from disintegration.[81]

Immediately after the coup the Revolutionary Council, where Ne Win was the head, ruled the country. A few months later, Ne Win formed Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), and ruled the country through this party until 1988.[82] Ne Win made the BSPP the only legal party in the country and his one-party government was a thinly veiled military rule.[83] The BSPP failed, and this failure led to a nationwide demand for democracy in 1988. This movement lasted several months until the military brutally suppressed this movement in September 1988. The end of this democracy movement marks a new military rule in Burma, and efforts to separate the military from state structures did not come until 2011.[84]

This very long militarization in Burma has been responsible for a very high human cost. For instance, according to one government report the civil war was responsible for tens of thousands of causalities between 1948 and 1952 alone. The government usually claimed that government troops killed about two thousand insurgents each year while it claimed that 500 to 600 government soldiers died each year. However, the insurgents gave a reverse figure on the death toll of combatants.[85]

Civilian causality is also very high and estimates suggests that as many as 10,000 civilians died each year because of civil war.[86] In 2006, in the northern part of Karen state alone about 27,000 civilians became displaced persons, because of the

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[81] Smith, *Burma*, 195, 196. Military leaders regarded the demand for federalism from ethnic minorities as a source for the disintegration of the union.

[82] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 63, 64.

[83] Bruce Matthews, "Buddhism under a Military Regime: The Iron Heel in Burma," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 4 (1993): 414, doi: 10.2307/2645106.

[84] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 63, 79, 80; and Ian Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 58, 59.

[85] Smith, *Burma*, 100.

[86] Martin Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma: Development, Democracy and Human Rights* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994), 73.

clashes between government troops and Karen insurgents. These clashes in that area killed lots of civilians, destroyed some 232 villages along with their crops and food stocks. There were about 500,000 internally displaced persons/people (IDPs) in 2006 in eastern part of Burma alone.[87] Civilians also had to endure human right violations (especially from government troops) such as forced labor, rape (both women and girls), and summary executions.[88]

As of 2016 and 2017, the civil war in Burma displaced thousands of people in Kachin, Arakanese, and Karen states. Civilians in these areas suffered from human rights violations such as indiscriminate attacks, summary executions, sexual violence, torture, forced displacements, destruction of property, and denial of aid.[89] The clashes between government troops and ethnic insurgents have led more than a million people to become refugees in neighboring and nearby countries such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Thailand.[90]

This incredibly long militarization in Burma, therefore, has caused enormous human suffering. This militarization has to stop to end the pain that it has been causing to the peoples of Burma. Despite various peace or ceasefire efforts and agreements between subsequent central governments and different rebel groups,[91] militarization continues in Burma as this civil war has not come to an end yet.

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[87] Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Burma: Events of 2006*, accessed April 5, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2007/country-chapters/burma.

[88] HRW, *Burma: Events of 2006*.

[89] Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Burma: Events of 2016*, accessed April 5, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/burma; and Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Burma: Events of 2017*, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/burma, accessed April 5, 2018

[90] *Invisible New Comers: Refugees from Myanmar/Burma and Bhutan in the United States* (Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, 2014), 10, 11. pdf version, downloaded on November 18, 2015, http://apiasf.org/research/APIASF_Burma_Bhutan_Report.pdf.

[91] For information about ceasefire agreements see for instance, Ashley South, *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar: Opportunities and Threats* (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2012), 1-15, pdf version, downloaded on November 9, 2015, http://file.prio.no/publication_files/prio/South-Prospects-for-Peace-in-Myanmar-PRIO-Paper-2012.pdf, and Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, Backgrounder-October 2015* (Institute for Peace

This historical background of Burma in relation to militarization there has pointed out that serious divisions exist in Burma today as the world's longest civil war keeps going on there. This civil war is rooted in century-old divisions in the society in Burma. The civil war in Burma has led to militarization of modern Burma which has caused even more division and a very high human cost.

While this chapter focuses on the history of militarization in Burma, the next chapter will focus on the suffering that militarization in Burma has caused and the reluctance of Christians to respond to this situation.

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and Development Policy, 2015), 5, 6, pdf version, downloaded on November 18, 2015, http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2015-isdp-backgrounder-myanmar-nca.pdf.

CHAPTER TWO. THE SUFFERING OF BURMA'S PEOPLE AND CHRISTIAN RELUCTANCE TO RESPOND

Thousands of people have lost their lives because of militarization in Burma. Many citizens have to go through unspeakable ordeal as they have become forced laborers, minesweepers, and combatants. Many girls and women have become victims of systematic rape. This militarization has also displaced more than a million people. Some even believe that ethnic cleansing has been going on in Burma for a long time.[92] The militarization in Burma after independence has largely been the result of armed conflict between the central government and ethnic rebel groups.[93]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer believes that "the church is the church only when it exists for others."[94] It follows, then, that a Christian is a Christian only when that person exists for others, because to live in Christ is to exist for others. One way for Christians in Burma to exist for others is to respond to the suffering in their society. Therefore, Christians can try to end this militarization which has imposed a lot of suffering on a lot of people.

This chapter will do two things. First, this chapter will present the suffering of the people of Burma under militarization. Second, it will discuss Christian's reluctance to become involved in society in the context the suffering of the people under militarization.

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[92] Pum Za Mang, "Separation of Church and State: A Case Study of Myanmar (Burma)," Asia Journal of Theology 25, no. 1 (April 2011): 43, 44.

[93] This researcher focused on this issue in the previous chapter.

[94] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 382.

Suffering Under Militarization

As there have been many ethnic insurgent groups in Burma, the military dominated subsequent central governments have always raised concern about the disintegration of the union. In the name of the integration of the union, the government has brutalized minority-populated areas.[95] More than half a century of militarization (about seven decades by the time of this writing) in Burma has brutalized much of rural Burma.[96]

The forms of suffering presented here are not exhaustive. The suffering of the people under militarization in Burma deserves a separate rigorous research work. This research will not be able to enumerate and describe all the forms of suffering (especially, emotional and psychological sufferings) that the victims of militarization in Burma have gone through. It will focus on human rights violations committed by government troops. This is not to deny that insurgent groups too have also committed similar crimes, even if they committed less than government troops did.[97]

Forced Labor

Use of forced labor, especially by government troops, was widespread in conflict areas.[98] Government troops used not only men, but also women and children as forced laborers.[99] Forced labor strained the daily lives and livelihoods forced laborers, because they had to be away from home during their time as forced laborers, and thus, were not able to attend their crops and domesticated cash animals for a great

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[95] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 51.

[96] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 86.

[97] Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma*, 72, 77; and South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 86.

[98] Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU), *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006* (Human Rights Documentation Unit, 2007), 25, 26. Some reports indicate that insurgent groups too used civilians as forced laborers, though they seemed to treat these laborers in a more humane way. See HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 28.

[99] Aili Piano and Arch Puddington (eds.), *Freedom in the World 2005: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 115.

amount of time.[100] In some cases, people were forced to work for several months, during which government soldiers treated them badly, abused them both verbally and physically.[101] Government troops used villagers and convicted criminals as forced laborers.

The most common form of forced labor is to carry heavy loads without time to rest. In many instances, soldiers did not give food to forced laborers. These forced porters had to bring their food and carry it along with their share of loads. If they collapsed, the soldiers would beat them, and sometimes killed them, or left them to die where they collapsed. In some cases, government soldiers made them as mine sweepers as they marched toward their enemies. It was also common for soldiers to force people to clear portions of jungles for their troops, bake bricks for constructions, build roads, collect wood, grow paddy, and find food for them.[102]

Extortion

The military not only forced civilians to give their labor for free but also money, food, livestock, and whatever materials that the military demanded.[103] The

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[100] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 26, 28.

[101] Human Rights Watch (HRW), *They Came and Destroyed Our Village Again: The Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Karen State* (Human Rights Watch, 2005), 36, 37, pdf. version downloaded October 27, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0605.pdf.

[102] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 26-29.

[103] Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU), *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2007* (Human Rights Documentation Unit, 2008) 298; and Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU), *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003* (Human Rights Documentation Unit, 2003), 400. In December 1999, this researcher was visiting some Karen villages in northern Mon State. In one village, he came across a government troop. When they came into the village, several forced laborers—who were carrying heavy loads—were marching before the soldiers. Soon after they all made it into the village, an officer and a few soldiers came to the house where this researcher and his friends were staying. Soldiers went to every corner of the small house, which was just a little more than a hut, looking for things. A few minutes later, one of them left with a pair of flip flops, which looked pretty new- Flip flops were considered a valuable possession for poor people in Burma. In that part of the country, people do not always wear shoes because they cannot afford them They use their footwear only for special occasions or religious ceremonies. One soldier took some papayas from a papaya tree from the compound of that house. Some other villagers later reported that soldiers took some of their properties. This troop took with them one male member of the house. to be their guide as they marched in that area. This meant that this person was the first person to march in the line. If there were landmines in places they marched, he would be the first or only victim. This also meant, in his case, that he was supposed not to take this troop to places where insurgents were. Many government troops in frontline areas wanted to avoid confrontations with insurgents as they feared for their safety and

government wanted its soldiers to be self-sufficient. As a result, government soldiers sometimes arbitrarily arrested villagers in the frontline areas and accused them of being insurgent supporters and sympathizers. The real intention was to demand money from these individuals and their families for their release.[104]

Sometimes, government troops told villagers to give them a certain amount of money or they would have to move and relocate.[105] In many cases, these villagers were very poor people, so this kind of demand from the soldiers was a huge challenge for them. For instance, in 2009 many villages in Chin State were having a bad harvest because of a rodent outbreak. In one village in that state, government troops demanded five hundred kyats[106] and one kilogram of rice from each house along with forced laborers.[107]

Forced Relocation

Only between 1996 and 2006, more than a million people were displaced in eastern Burma alone.[108] The military governments did not want villagers to help or support insurgents. To prevent this, different military governments forced local villagers to relocate. On the other hand, insurgent groups, who claim to be the defenders of these villagers, use guerrilla tactics, which cause government troops to retaliate against those villagers. When this happens, in many cases, insurgent groups

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lives. Their responsibility though was to find insurgents and fight with them. As long as they were marching searching for insurgents, they were able to report back to their superiors that they were fulfilling their responsibility. Government troops believed that local villagers knew the locations of insurgents. As a result, they forced these villagers either to take them to insurgents or to take them away from insurgents. The reality was that these local villagers did have some knowledge of the whereabouts of insurgents, but their knowledge was not complete and insurgents were highly mobile. Sometimes, these forced village guides accidentally led government soldiers to the insurgents- Government soldiers punished these guides severely or killed them in this kind of incidents.

[104] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 211.

[105] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 422.

[106] Five hundred kyats would have been equal to 0.5 US dollar.

[107] Free Burma Rangers, *Evidence of Burma Army Extortion Demands on Villagers Facing Food Crisis in Southern Chin State* (July 24, 2009), accessed May 14, 2018, https://www.scribd.com/document/17708757/Evidence-of-Burma-Army-extortion-on-Chin-villagers.

[108] International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School, *Crimes in Burma* (Cambridge: International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School, 2009), 40, 41.

such as the Karen National Union(KNU) are not able to protect civilian populations in the areas that they operate.[109]

In 2006, there were ten refugee camps in Thailand for refugees from Burma. By the end of that year, there were 153, 882 registered refugees in those ten refugee camps. The actual number of refugees from Burma residing in Thailand that year was higher than that. This was the case because a large number of refugees did not enter official refugee camps, while there were other refugees that Thai authorities refused to recognize them as refugees.[110]

In addition to refugees living outside Burma, there were also IDPs inside Burma. According to one study in 2002, about 268,000 people were living in hiding inside Burma.[111] Other 365,000 people were living in more than 176 government assigned relocation sites in government controlled areas in Shan State, Karenni State, Karen State, Mon State, and Tenasserim Division (all these areas are in eastern Burma).[112] By 2007, the number of IDPs in eastern Burma alone was well over 1,000,000.[113] In the same year, a reputable report confirmed that about 3,167 villages disappeared in eastern Burma between 1996 and 2007 because of destruction or mass (forced) relocation.[114]

Forced displacement for victims of militarization was not a onetime incident. They went through it repeatedly. Several things could happen to these people's place

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[109] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 86.
[110] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 82.
[111] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 83
[112] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 83. It seems that there is more information on IDPs in eastern part of Burma and refugees in Thailand than other parts of Burma and refugees in other neighboring countries. There are more insurgent groups in the eastern part of Burma than any other parts of Burma. Many INGOs and the UN agencies operate along Thai-Burma border, which is the eastern part of Burma. These organizations and researchers have more opportunities to do research on Thai-Burma border and in eastern Burma as they operate there or because of somewhat easier access to the population in eastern Burma across Thai border.
[113] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 83.
[114] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 83.

of origin when they had to leave it. Sometimes government troops or other hostile groups occupied it, or they planted landmines in that area. In some cases, other displaced persons came and lived there.[115] This made it very difficult for the original residents to come back and live in their place of origin.

They were also not able to live very long in the place that they moved to, as they had to move multiple times after first displacement. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) conducted some in-depth interviews in 2003 and 2004 with thirty-six Karen IDPs in north-eastern Karen State. These interviews revealed that these thirty-six Karen IDPs experienced more than 1,000 forced displacements. Five of these thirty-six people had been displaced more than 100 times (some of them since the 1940s).[116] It is hard to know how many more other people in Burma have gone through similar ordeals.

When government troops gave relocations orders to villagers, they gave villagers only a few days to move out, or it was effective immediately.[117] Sometimes government troops told villagers to go to a designated relocation site, but at other times they simply told villagers to leave.[118] The government troops would also loot and destroy houses, crops, animals, and burn rice barns and villages. They also laid landmines on the main trails, so that villagers would not dare to come back.[119]

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[115] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 85.
[116] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 85. Also see note number 10.
[117] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 408, 423.
[118] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 86.
[119] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 86, 87; and HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 421, 422. This researcher went to a village in Karen State in Than Daung township in mid-2009 as he was invited to preach at a Sunday where the village church was planning consecrate the new roof of the church. A few years prior to that, government soldiers came to that village and ordered villagers to evacuate. A few years later, villagers were allowed to come back to their village. Not all of them, but some of them came back. When they came back, almost all houses were in pretty bad shape. There were clear signs of looting and destruction. Many houses were mere ashes now. The tin roof and some timbers of the village church was missing. The pastor and many villagers believed that the government troops took it, and used it for their buildings in their base just at the edge of the village. The pastor and some villagers said "we saw the church roof and timber there." Government soldiers also planted landmines in the village, even in the compound of the primary school of the village. It had been a few years and different government troops had been stationed there during these years. Troops

Forced displacement is also closely linked with land confiscation. Government troops confiscated land especially in the conflict areas to increase their presence and consolidate their control of those areas. These land confiscations forced local populations to move to other places.[120] It was common for government troops to confiscate the properties and belongings of villagers that they had to leave behind.[121]

Torture

Torture was another widespread human rights violation that villagers had to endure especially at the hands of government troops.[122] Beating was the most common form of torture for villagers. For instance, government soldiers would beat forced laborers, and sometimes they beat them until they died.[123] Government soldiers also used sexual forms of torture both against men and women. They forced victims to strip naked in the presence of others as soldiers taunted and threaten them. In some case, soldiers burned, beat, or electrocuted genitals.[124]

Some reports claim that government soldiers, sometimes, tortured their victims until parts of their bodies such as hands, legs, eyes were broken or completely destroyed. They also used starvation as torture. There were cases where government

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that came later did not know exactly where all the landmines were. This researcher visited that school compound and one village leader pointed to a few places in the school compound that the villagers believed landmines were laid. This researcher asked that person "how do you keep school children from going into those areas?" His answer was abrupt and simple: "we told them there are landmines, so don't go there." When government troops drive out people from their villages, they do not want them to come back, and one common practice to reach this goal is to lay landmines near and in the villages. Sometimes, some villagers sneaked back into their villages though they knew that there could be landmines. Most of the time they decided to take such a huge risk because they had to leave in a hurry that they could hardly take any belongings, food, or animal such as pigs and chickens. Sometimes, their family members had no more rice to eat, so they decided to sneak back into their villages to fetch some rice, or to check their pigs and chickens and, if possible, to feed them. These domesticated animals were one of the primary sources of food or income for these people. In Burma, this researcher had the privilege to hear the stories of numerous victims and family members of victims of landmines or on sight shooting, who went back to their villages for the reasons mentioned here. Some of them lost their lives, while some of them were amputated or seriously injured.

[120] International Human Rights Clinic, *Crimes in Burma*, 46.

[121] Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma*, 73, 74, 76; and HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 400.

[122] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 214.

[123] HRW, *They Came and Destroyed Our Village Again*, 29, 36.

[124] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, 214.

soldiers arrested and starved their victims—including elderly people, women, and children—for multiple days. In many cases, these victims were arrested and tortured for no cause at all.[125]

Sexual Violence

The government encouraged its troops to rape ethnic minority women and girls in conflict areas, or at least it ignored such incidents. It seems that government troops raped these women and girls as part of their military strategy. They raped them because they hoped to induce fear on local populations, and they also hoped to humiliate and demoralize insurgent groups as they raped women and girls from insurgents' respective ethnic groups. Rape of these women and girls also served as a form of reward for government troops in the frontlines.[126]

A report on rape case in Shan State came out in 2002. This report documented 173 rapes that government troops perpetrated against 625 girls and women. These recorded incidents occurred in Shan State alone and covered the incidents that took place only between 1996 and 2001.[127] Another report that recorded rape cases that took place mainly in Karen State came out in 2004. This report documented 125 rape cases against women and girls between 1988 and 2004.[128]

It is highly probable that there were more rape victims than these two reports could document. Not all victims would have come forward because of culture of shame in these communities attached to rape or because of fear of retaliation from the

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[125] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 158-160, 423.

[126] Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) and The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), *License to Rape: The Burmese Military Regime's use of Sexual Violence in the Ongoing War in Shan State* (Chiang Mai: Shan Human Rights Foundation and The Shan Women's Action Network. 2002), 7; and HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 286.

[127] SHRF and SWAN, *License to Rape*, 1.

[128] Karen Women's Organization (KWO), *Shattering Silences: Karen Women Speak out about the Burmese Military Regime's use of Rape as a Strategy of War in Karen State* (Mae Sariang: Karen Women's Organization, 2004), 10, 16.

perpetrators for reporting the story.[129] Government troops would also beat their rape victims until they were unconscious, suffocate them with plastic bags, cut off their breasts, and murder them. Even pregnant women had to endure these ordeals.[130]

Extrajudicial Killings

In some cases, government soldiers not only killed their rape victims, but also the family members of those victims,[131] probably in order to leave no witnesses. Another common form of extrajudicial killing was to shoot villagers on sight in the conflict areas. They would shoot villagers that they came across in conflict areas. Sometimes, displaced villagers returned to their villages to get food or check their houses and animals. If government troops happened to be in the area, they shot these returnees on sight.[132] Government soldiers also killed villagers that they accused to be insurgent supporters. They arrested, tortured, and, in most cases, killed these accused individuals without any credible evidence against the accused and fair trials. They sometimes also killed villagers for no apparent reason at all.[133]

Christian Inaction in the Face of Suffering

Christian response to the suffering of people in Burma has been for the most part inaction and silence. Christians and their churches in Burma have "been silent in

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[129] KWO, *Shattering Silences*, 10, 11; and International Human Rights Clinic, *Crimes in Burma*, 46, 47.

[130] SHRF and SWAN, *License to Rape*, 10. For fuller accounts of such incidents see sources such as SHRF and SWAN, *License to Rape*; KWO, *Shattering Silences*; Karen Women's Organization (KWO), *State of Terror: The Ongoing Rape, Murder, Torture and Forced Labour Suffered by Women Living Under the Burmese Military Regime in Karen State* (Mae Sariang: Karen Women's Organization, 2007); and Women's League of Chinland, *Unsafe State: State-Sanctioned Sexual Violence against Chin Women in Burma* (Women's League of Chinland, 2007). As government troops have been raping local women and girls in frontline areas since the beginning of the civil war in Burma, it is impossible to know how many women and girls they raped, tortured, and killed over several decades.

[131] International Human Rights Clinic, *Crimes in Burma*, 53, 54.

[132] International Human Rights Clinic, *Crimes in Burma*, 46, 47; Martin Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma*, 74; and HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 81.

[133] HRDU, *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2002-2003*, 81-107.

the face of such inhumane social-political evil."[134] There are at least three important reasons why Christians in Burma are mostly silent or have decided not to try to seek changes in Burma in the face of sufferings that militarization brings about. First, Baptist doctrine of separation of church and state discourages involvement in political situations. Second, many of Burma's Christians are under a strong influence of this-world-denying theology, and this theology makes them stay away from societal issues. Third, the minority status of these Christians keeps them from becoming agents of positive change.

Baptists and Separation of Church and State

State, society, and government. Many Christians in Burma are reluctant to be agents of positive change as they face militarization and its evil. They believe that Christians should not become involved in government related matters. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the term "government" refers to rulers of a society, but he understands the term "state" to mean a unit that includes "both the rulers and the ruled."[135] In this sense, it means that a state is the whole society where both rulers and the ruled live and act. This distinction between government and state or society is necessary for the discussion here because the doctrine of separation of church and state is not about separation of church and society, but separation of church and government.

Separation of church and government. The idea of separation of church and government has its origin in separationist ethos in the Old Testament. For instance, the Hebrew Bible reminds ancient Israelites not to mingle with the gentiles and to separate the Levites and other who worked in the temple from the rest of the Israelites

[134] Mang, Seperation of Church and State, 44.

[135] See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "State and Church," in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, ed. William T Cavanaugh, Jeffery W. Bailey, and Craig Hovey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 286.

(Ex 34:11-16, Ezr 6:21, 1 Kgs 8:53, Lv 20:24-25, 1 Chr 23:13, Neh 10:28-31).[136] The early Catholic Church espoused the separation of Christian churches from, what the y perceived to be, the sinful and sometimes hostile world that the political authorities governed. Even after Christianity became an established religion of the Roman Empire, Augustine and other church leaders wanted government power to stay separated from church power on the premise that the world was sinful while the Christian church was not.[137]

While the early exponents of separation of church and government wanted this separation for the sake of purity of the Christian church, the reason for this separation changed with time. Not long after Christianity became a state religion of the Roman Empire, the government power and the power of the Christian church began to merge, though they were still two separate powers. Under this arrangement of power, the pope and clergy enjoyed jurisdiction not only over spiritual matters, but also over broad societal matters. The clergy was even able to delegate emperors, kings, and dukes. The clergy also imposed the responsibility on civil authorities to legislate and implement civil laws that would be in accordance with canon law.[138]

One consequence of this power arrangement was that the clergy became dependent on civil authorities who were loyal to them to set up and implement church decrees.[139] This gave government authorities power to intervene in church related affairs in significant ways. They even possessed the authority to condemn church leaders if they believed that those leaders' faith was heretical. For instance, in April of 1521, Emperor Charles V of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire convened the Diet of

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[136] John Witte, Jr., "Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State," *Journal of Church and State* 48, no. 1(2006): 16.

[137] Witte, Jr., Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State, 17-19.

[138] Witte, Jr., Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State, 19-20.

[139] Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18,19.

Worms to decide the fate of Martin Luther.[140] Subsequently, the emperor condemned Luther "as an unrepentant heretic in the Edit of Worms."[141] Charles V also ordered the destruction of Luther's books and writings and his arrest and execution.[142]

In the sixteenth century, many leaders from the protestant reformation criticized this kind of power arrangement. These early reformers wanted "freedom of the church from the tyranny of the pope, freedom of the individual conscience from canon law and clerical control, freedom of state officials from church power and privilege."[143] These early reformers demanded freedom of the individual Christian in matters of faith.[144] For example, Luther was adamant that civil authorities should not punish a citizen for wrong beliefs, but only in civil matters.[145] The following section will explain how Luther's view of the role of civil authorities in spiritual matters indirectly influenced early Baptists.

Baptists and separation of church and state. In the Netherlands, the first Baptists came in contact with Luther's idea of the non-interference of government in church related matters through the Mennonites, who in turn had received these ideas from the Anabaptists.[146] In 1608, a group of separatists from England came to the Netherlands and John Smyth was their leader. Smyth was an Anglican minister, but later he left the Church of England. After he left the Church of England, Smyth became a separatist and organized a church, where he became a pastor. In 1608,

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[140] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 19.
[141] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 20.
[142] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 20.
[143] Witte, Jr., Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State, 21.
[144] Witte, Jr., Facts and Fictions About the History of Separation of Church and State, 21.
[145] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 25. This was, however, the view of the early Luther while the later Luther contradicted this early view to some extent. The later Luther wanted civil rulers to provide some religious oversight in the light of the Peasants' War. See Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 20-27.
[146] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 27-29.

Smyth led this congregation to the Netherlands to avoid official harassment in England for not being Anglicans.[147]

In the Netherlands Smyth was influenced by Mennonites, and as a result he embraced adult baptism. Later, Smyth baptized himself, and became the first Baptist ever. Consequently, his congregation too became the first Baptist church ever.[148] Mennonites in the Netherlands also influenced Smyth's view on the role of government in church affairs. Just a few years before he came to the Netherlands, in 1605, Smyth wrote: "the Magistrate should cause all men to worship the true God, or else should punish them with imprisonment, confiscation of goods, or death."[149] However, as he came under the influence of Mennonites in the Netherlands, Smyth directly contradicted his prior view of the role of government in religious affairs. He wrote:

> That the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine: but to leave Christian religion free, to every man's conscience, and to handle only civil transgressions (Rom. Xiii), injuries and wrongs of man against man, in murder, adultery, theft, etc., for Christ only is the king, and lawgiver of the church and conscience (James iv.12).[150]

Among the early Baptists, Smyth was not the only Baptist to hold this view of the role of government in church affairs. Smyth's most prominent fellow Baptist

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[147] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 33, 34; and David W. Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 31, 32.

[148] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 34; and Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 32.

[149] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 33.

[150] John Smyth quoted in Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 34. It is highly possible that Smyth reached this view of government's role because Menno Simons's Mennonite view influenced him. In addition to that, this could also be because of the direct influence of Anapabtist's idea of the role of government in religious matter on Smyth. See Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 34-37.

associates such as Thomas Helywes and Leonard Busher shared and promoted this view.[151] Many other prominent early Baptists also shared and promoted this view.[152] Actually, these early Baptists were the first Christians to demand separation of church and government. These Baptists demanded that civil authorities stay away from church affairs, especially in England.[153] Therefore, Baptist doctrine of separation of church and state does not imply that Christians need to stay away from government related matters or societal issues. It is the government which needs to stay away from religious matters.

In fact, many early Baptists in the Netherlands decided not to become Mennonites despite Mennonite influence partly because of the Mennonites' view on civil magistrates. These Mennonites in the Netherlands did not encourage Christians to serve as civil magistrates[154] as they believed that a civil magistrate's office disqualified the magistrate to be a member of Mennonite church.[155]

On the other hand, prominent early Baptists such as Thomas Helwys believed that civil magistrates' profession did not bar them to become church members.[156] These early Baptists were ready to accept government officials as their members, and this reflects that they believed that there was no reason for Christians not to become civil authorities. If Christian involvement in government even as civil magistrates was not a problem, Christian involvement in any government related matters could not have been a problem for them.

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[151] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 35, 36; and Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 38, 39.

[152] See Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 36-39; and Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 198-200.

[153] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 39.

[154] Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 36.

[155] Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 198.

[156] Bebbington, *Baptist Throughout the Centuries*, 198; and G. Hugh Wamble, "Baptist Contributions to Separation of Church and State," *Baptist History and Heritage* 20, no. 3 (1985): 11.

As Baptists are the majority among Christians in Burma,[157] they stress the importance of the doctrine of separation of church and state. Many believe that separation of church and state requires Christians to refrain from matters related to politics, and subjugation of church to government.[158] However, the origin of Baptist doctrine of separation of church and state has nothing to do with Christian political quietism or total submission of church to political authorities. This doctrine, instead, originated in the protest of early Baptists in England to the crown of England, who required his subjects to belong to Church of England.[159] Thus, Baptist doctrine of separation of church and state is more about religious liberty, and not a justification for political quietism or Christian submission to government.

Baptists in the United States of America (USA) claim their European heritage, which goes all the way back even to the first exiled English Baptist church in the Netherlands.[160] Baptists in Burma, in turn, claim their American heritage as early Baptist churches in Burma were established because of the work of American Baptist missionaries who went to Burma in early nineteenth century.[161] Christians in Burma do not realize that the doctrine of separation of church and state does not require them to stay away from government related matters such as militarization in Burma.

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[157] Katherine E. Babson, "The Province of Myanmar (Burma)," in *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*, ed. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 407.

[158] Mang, Seperation of Church and State, 44. This researcher too has come across with many Christians in Burma who believe that Baptist doctrine of separation of church and state requires these two things.

[159] See Thomas Helwys quoted in Walter H. Burgess, *John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, and the First Baptist Church in England* (London: James Clarke & Company, 1911), 293; and Wamble, Baptist Contributions to Separation of Church and State, 4,5.

[160] Charles McDaniel, "The Decline of the Separation Principle in the Baptist Tradition of Religious Liberty," *Journal of Church and State* 50, no. 3 (2008): 415.

[161] One comprehensive source on early American Baptist mission work in Burma is Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicles*, ed. Genevieve Sowards and Erville Sowards, Book 1 and 2 (Rangoon: University Press, 1963).

Christians and society: this-world-denying theology. Many Christians in Burma are not only reluctant to get involved in government related issues, they are also reluctant to become involved in broader societal related issues.[162] This-world-denying theology, which has low regard for this world, influences many Christians in Burma. This theology leads to the desire to separate Christians from the larger society. These Christians relate their this-world-denying theology to the commandment to seek the Kingdom of God first (Mt 6:33). For these Christians, to seek the Kingdom of God means to devote one's time and energy only for activities such as worshipping, prayers, Bible reading, and fasting but nothing else.[163]

This this-world-denying theology suggests that the Christian church is sacred while society outside the church is evil.[164] In fact, many of them believe that society is broken or evil beyond repair.[165] Since society is broken beyond repair, these Christians do not see any reason to try to improve their society. Long militarization in Burma in some ways seems to confirm the irreparably brokenness of society. As this militarization seems to be going on forever in this society, Christians in Burma can hardly see any good reason to do something about it.

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[162] Zam Khat Kham, "Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar: Christian Identity and Witness in Myanmar Today" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2015), 204, accessed April 26, 2018, http://scholar.csl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=phd.

[163] Saw Augurlion, *Christian Existence: And Issues Related to Nationalism and Religious Identity in Post-Colonial Myanmar* (Yangon: Tin Tin Chit, 2018), 107; also see footnote no. 269 on the same page. Here Augurlion is talking about Christianity under socialist rule in Burma (1962-1988). However, this researcher's experience is that this this-world-denying theology is still dominant among Christians in Burma.

[164] Augurlion, *Christian Existence*, 107.

[165] Kham, Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar, 204. Some people assert that Christians in Burma regard religious sphere to be sacred while society outside Christian church to be profane because of the teachings of missionaries in Burma from the West and the influence of Theravada Buddhism. While Western missionaries teach that this world is broken beyond improvement, Theravada Buddhism in Burma makes a sharp distinction between the present world (*loka*) and the metaphysical or supra-mundane (*lokkuttara*). See Kham, Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar,203, 204; and Simon Pau Khan En, "The Ecumenical Perspective of Christianity by the Churches in Myanmar,"
RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology 10 (January 2009): 25.

Being a minority. The total population of Burma is about 52 million. Buddhism is the majority religion in Burma, and almost 87.8 percent of the population is Buddhist. Christians make up 6.2 percent of the whole population.[166] This minority status Christians in Burma discourages their involvement in both government related matters and societal matters. Christians in Burma face discriminations, and even persecution that come from the government.[167]

Some reports suggest that, even if not nationwide, Christians in some parts of Burma have suffered persecution that came from government troops since the day of the BSPP rule. Many villages of minority ethnics, who were Christians, happened to be in the conflict zones, and they were ethnically affiliated to insurgents. Christians in these areas have suffered different forms of human rights violations, especially at the hands of government troops.[168]

Ne Win's BSPP government's discrimination against Christians was mostly restricted to insurgent areas. Christians enjoyed a relative freedom under the military government that succeeded Ne Win's government. However, Christians did face restrictions and discriminations under this military government, while this government gave a more favorable treatment to Buddhism. In some Christian majority areas, the government sent Buddhist monks as missionaries. Forcible conversions to Buddhism took place in those areas.[169] The seizing and burning of

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[166] Department of Population, *Myanmar Census Atlas: The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census*, 10, 26, accessed April 17, 2018, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MyanmarCensusAtlas_lowres.pdf.

[167] See Pum Za Mang, "Ethnic persecution: a case study of the Kachin in Burma," *International Journal of Public Theology* 9, no 1 (2015), doi: 10.1163/15697320-12341380.

[168] Augurlion, *Christian Existence*, 82, 83.

[169] Augurlion, *Christian Existence*, 85-95. Christians are not the only minority that faced restrictions and discriminations. Other minorities such as Muslims and Hindu too faced similar restrictions and discriminations.

thousands of Bibles happened along with the destruction and burning of churches and Christian symbols such as erected crosses in those areas.[170]

To get permission from authorities to build new churches or even to repair existing churches was very difficult in many cases.[171] Christians also faced restrictions on holding meetings and mission efforts.[172] Some Christians and pastors faced harassments, arrests, and torture simply because they practiced their religion.[173] Many Christians in Burma fear the government as they are a small minority that faces such harassments, restrictions, and persecution at the hands of government authorities and military. Decades-long acts of terror from governments have created fear in the hearts of not only Christians, but also the majority of the people in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi writes:

> Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure ... It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of the principle that might is right to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear.[174]

In similar vein, Monique Skidmore observes that "fear is the most common emotion constructed by the regime."[175] Christians in Burma do not escape this fear, which almost everyone in Burma exhibits. They even have a very good reason to fear

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[170] Augurlion, *Christian Existence*, 87, 88, 93; and Benedict Rogers, *Burma: A Nation at Crossroads* (London: Rider, 2012), 108, 109.

[171] Rogers, *Burma*, 95.

[172] Augurlion, *Christian Existence*, 79, 90-91; and Rogers, *Burma: A Nation at Crossroads*, 95.

[173] Rogers, *Burma*, 109, 110.

[174] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and other Writings*, ed. Michael Aris (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 184.

[175] Monique Skidmore, "Darker than Midnight: Fear, Vulnerability, and Terror Making in Urban Burma," *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 1 (2003): 18, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805206.

the government more than the majority of the population. In addition to the government's general mistreatment of the whole population, they suffer extra mistreatments from the government because they are a religious minority. When this fear is compounded by this-world-denying theology, it is not surprising that Christians in Burma see no reason to engage society. They would not want more harassment from the government for saying or doing things that the government does not like.

Theological Reasoning Against This-World-Denying Theology and Being a Minority

Christians responsibility to contribute for the betterment of this world or the society comes from the understanding of God as the God who cares for this world. God loved this world so much that God decided to give God's own son to this world (Jn 3:16). Jesus Christ is the center of God's salvation scheme. To be saved is to be union with God through Jesus Christ.[176] Bonhoeffer points out that Jesus Christ's disciples participate in the being of Jesus Christ. They participate in the being of Jesus Christ through their faith in him. Jesus Christ existed only as being there for others, and he maintained this being there for others until his death.[177] As Christians participate in the being of Jesus, they also share Jesus' work of being there for others.

Whoever refuses to participate in the building up of this world and to open themselves to others rejects union with God through Jesus Christ (Mt 25:31-46).[178] When Christians embrace this-world-denying theology, they deny God because they do not appreciate Jesus Christ's incarnation. God's decision to send God's own son to this world means that God does not deny this world. God communicates and engages

[176] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 85.
[177] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 381.
[178] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 85.

this world through Jesus Christ.[179] God's son assumed human form and came to live in this world. The incarnation of God's son is, perhaps, the most powerful way to declare that God does not deny this world, but loves it very much.

This world that God loves so much is not an inherently evil world. In fact, it is the creation of the God who is good (Ps 107:1), and this good God declared that God's whole creation is good (Gn 1:31). God also "remains passionately and compassionately involved with it.[180] Therefore, there is no reason to regard this world as evil or broken beyond repair, and conclude that it is better for Christians to separate themselves from the world and society.

Sin is present in the world and there is no one who has not sinned (Rom 5:12). However, this does not mean that this world is too evil for God—who is holy (Is 43:15)—to associate with. In fact, "God does not abandon the godless to their evil but gives the divine self for them in order to receive them into divine communion through atonement."[181] This basically means that God sent Jesus Christ to engage this world, and God continues to be involved in this world.

In his last sermon, which he preached on the eve of his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. urged the need for dangerous unselfishness in the struggle against segregation in the United States. He based his argument for dangerous unselfishness on one of the stories that Jesus told: The Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37). In this story, a man was robbed on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. The robbers attacked him and left him on the road naked and half-dead. Later on, three people happened to be travelling on this road and came across with this victim. A priest and Levite were the

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[179] Geffrey B. Kelly, ed., *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 102.

[180] N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 40.

[181] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 23.

first and second persons to come by the place where this man was lying. Both the priest and Levite ignored this man, but Jesus did not explain why they decided to do so (Lk 10: 31-32).[182]

Some people assume that the priest and the Levite did not have time to stop to help this victim as they were heading to a religious meeting. Another possibility, people also assume, was that the priest and Levite were about to engage in a religious ceremony, and this required them not to touch a human body twenty-four hours before the ceremony. King, however, had a different understanding of what was going through in the minds of the priest and Levite in this incident. According to King, the road between Jerusalem and Jericho is a very dangerous one. He could see how dangerous the road would have been in Jesus' day because King once drove from Jerusalem to Jericho. King believed that this road would have been a very good place for robbers to rob people as it is a winding and meandering road. [183]

Back in Jesus' days, people named this road "Bloody Pass," for the dangers it posed to the travelers. Thus, the possibility was that, King contended, the priest and Levite were afraid. When they saw this man lying on the road, it was obvious to them that he had been robbed. Consequently, they would have thought that the robbers might still be in that area, and they did not want to face what this man faced. The other possibility was that they thought that this man was actually was a robber. He was just trying to trick people to approach him so that he can easily rob them. Therefore, the priest and the Levite decided not to help this man.[184]

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[182] Martin Luther King Jr., "I See the Promised Land," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harpercollins, 1991), 284.

[183] King Jr., I See the Promised Land, 284.

[184] King Jr., I See the Promised Land, 284-285.

The Good Samaritan, as he is widely known today, was the third person to come by. King believed that the Good Samaritan did not worry about what would happen to him if he stopped to help this man. Rather, his concern was that what would happen to this man if he did not stop and help him. King believed that the priest and Levite were afraid, but he did not mention if he thought that the Good Samaritan was afraid as well.[185]

However, it is possible that the Good Samaritan was also as scared, even more than the others. Yet, the Good Samaritan decided to help the victim. King believed that the Good Samaritan was able to help the victim because "he had the capacity to project the 'I' into the 'thou.'"[186] He was able to deny his love for self, and give way to his love for another person. Jesus told this story because someone wanted to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life (vs. 25). Jesus answered that one needed to love God with all of one's heart and soul, and love one's neighbor as oneself (vs. 27). Then, the questioner asked was who his neighbor was (vs. 29), and Jesus told this story (vs. 30-37).

This story makes clear it is important to help the victims who are suffering. To help such victims is also one of the requirements for Christians to inherit eternal life. It might not be possible for Christians in Burma to overcome their fear when it comes to the call to engage government related issues. The Good Samaritan did not get rid of his fear, but he had enough courage to do the right thing. This story tells Christians in Burma to see that though subsequent governments in Burma have terrorized them, God wants them to muster enough courage to help those who are suffering. When

[185] King Jr., I See the Promised Land, 284-285.
[186] King Jr., I See the Promised Land, 284.

they help the people who are suffering around them, they fulfill one of the two requirements to enter eternal life.

This chapter has accomplished two things. First, it has presented the suffering of the people of Burma under militarization. Second, it has explored the underlying causes for the lack of Christian involvement in society in the context of people's suffering under militarization. It has also argued that there is a Christian responsibility to build peace and to try to end militarization in Burma. This answers the first sub-question of this research: Why do Christians need to contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma? The next chapter will present the method and methodology that this work will use and its distinctive public dimension.

CHAPTER THREE. PRACTICE-THEORY-PRACTICE METHOD AND PUBLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

This chapter introduces a public practical theological approach to peacebuilding in Burma. It begins with a presentation of practical theology, and particularly, Don S. Browning's practice-theory-practice method, and its usefulness for this work. After that, the present chapter will explain what public theology is and why this work is a public practical theology.

Practical Theology

A Brief Account of Practical Theology

Practical theology slowly started to emerge as a separate theological discipline in the late eighteenth century. This makes practical theology a relatively young theological discipline. However, people have argued that theology was practical centuries before the emergence of practical theology.[187] Arguably, German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first theologian to assign an important role to the practical dimension in the field of theology.[188]

Schleiermacher divided theology into three distinct sub-disciplines. They are: philosophical theology, historical theology, and practical theology. Among these three, Schleiermacher regarded practical theology as the crown of theology. Though practical theology was the crown of all theology for Schleiermacher, he did not give practical theology an independent status, but a completely dependent one. Schleiermacher believed that the application of philosophical and historical theologies had to take place in practical theology.[189]

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[187] Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 23, 39, 40.

[188] Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains*, trn. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 19.

[189] Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 43.

Schleiermacher's understanding of practical theology made this theological discipline simply an applied theology. For him the primary role of practical theology was "to bring to bear the fruits of other theological disciplines in the church's life through ministerial practice."[190] Therefore, practical theology as applied theology for Schleiermacher was not the work of the whole church, but only of the professional clergy. Schleiermacher effectively confined practical theology within the boundaries of the church, and this approach has been termed the clerical paradigm.[191] This Schleiermachian understanding of the scope and role of practical theology lasted for a very long time. Until 1950, practical theology was limited to research and teaching in a pastoral setting.[192]

However, in the 1950s and 1960s, practical theologians in the United States of America (USA) started to question the validity of this Schleiermachian understanding of practical theology. These theologians put forward two important criticism of Schleiermachian model. Firstly, they believed that Schleiermacher's model missed one important aspect of ministry. These theologians argued that ministry was not only the work of the clergy, but of all the people in the congregation. Secondly, they pointed out that Schleiermacher falsely believed that practical theology could not generate original theological insights, but techniques for ministry only. These theologians believed that practical theology produced new knowledge on its own.[193]

Despite such criticism, Schleiermacher's model of practical theology still persists to some extent. Practical theologians may agree that practical theology is not

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[190] Sally A. Brown, "Hermeneutics in Protestant Practical Theology," in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 122.

[191] Brown, Hermeneutics in Protestant Practical Theology, 122.

[192] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "The Contributions of Practical Theology," in *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Blackwell, 2012), 4.

[193] Brown, Hermeneutics in Protestant Practical Theology, 122.

applied theology. However, some of them still see it as only the work of the clergy. For instance, practical theologians in the United Kingdom (UK) use the terms practical theology and pastoral theology interchangeably.[194] Pastoral theology is "person- and pathos-centered and focused on the activity of care."[195] This understanding of the nature of pastoral theology can be more of a Protestant understanding of the discipline. Catholics and Protestants understand pastoral theology in different ways. For Protestants, pastoral theology means pastoral care, whereas for Catholics, pastoral theology is "a curricular category having to do with courses and topics related to pastoral ministry."[196]

Catholic and Protestant understandings of pastoral theology share the view that pastoral theology is the work mainly, if not exclusively of professional ministers. If pastoral theology and practical theology are interchangeable terms, practical theology ends up as the work that only professional ministers can do. As people use the terms pastoral theology and practical theology in "confusing and conflating ways,"[197] they no longer see how each discipline contributes in unique ways.[198] Pastoral theology contributes through the work of people in ministry. Practical theology, on the other hand is more integrative, and it focuses on wider issues of ministry, discipleship, formation, [199] and any issue that affects human beings.

Gerben Heitink's understanding of practical theology clearly captures the above-mentioned understanding of the nature of practical theology perfectly. He argues that practical theology "deals with God's activity through the ministry of

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[194] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 10.

[195] Miller-McLemore, The Contributions of Practical Theology, 6.

[196] See note 14 of Kathleen A. Cahalan and Bryan Froehle, "A Developing Discipline: The Catholic Voice in Practical Theology," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, ed. Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah: Paulist, 2014), 45.

[197] Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 10.

[198] Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 10.

[199] Miller-McLemore, The Contributions of Practical Theology, 6.

human beings."[200] In this sense, the focus of practical theology goes beyond what clergy do. It includes the whole ministry where all believers contribute. The scope of practical theology is broader than the scope of pastoral theology. It is not limited to intra-ecclesial issues. For this reason, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore argues that pastoral theology and practical theology are not the same. She believes instead that pastoral theology is one of the sub-disciplines of practical theology.[201]

While systematic or doctrinal theology focuses on proclaimed beliefs, practical theology is a theology that "deals with God's activity through the ministry of human beings.[202] It focuses on faith in the daily life of believers[203] and not on speculations about the existence of God, the nature of God, or theodicy.[204]

Practical theologians presuppose the existence of God, who is love (1 Jn 4:8), and this loving God acts through the ministry of human beings.[205] Their focus is on: (1) God's action through the ministry of humans, (2) human response to God's action, and (3) how those acts affect human realm. This is the understanding of practical theology embraced in this work.

Practical Theology Begins with Practice

For Swinton and Mowat, "practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in,

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[200] Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 7.

[201] Miller-McLemore, The Contributions of Practical Theology, 6.

[202] Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 7.

[203] Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 104.

[204] Neil Darragh points out that "practical theology begins with the contemporary local situation in contrast with other possible starting points such as a scriptural text, official church documents, or a philosophical system." Neil Darragh, "The Practice of Practical Theology: Key Decisions and Abiding Hazards in Doing Practical Theology," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (2007): 4, http://aejt.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/395736/AEJT_9.9_Darragh_Practice.pdf.

[205] One former professor of this researcher told this researcher once that he sympathized with the project of liberation theologians, but for him the question of the existence of God needed to be tackled first. That professor argued that only after that question had been dealt with it was appropriate to proceed to talk about God's action in the world.

to and for the world."[206] This definition of practical theology is also about God's activity through human activity in the world.

Practical theologians start with practice because they seek to understand God's action in the world: A world that is laden with God's presence because of creation and incarnation. Browning argues that theology can be practical instead of theoretical if theologians bring practical concerns from the start.[207] They value the centuries-old Christian wisdom that theology is a practical matter.[208] For that reason, they start their theology with practical concerns:[209] social, political, cultural, and pastoral.[210] The practical concern in this dissertation arises from the socio-political context in Burma: Can Christians make a difference in the peacebuilding process in Burma?

Practical theology takes human experience seriously.[211] It is the theological field that "gives the most attention to studying and engaging the present context directly."[212] Practical theologians try to understand the present context in depth. Particularly, they try to understand human actions and practices in the present context. They seek to understand these human activities because they want to reflect upon these activities theologically in order to learn from them and transform them into more theologically and morally sound activities.[213] The purpose of practical theology is always transformational.

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[206] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 6.

[207] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 5.

[208] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 33, 34.

[209] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 5.

[210] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 57.

[211] Richard R. Osmer, "Empirical Practical Theology," in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 61; Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 5.

[212] Osmer, Empirical Practical Theology, 61.

[213] Osmer, Empirical Practical Theology, 61.

Practice-Theory-Practice

Browning believes that all theologies need to start with human practice and move on to theological reflection and then come back again to human practice. Consequently, he suggests practice-theory-practice approach in doing theology.[214] Duncan B. Forrester provides four dictionary meanings of the word practice. Practice is (1) a patterned activity, (2) a regular pattern of repeated behavior, (3) the basis of a skill, and (4) the exercise of a profession or occupation.[215] These four dictionary meanings point out that practice involves body[216] and is not simple random behavior but intentional. Browning believes that these bodily involved non-random practices, whether secular or religious, are always "meaningful or theory-laden."[217]

Practice is not theory free.[218] Practical theologians try to understand practices in the light of theories embedded in those practices. While practices are theory-laden, theory (*theoria*) is pure theoretical reason or contemplation.[219] While practice is engaging in nature, theoretical reason can be dispassionate or objective in nature.[220] One root meaning of the word theory or the Greek word *theoria* is "being a spectator at solemn occasions."[221] This meaning of theory displays the unengaged or detached nature of theory or theoretical knowing. Therefore, to know or study something theoretically is to know or study that something without engaging it.[222] Theory has an

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[214] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 9.

[215] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 3-5.

[216] Colleen M. Griffith, "Practice as Embodied Knowing: Epistemological and Theological Considerations," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, ed. Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah: Paulist, 2014), 60.

[217] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 6.

[218] Practical theologians, along with Browning, acknowledge that "theory is always embedded in practice." Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 9.

[219] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 23, 24.

[220] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 10, 34.

[221] Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 149.

[222] Thomas Groome, "Practices of Teaching: A Pedagogy for Practical Theology," in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, ed. Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah: Paulist, 2014), 180, 181.

important role to play in practice-theory-practice movement though. Theory allows theologians "to think about the real world of practice with clarity and breadth."[223]

Practices involve body and embodied knowing[224] (e.g. the act of a Christian praying). To start with practice is to deal not with random practices, but with theory-laden practices. To move on to theory after this activity is to relate the practice from the first movement with that theory which is grounded on the normative practice of the Christian community. Browning explains that the move from practice to theory is to go "from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice …"[225] In practical theology, theory in the second movement is not theoretical reason, but reflection of the normative practice of the Christian community.

In the last movement of this method, it moves back to practice again. However, this practice is not identical with the initial practice. After the coming together of the present theory-laden practice and the normative-theory laden practice in the first and second movements of practical theology, Browning's method moves to "the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices."[226] He chose this method because he believed that when one starts with practice and moves on to reflection, it leads to refined action or practice.[227] This work uses this practice-theory-practice approach (method) that Browning proposes.

Methodology Behind Browning's Practice-Theory-Practice Approach

Hans-Georg Gadamer's fusion of horizons influenced the development of Browning's practice-theory-practice or practice to reflection to practice method.[228]

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[223] David Garland quoted in Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 144.
[224] Griffith, Practice as Embodied Knowing, 60.
[225] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 7.
[226] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 7.
[227] Andrew Root, *Christopraxis: A Practical Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 55-56.
[228] Root, *Christopraxis*, 56; and Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 162.

Gadamer's concern is hermeneutic or interpretation, and his main interest is how to understand texts.[229] Gadamer argues that understanding is always the fusion of horizons.[230] He uses the term horizon as a visual metaphor.[231] He explains that a horizon is "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vintage point,"[232] or as Heitink puts it, "the perspective from which we see things."[233] This fusion is the fusion of "the horizon of the interpreter and the horizon of the text, person, or object being interpreted."[234] This fusion of horizons leads to new insights, and these "new insights give rise to new ways of thinking and acting in the world."[235]

The fusion of horizons for Gadamer is dialogical or conversational in nature.[236] For Browning, practical theology is all about this kind of conversation or dialogue.[237] He sees practical theology as "a mutually critical conversation between 'Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation.'"[238] Therefore, for Browning, the fusion or dialogue between practice and theory leads to practice again.

The goal of practical theology is transformative practice[239] and transformed practice.[240] Gadamer believes that "reason exists for us only in concrete, historical

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[229] Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 185.
[230] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 273.
[231] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 23.
[232] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.
[233] Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 185
[234] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 23.
[235] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 23.
[236] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 50.
[237] Claire E. Wolfteich, "Hermeneutics in Roman Catholic Practical Theology," in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 134.
[238] Wolfteich, Hermeneutics in Roman Catholic Practical Theology, 134.
[239] Darragh, The Practice of Practical Theology, 5.
[240] In practice-theory-practiced movement practice in the third moment is not the same with practice in the first moment. This work already stated earlier that it is a transformed one.

terms, ie [*sic*] it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates."[241]

For Gadamer, "understanding, interpretation, and application are not distinct but intimately related."[242] This particular perspective of Gadamer, Browning argues, discredits the theory to practice (text to application) approach. Instead, it favors practice-theory-practice approach. Application is not merely the process of applying understanding and interpretation. Application always involves understanding and interpretation. In the same way understanding always involves the other two and interpretation always involves the other two as well.[243]

Browning's Method

Browning's practice-theory-practice method offers a way to explore how Christians can make a difference in the peacebuilding process in Burma. As noted above, Browning argues that the coming together of practice and reflection leads to refined action.[244] This method integrates practice and theory.[245] This work uses such method to fuse the existing Christian peacebuilding practices in Burma with a theology of peace and peacebuilding. The fusion of these two elements will yield new transformative peacebuilding practices for Christians in Burma.

Public Theology and Practical Theology

After this brief introduction to practical theology, this section explores public theology and its relevancy in this work. According to Elaine Graham, "public theology is the study of the public relevance of religious thought and practice."[246] For

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[241] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 245.
[242] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 39.
[243] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 39.
[244] Root, *Christopraxis*, 55-56.
[245] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 26.
[246] Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (London: SCM, 2013), 71.

Sebastian Kim, "public theology is Christians engaging in dialogue with those outside church circles on various issues of common interest."[247] For Duncan B. Forrester, public theology is a theology "which claims to point to publicly accessible truth, to contribute to public discussion by witnessing to a truth which is relevant to what is going on in the world and to the pressing issues facing people and societies today."[248]

All these three definitions of public theology point to two things: First, public theology engages people and issues outside Christian church or the general public.[249] Second, public theology seeks to engage the general public because Christian faith has something to say about the issues the general public faces. In short, public theologians believe that Christian faith offers a wisdom that can make a contribution to society and human flourishing. The difference between public theology and practical theology is that the subject matter of public theology is society, while practical theology is a method that can be used to reflect on a variety of practices within or outside the church. Earlier in this chapter, this work pointed out that practical theology "deals with God's activity through the ministry of human beings."[250] The subject matter of public theology is the practice in the general public. While the subject matter of this work is a general public issue in Burma, it approaches it from a practical theological perspective. Therefore, it can be considered a work of public practical theology.

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[247] Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (London: SCM, 2011), 3.

[248] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 127.

[249] David Tracy argues that each theologian speaks to three distinct but related publics. These three publics are the society, the academy, and the church. See Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 5. This work agrees with Tracy that theology speaks to these three public although the main focus of this work in on the church and the society. As this work agree with Tracy's argument about theology's relation to these three public, from now on, this work will use the phrase "the church" in place of the generic phrase "Christian church," which this work has been using until now. The reason for this shift is to signify the church as one of the three publics that Tracy talks about.

[250] Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 7.

Two Crucial Dimensions of Public Theology for this Work

This work privileges two important dimensions of public theology: The apologetic and the evangelical dimensions. Early Christian apologists saw a common ground between the Christian faith and the world outside. The Alexandrian school found a common ground in Platonism. Thomas Aquinas saw a common ground in Aristotelianism.[251] If Christianity and the world outside of the church do not share something in common, they cannot enter into dialogue.

In Christian theology, apologetics has traditionally been "a rational defense of Christian faith to skeptics and unbelievers, originally in the face of persecution by Roman authorities."[252] The early apologetic treaties are highly public in nature. The works of early apologists did not address their fellow Christians. They addressed philosophers, people of other faiths, and government authorities.[253] Therefore, apologetics was originally a rational presentation of Christianity to those in the society in the defense of Christian faith. This defensive mode is also present in Stackhouse's understanding of the apologetic dimension of public theology. He argues that public theology defends the rightful place of religion's voice in general and Christianity's voice in particular in the wider society.[254]

Stackhouse understands the apologetic dimension of public theology as a way of showing the relevancy of Christian faith in social matters. For him, public theology "seeks to speak in ways that can be grasped by those who doubt or do not share the faith."[255] The intention behind this attempt is to be in conversation with those who doubt or are non-members of that faith.

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[251] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 6.
[252] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 179.
[253] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 195.
[254] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, xxiv, 186.
[255] See note 6 of Max L. Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," *Theology Today* 54, no. 2 (1997): 168, accessed August 24, 2018, doi: 10.1177/004057369705400203.

In fact, it seems that currently public theology focuses less on defense and more on relevancy in the West. Religion, Christianity in particular, has been declining in the West at least in its institutional form for decades.[256] However, the decline of Christianity's influence on the wider public in the West has started in the seventeenth century with the rise of modern science. There is ample of evidence that when modern science rises, religion declines in the West.[257] The signs of that decline are still visible in the West.[258]

Traditionally, the church had an important role in society. However, Christian contribution to society has been marginalized in the West for decades.[259] The principle of separation of church and state in the West has bracketed out religion from public square.[260] Religious matters have been relegated from the public square to the private sphere since the Enlightenment.[261]

Public theology not only needs to speak the language of the church, but also the language of the public as it wants to present the relevancy of Christian faith in the public square.[262] Public theology in Burma also needs to be bilingual, but for a different reason. When public theologians in the West speak to society, they speak to

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[256] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 10, 11.

[257] Loyal Rue, *Religion is not about God: How Spiritual Traditions Nurture our Biological Nature and What to Expect When they Fail* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 316, 319.

[258] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, xiv.

[259] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 20, 21.

[260] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 14, 15. In the West, especially in Europe, Christianity and political power were closely knitted from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the emergence of modern nation states and the Democratic Revolutions in France and the United States in the late eighteenth century. Modern nation states in the West started to embraced the political thinking that the State, the nation, and government were the result of popular will, but not divine right. This is the beginning of separation of Church and state in the West. In the late eighteenth century, people in the West started to regard religion as a source of contention, and believed that it was better for the welfare of the people and the health of democracy if religion was not the basis of political power and the source that determined the policies of a government. Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 14, 15. Therefore, the basic spirit of separation of church and state in the West is to try to stop religion's influence in public discourse and political affairs.

[261] Max L. Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), ix.

[262] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 99, 183, 232.

a population which used to be predominantly Christian.[263] When public theologians in Burma speak to society, they speak to a people who are largely ignorant of the Christian faith.

When public theologians in the West want to reassert the public relevance of Christian faith, they want to regain some ground, if not all, Christianity has lost. They believe or at least hope that they are not fighting a losing battle because they see many signs of revitalization of religion. However, they are not looking for a return to pre-modern faith or Western Christendom.[264] They are not looking for Christian domination of society again. Instead, public theology emphasizes stewardship.[265]

Stewardship in this work means "the relationship of Word to world."[266] This understanding of the word stewardship comes from Old English which "reflects a practice of appointing particularly reliable workers to be wardens of the pig sty."[267] These wardens operated under the word of the lord of the manor and they were expected to become reliable caretakers of those resources that were essential to the whole community. These stewards were expected to affectionately and carefully look after the goods which were entrusted to them.[268] Therefore, public theology as the work of stewardship emphasizes Christian responsibility in the care of society under the lordship of the Christian God.

This work as a public practical theology will present what Christians can contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma in the spirit of stewardship. However, there is one important difference with public theology in the West in this

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[263] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 46.
[264] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, xvi, xxiii.
[265] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xii, xiii.
[266] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xiii.
[267] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xiii.
[268] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xiii.

regard. Public theology in Burma does not seek to regain grounds that Christianity has lost in the society because Christians have always been a small minority religion in Burma.

In addition to apologetic dimension, public theology still has another important dimension. Forrester believes that public theology is "a form of evangelism."[269] At the heart of public theology is the gospel. Therefore, this theology does not simply strive to help solve problems that affect the public. It is also a form of Christian witness to the truth of the gospel[270] and how that truth can contribute to society. For Stackhouse, public theology is called public theology for two reasons. One of them is that Christians believe that God wants to offer salvation[271] to the world. This salvation is not something hidden from others or difficult to comprehend. Christians can discuss this salvation in public and witness to their faith in ways that are meaningful and relevant to anyone seeking to build a better world.[272] The second reason is because it will guide the public how to structure and conceive policies for public life[273] according to general criteria of justice.

Christian apologetics itself is sometimes thought to be within the scope of evangelism.[274] This makes the apologetic dimension and evangelistic dimension of public theology to be two sides of the same coin. Therefore, this work as a public practical theology is both apologetic and evangelistic. It tries to show others that Christian faith has public value and seeks to convey that good news to others. This

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[269] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 113.
[270] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 113.
[271] In this work, salvation means it is something that comes from God and embraces the whole humanity. It transforms humanity and leads it to its fullness in God. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 85; and Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, trns. Magaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 37.
[272] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xi.
[273] Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, xi.
[274] Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, xxiv, xxv.

work will not simply be about relevance of Christian faith for the public good in the society in Burma, but its ethical implications.

This works is directed not only to Christians in Burma, but to the general public. The previous chapter has pointed out how Christians in Burma are reluctant to engage the general public. This work seeks to show Christians in Burma that they have something valuable to offer to the peacebuilding process there.

This chapter provided an account of practical theology. It also explained why practice is the starting point of practical theology following Don S. Browning's practice-theory-practice method. This method is grounded in a methodology that is incorporates Gadamer's hermeneutics and his concept of fusion of horizons. Second, this chapter explained what public theology is and why this work is considered public practical theology. The previous two chapters presented practices in Burma; the next chapter, following Browning's second movement, will focus on the normative theory-laden practice of the Christian community in relationship to violence and peace. Therefore, the next chapter will explore a theology of peace and peacebuilding.

CHAPTER FOUR. A THEOLOGY OF PEACE AND PEACEBUILDING

This chapter begins by exploring the meaning of peace in Burma and its correlation to the Christian understanding of peace. It will give attention to a theology of peace and peacebuilding. It seeks to answer the second sub-question: What is the Christian understanding of peace and peacebuilding, especially in the light of militarization experiences in Burma? It argues that God is not the God of violence; Jesus did not condone violence, but brought God's peace and wanted that peace to grow on earth. It will also provide a definition of peace, a biblical and theological understanding of peace, and the meaning and key features of peacebuilding.

Defining Peace in Burma

Peace may be defined in both positive and negative ways. Negatively, peace is the absence of civil unrest or disorder. Positively, there is peace where there is public order and security. Bamar language is the official language in Burma and the transliteration of the Bamar word for peace is *nyein chan yay*. The literal meaning of this word is to strive for or the desire for peace.

Nyein chan means calm or no chaos. The word *yay* denotes the desire to do something or the idea of a movement. The word *yay,* is also used in the transliteration of the Bamar word for revolution which is *taw hlan yay*. *Taw hlan* means to flip something or to turn something upside down. It implies action or movement. Therefore, *taw hlanyay* is an action or movement that seeks to turn something upside down or flip something.

However, the word *yay* also has another meaning in relation to the English word for peace. The transliteration of the Bamar word for independence is *loot lut yay*. The literal meaning of *loot lut* is free. Therefore, the word *loot lut yay* means the

state of being free. It follows that the meaning of Bamar word *nyein chan yay* (peace) means the state of being without chaos or the state of being calm.

In addition to Bamar language, there are many other active languages in Burma as there are many ethnic minorities in Burma. However, this work focuses mainly on the Bamar word for peace because the existing peacebuilding process in Burma uses the Bamar word *nyein chan yay*.[275]

The Bamar word peace agrees with the *OED* definition of peace. Peace is about the absence of chaos and the presence of stability. Therefore, like the English word, the Bamar word for peace has both negative and positive aspects. However, the Bamar word has something that the English word peace does not have.

The Bamar word *nyein chan yay* implies that peace is something people do or a movement because of the word *yay* denotes action or movement. Therefore, the Bamar word for peace is more than being in a particular state. It is also something active. It is something that people do. It is not just the absence of violence. Therefore, the understanding of peace in Burma requires action and this is critical to respond to militarization in this country. This understanding correlates with the biblical understanding of peace that will be explored in the next section.

Biblical Understanding of Peace

In the Old Testament, Hebrew word *shalom* significantly influences the understanding of peace.[276] The word *shalom* is usually translated as peace in English. The base meaning of *shalom* is wholeness or completeness, and this wholeness refers

[275] Therefore, the focus on Bamar word *nyein chan yay* here is only a practical matter. It is not because this work favors this Bamar word over the equivalent of ethnic minorities' vocabularies for peace.

[276] Jacob Kremer, "Peace—God's Gift: Biblical-Theological Considerations," in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, ed. Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 134.

to several things such as health and prosperity (both physical and spiritual).[277] When it comes to relationships, it means the restoration of broken relationships. In the OT, to restore broken relationships means to achieve peace and reconciliation. When it comes to politics, peace in the OT means more than the absence of war. It also means guarantee of security and material prosperity (1 Kgs 4:26-28).[278]

The NT writers most frequently used the Greek word *eirene* for peace and it is the most inclusive term for peace as the NT writers used it.[279] The root meaning of this word was linkage, and *eirene* as peace meant a state of order and coherence for the Greeks.[280] In classical Greek, *eirene* is a word used in relation to cessation of war or the absence of animosities. For the NT writers, however, *eirene* represents the word *shalom* from the OT. Therefore, the NT writers used the word *eirene* in a much broader sense than its meaning in classical Greek.[281] If the NT writers understood the Greek word *eirene* to be the equivalent of the Hebrew word *shalom*, *eirene* also basically means wholeness.

The above examination of the words *shalom* and *eirene* points out that both words provided negative and positive ideas of peace. They are about negation of war or strife, but they are also more than that. They also point to positive ideas such as well-being and health.[282] Hence, biblical understanding of peace is more than the absence of war, violence, or hostility. The main focus of the Bible is not on negative

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[277] Lahpai Zau Latt, "Biblical Idea of 'Peace' as Foundation for Building a 'Lasting Peace' in Burma (Myanmar) Ethnic Arm Conflict," in *Theology Under the Bo Tree: Contextual Theologies in Myanmar*, ed. Samuel Ngun Ling (Yangon: Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2014), 96.

[278] Choong Chee Pang, "Peace and Reconciliation: Biblical Themes in the East Asian Context," in *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity*, ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai, and Greg Hoyland (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 51.

[279] Latt, Biblical Idea of "Peace," 101, 102.

[280] Ronald H. Baiton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 17.

[281] Pang, Peace and Reconciliation, 52.

[282]Perry B. Yoder, Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, & Peace (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 13.

peace. Its main focus is on positive peace.[283] It requires not only the cessation of violence, but also the integration of the whole society.[284] It is not a static concept, it requires action to foster this peace and wholeness. However, this peace is also a gift. It comes from God because God is the giver of *shalom*. God makes *shalom* in heaven, guarantees it to humans, and delights when humans experience *shalom* (Jb 25:2; Ps 35:27; and Ps 147:14).[285] After his resurrection, Jesus offered this gift to the disciples.

According to Gospel Luke and Gospel John, the very first thing that Jesus said to his male disciples at his appearance to them after his resurrection is "Peace be with you" (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19). When Jesus appeared to these disciples, they were full of fear (Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23). They were hiding in the upper room of a house. The authorities had executed their leader on the charges of an enemy of the state. These male disciples worried that they would receive the same punishment if the authorities found out who they were, and their fear was realistic.[286]

These disciples had abandoned Jesus and fled to save their own lives. Peter not only abandoned Jesus, but also denied knowing him (Lk 22: 54-62). However, when Jesus suddenly appeared to them in that upper room, he did not rebuke them. Instead, Jesus said "Peace be with you" (Lk 24: 36; Jn 20:19).[287] According to Gospel John, Jesus said "Peace be with you" to the disciples not only once, but twice (Jn 20:

[283] According to Johan Galtung, peace exists not simply as peace; it exists both as negative peace and positive peace. Johan Galtung, "An Editorial," *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 2, http://www.jstor.org/stable/422802. For instance, for the discussion on negative peace and positive in the light of Sri Lanka's conflict see Nirmanusan Balasundaram, "Sri Lanka: An Ethnocratic State Preventing Positive Peace," *Cosmopolitan Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 3 (2016): 47,48, doi: 10.5130/ccs.v8i3.5194.

[284] Galtung, An Editorial, 2.

[285] Douglas J. Harris, *The Biblical Concept of Peace: Shalom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 27.

[286] Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 52.

[287] Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 53.

19-21). Robert J. Schreiter believes that the disciples did not expect to hear "Peace be with you" from Jesus. Perhaps they were expecting a rebuke.[288]

After he had suffered so much and the disciples had gone through fear and uncertainty, Jesus wanted the disciples the experience peace. The peace that Jesus offered the disciples was a peace that had known a great deal of suffering.[289] Jesus went through torture, humiliation, abandonment, and even death. When he came out of on the other side of all these, Jesus did not come back as an angry and revenge hungry person. Jesus did not blame disciples. At the same time, he did not blame the people who sought his death nor sought revenge. He told his disciples that now that he had overcome death, there was nothing more to fear. He invited them to go to these people and announce this good news.

Thus, these resurrection stories are a source of hope for those who have suffered, but at the same time they invite those who have been victims of violence to put aside the past and to become builders of peace. While the suffering of the past will always be part of their story, which is why Jesus shows his scars, the response to that is to turn those wounds into a positive force to transform conflict. To build peace one needs to be able to let go of the past and forgive as Jesus did.

However, there are biblical texts that seem to imply that God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the Gospels advocate violence. The next section seeks to dismiss this understanding.

God and Violence

One may argue that God is not a God of peace but a God of violence because in the Hebrew Scriptures God is often portrayed as the god of armies (1 Sm 17:45),

[288] Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 53.
[289] Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 54.

the god of military victory (Dt 20:1-4), and the god who destroys creation with a great flood, kills (Gn 6-7), goes to the battle (Dt 20:4), and decimates the enemies of the people of Israel (Jo 10:11).[290] Some texts in the New Testament also seem to support the view that Jesus was in favor of violence. However, a more careful research makes clear that God is against violence.

The God of Violence vs. the God of Peace

Jesus declares that whoever sees him sees God (Jn. 12: 45, 14:8-10). As Jesus reveals God, one can see God through him. Walter Wink asserts that the violent images of God in the Old Testament (OT) are "in part the residue of false ideas of God carried over from the general human past."[291] In fact, many books of the OT present God as the God of peace. Prophet Isaiah understands God as the provider of peace (Is 48:18).[292] The book of Isaiah envisions God's non-violent reign (Is 66:17-25).[293] Other OT books such as Amos, Jeremiah, Micah, and Zechariah also portray God as the God who desires justice and peace[294] (Am 5:18-25, Jer 33, Mi 4:1-5, Zec 8).

The understanding of God as the God of peace is reflected in the life and message of Jesus. The crucified Son of God manifests the OT image of God as the God of nonviolence.[295] Jesus did not use violence at the time of his arrest and crucifixion; rather, "the God Jesus reveals refrains from all forms of reprisal."[296] Jesus never taught that God was going to lead the Israelites into military victory over their enemies.[297]

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[290] John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 34.
[291] Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 147.
[292] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 35.
[293] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 36.
[294] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 35.
[295] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 36.
[296] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 149.
[297] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 37.

Jesus and Sword Verses

Some gospel texts raise questions about Jesus' view on the use of violence. In Mt 10:34, Jesus is reported to have said the following to his twelve disciples: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."[298] This verse, at face value, definitely makes Jesus look more of a violent person than a peace loving one. However, a careful look at the context suggests that Jesus was not implying that he advocated violence instead of peace.

The context of this saying was Jesus' instructions to the twelve apostles regarding their mission (Mt 10:5-42).[299] Here Jesus used the word "sword" as a figure of speech which symbolized division.[300] Before he mentioned sword, Jesus warned the apostles that some people would treat them harshly when they carried out their mission (Mt 10:16-23). They were to expect persecution. Their preaching of Jesus' message concerning the nearness of the kingdom of God would cause divisions for them.[301]

When Mary presented baby Jesus in the Temple, Simeon warned her that a sword would pierce her soul because of Jesus.[302] Therefore, Jesus came with a sword from the start that would split and divide things.[303] This sword is about the divisions among family members and friends. The apostles would experience these divisions as Jesus required them to leave their families and follow him. Their friends, families, and enemies would persecute them because they chose Jesus and preached the

[298] This scripture quotation is from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible. All quotes from the Bible following this will also be from the NRSV.

[299] Marius Nel, "'Not Peace but a Sword:' Jesus and the Sword in Matthew," *Neotestmentica* 49, no. 2 (2015): 237, doi: 10.1353/neo.2016.0001.

[300] Lamar Williamson, Jr., "Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 6, no. 2 (1984): 54, https://doi.org/10.1163/187122084X00115.

[301] Nel, Not Peace but a Sword, 237-239.

[302] Nel, Not Peace but a Sword, 239.

[303] Williamson, Jr., Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom, 54.

gospel.[304] Jesus was not promoting violence or suggesting to wage a war. Jesus was simply warning the apostles that they should expect separation from those whom they loved, and persecution not only from enemies, but even from their family members.

Another time that Jesus talked about swords is in Luke 22: 35-38.

He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."

According to Raymond Brown, Jesus is telling his disciples to be prepared for what is coming and the "items mentioned as preparation, namely, purse, bag, and sword, are quasi-symbolic ways of concretizing the necessary readiness for such contingencies."[305] The disciples misunderstand and Jesus rebukes them for always missing the point: "sufficient, enough." This is not referring the number of swords, but to their inability to understand him. This is most likely the best interpretation; however, there are many other interpretations.

Rodney J. Decker believes that Jesus was not talking about buying swords metaphorically, but literally. According to him, Jesus wanted the apostles to acquire swords for self-defense, but not to initiate violence from their part. That is why Jesus believed that two swords were enough for them.[306] Decker argues that as his arrest

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[304] Nel, Not Peace but a Sword, 241; Williamson, Jr., Jesus of the Gospels and the Christian Vision of Shalom, 53; and Paul S. Minear, "The Peace of God: Conceptions of Peace in the New Testament," in *Celebrating Peace*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 123, 124.

[305] Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. One (New York: Doubleday, 1994). 270

[306] Rodney J. Decker, "Self-Defense and the Christian," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 18, no. 1 (2014): 37-39, https://www.clarkssummitu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Vol18-No1-SP14.pdf.

was approaching, Jesus was preparing the apostles for the future ministry for them. Travelling in the Roman Empire was sometimes dangerous. Therefore, Jesus wanted them to be able to defend themselves by swords for their upcoming mission trips.[307]

If that was the case, Jesus was certainly non-violent. However, only the Gospel of Luke reports that Jesus told his disciples to buy swords. Other three Gospels do not report this incident. The author of the Gospel Luke does not say that Jesus wanted his disciples to buy swords for self-defense. There is also no report that the disciples were carrying swords to defend themselves after Jesus left them behind on the earth.

Another interpretation of the sword verse in Luke 22 suggests that Jesus did not instruct his disciples to buy swords, but sacrificial knives. At that time, they were in Jerusalem and Passover was approaching. They were getting ready for Passover because Jesus told Peter and John to go and prepare for the Passover meal (Lk 22:8). Jesus and the disciples needed sacrificial knives to prepare this meal. That was why Jesus believed that two sacrificial knives were enough for them (Lk 22:38). Jesus and his men were not carrying swords, only some sacrificial knives. That was why Roman authorities never brought weapon charges against Jesus or his men after they arrested him.[308]

David Lertis Matson argues that Jesus was not against use of violence because Jesus did not rebuke the disciple who used sword on one of the people who came to arrest Jesus. Jesus' response was, "No more of this!" (Lk 22: 51). Matson argues that

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[307] Decker, Self-Defense and the Christian, 37-39.

[308] Paula Fredriksen, "Arms and The Man: A Response to Dale Martin's 'Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous'," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 37, no. 3 (2015): 321, 323, doi: 10.1177/0142064X14566371; and F. Gerald Downing, "Dale Martin's Swords for Jesus: Shaky Evidence?," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 37, no. 3 (2015): 330, doi: 10.1177/0142064X14567067.

the proper translation of Jesus' words is, "permit as far as this."[309] Then, this was not a rebuke of the use of the sword, but Jesus was simply telling his disciples to allow these people to arrest him. Therefore, it is wrong to argue that Jesus was prohibiting violence in this context.[310]

Jesus' response was important to early Christian communities who experienced persecution; did Jesus approve of armed resistance? Should they recur to violence to defend themselves? If Jesus' response is read in the context of the rest of the gospel of Luke, Jesus did rebuke the disciple for his violent action. Either "No more of this!" or "Permit as far as this" means "it is enough." If Jesus effectively said "it is enough" to the disciple, it was a clear rebuke.[311]

The Lucan theology of Jesus presents him as one who saves, heals, and practices his message of love of enemies. In addition, the fact that Jesus healed the wound of the disciple's victim points out that Jesus was against this act of violence.[312] If he was not against it, he would not have any problem with the consequences of use of violence. It only makes sense for Jesus to heal that person only if he was against the use of violence.

Since now this work has pointed out that the Christian God is not the God of violence, but the God of peace, the following section focuses on a theology of peace.

Theology of Peace

God does not simply create peace and gives peace: God is peace (Yahweh is peace) (Jgs 6:24).[313] Since God is peace and wants peace for human beings,

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[309] David Lertis Matson, "Double-Edged: The Meaning of Two Swords in Luke 22: 35-38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 2 (2018): 463, 464, doi: 10.15699/jbl.1372.2018.350425.

[310] Matson, Double-Edged, 464.

[311] Brendan Byrne, "Jesus as Messiah in the gospel of Luke: Discerning a pattern of correction," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2003): 89.

[312] Byrne, Jesus as Messiah in the gospel of Luke, 89.

[313] William Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way to Peace* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 75.

peacebuilding stems from God first and foremost. God's way is the way of peace.[314] God has brought peace to earth through the incarnation. God entered the world in human form through Jesus. The purpose of the incarnation of God is to reconcile Godself to humankind, who had become estranged from God and with the whole creation.[315]

The second letter to the Corinthians states that "all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor 5:18-19).[316]

God offers peace to humanity and the whole creation through Jesus as a gift and requires Christians to work for peace.[317] While the author of Gospel of Luke portrays Jesus as a bringer of peace,[318] the author of Matthew believes that "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Mt 5:9).[319] The Apostle Paul pointed out that in Jesus, Christians were the children of God (Gal 3:26), and "Jesus calls peacemaking the work of the child of God."[320]

The Letter to the Ephesians tells Christians that their Lord Jesus Christ is their peace. He came to proclaim God's peace to human beings, and is still

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[314] James M. Childs Jr., *The Way of Peace: Christian Life in Face of Discord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 6-7.

[315] Childs Jr., *The Way of Peace*, 7-8.

[316] Childs Jr., *The Way of Peace*, 7-8.

[317] Roger Burggraeve, "The Radicalness of the Gospel and the Necessity of a Reflective Ethics of Peace. In Search of the Specificity of the Biblical Pronouncements in the New Testament," in *Swords into Plowshares: Theological Reflection on Peace*, ed. Roger Burggraeve and Marc Vervenne (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 23.

[318] Klassen, *Love of Enemies*, 80.

[319] Klassen, *Love of Enemies*, 74.

[320] Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice, and only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 149.

making/creating peace (Eph 2:14-17).[321] That letter reminds Christians, along with Mt 5:9, that as the recipients of God's peace, being peaceable is not good enough to qualify to be the sons and daughters of God. They must also build peace.[322] A careful look at the central theme of Jesus' ministry explains more about the peace from God.

The Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' earthly ministry. One of the characteristics of this reign of God is peace.[323] The reign of God is the first theme that Jesus preached when he started his public ministry (Mt 4:17; Mk 1: 14-15). The reign of was the core of all his teaching as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.[324] Jesus was not the first person to preach the reign of God. John the Baptist preached about this before Jesus did. John the Baptist preached the reign of God in close connection with the traditional Jewish understanding of an earthly kingdom.[325]

John the Baptist was announcing the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, where there would be social justice and the victory of true religion. Jesus received John's baptism in the Jordan river. Therefore, there was a link between John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' ministry. One clear link is that both Jesus and John the Baptist preached the reign of God. Jewish nationalistic hopes were not new at that

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[321] Burggraeve, The Radicalness of the Gospel and the Necessity of a Reflective Ethics of Peace, 23.

[322] Moltman, *Ethics of Hope*, 33; and Ateek, *Justice, and only Justice*, 149.

[323] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Peace*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 35. From now on, this work will use the phrase the reign of God for the phrase the kingdom of God. Some people find the word kingdom to be too masculine. Therefore, this work will use the phrase that is more inclusive but portrays the same reality.

[324] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, ed. Paul Rauschenbusch (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 46; and Jonathan T. Pennington, "The kingdom of heaven in the Gospel of Matthew," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 44, https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/sbjt-121-spring-2008/the-kingdom-of-heaven-in-the-gospel-of-matthew/.
Pennington points out that all scholars of the Gospels agree that, which is a rare thing, the Kingdom of God is the central theme in Jesus' ministry.

[325] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 44. Many Christians believe that John the Baptist was the person who prepared the way for Jesus' earthly ministry (For instance, Matt. 3:1-3). If that is the case, Jesus did not preach the reign of God after John the Baptist. Rather, John the Baptist was preparing the way for Jesus by introducing the theme that Jesus would preach later.

time. Therefore, when John the Baptist and Jesus preached the reign of God, it was not a new theme for their hearers. However, Jesus' preaching of this reign of God contained elements that were contrary to the popular hope about the reign of God.[326]

The reign of God that Jesus preached had nothing to do with violence. Jesus rejected both human violence and violence from heaven. Jesus refused to summon legions of angels to set up the reign of God.[327] The popular hope at that time was the coming of divine catastrophe. Jesus corrected this expectation of a sudden and violent arrival of the reign of God from above. He taught that the reign of God was something that would start to grow among the people of Israel with rather an organic life. This reign would grow like a mustard seed grew.[328] It would grow gradually cell by cell. In the traditional understanding, this reign was simply about Jewish national hope. However, Jesus presented it as a universal hope. This reign of God, as Jesus presented it, is for everyone.[329]

For the early Christian community, Jesus was the prince of peace:[330] "For he is our peace …" (Eph 2:14).[331] The prince of peace declared that the reign of God was already breaking into history (Lk 17:20-21).[332] The one who declares the reign of God was God's Son and prince of peace. Therefore, this reign is the reign of peace. The inauguration of this reign of peace means and requires the ultimate elimination of violence between individuals and groups, and the efforts to build peace.[333] Furthermore, it calls for right relationship with God, among people, and with creation.

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[326] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 45-48.
[327] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 48-49.
[328] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 48-50.
[329] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 48-51.
[330] Dear, *The God of Peace*, 52.
[331] John Macquarrie, *The Concept of Peace* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 20.
[332] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 115, 183.
[333] Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 149, 173; and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 113.

Gustavo Gutierrez believes that Jesus' preaching of the arrival of the reign of God calls for a new creation. The arrival of this reign of God in Jesus' time in Palestine meant the end of the old political order which was oppressive.[334] Gutierrez believes that the reign of God that Jesus preached and his life pointed to a never-ending search for "a new kind of humanity in a qualitatively different society."[335] Gutiérrez, however, is quick to point out that one should not conflate the reign of God with the establishment of a perfectly just society in this world.[336] For him, the establishment of a better society in this world is part of God's plan for the realization of the reign of God which leads into an eternal future.[337]

Although the reign of God is not fully realized in this world, the reign of God is still a better alternative order for this world to counter evil in it.[338] Human history is definitely part of the building up of the reign of God because God builds God's reign "from and within human history."[339] God's peace has arrived on earth as the reign of God is already here, and its realization is still going on. It may grow like a mustard seed as Jesus indicated (Mt 13:31-32). God's peace itself is a process, not a one-time dramatic event.[340]

Jesus initiated the reign of God and mediated it. This the reign of God is for the whole humanity and creation.[341] It is natural for the followers of Jesus to mediate what he mediated for the whole humanity. Jesus not only initiated and mediated the

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[334] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 134.
[335] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 134.
[336] Jürgen Moltmann too points out that "this world is not going to become the kingdom of God on earth." Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 11.
[337] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 135.
[338] Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 11.
[339] Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 138.
[340] Jose Miguez Bonino believes that peace, according to the Bible, is a dynamic process. Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 116.
[341] Childs Jr., *The Way of Peace*, 7-8; and Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century*, 48-51.

reign of God, but as Jürgen Moltmann asserts, Jesus also practiced it.[342] To practice the reign of God is to practice peace and to work for that justice that leads to peace. For Christians to follow the footsteps of Jesus[343] is to practice this reign of peace. The church as a whole builds peace because it is the servant of the reign of God.[344] Jon Sobrino believes that the church is the servant of the reign of God means that it has the responsibility to promote the values of this reign.[345] Since the core value of the reign of God is peace, to promote its values is to build peace.

The church is the result of "the justifying and peacemaking action of God through Christ."[346] Karl Barth points out that because Jesus mediates between human beings and God, there is no more isolation between God and human beings. God and human beings are now together because of Jesus' reconciling work between God and humans[347] (Col 1:19-20). Those who believed in this mediation and reconciliation of Jesus formed the church. Therefore, the church came into existence because of the result of God's reconciliation. Since the church is the fruit of God's peacemaking act, it is a community to extend peace.

Dieter T. Hessel believes that one basic function for the church to fulfill is to seek to transform society along with others.[348] "The church's public role and responsibility is a transformative one."[349] The church receives the call from God to transform societies because God is not only at the center of church life, but also at the

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[342] Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 53.

[343] Ateek, *Justice, and only Justice*, 161.

[344] Thomas M. Kelly, "A Church Rooted in Mercy: Ecclesial Signposts in Sobrino's Theology," in *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 165.

[345] Kelly, A Church Rooted in Mercy, 165.

[346] Jürgen Moltman, "Political Theology and the Ethics of Peace," in *Celebrating Peace*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 109.

[347] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trs. Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 46.

[348] Hessel, *Social Ministry*, 4, 5.

[349] Dana Wilbanks, "The Church as Sign and Agent of Transformation," in *The Church's Public Role*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 34.

center of public life.[350] The reign of God, which has the transformative power,[351] is not only for the church, but also for the public. The church's responsibility to transform societies requires the church to build peace because this transformative reign of God is peace.

As this work has pointed out that God calls Christians to be peace builders, it is necessary to understand what peacebuilding is. The following section seeks to do that.

The Meaning of Peacebuilding

People beyond peace community began to use the term peacebuilding in 1992 when then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced his Agenda for Peace.[352] The term peacebuilding has many possible definitions.[353] This work will present some definitions of peacebuilding that practitioners and scholars in the field of peace and reconciliation have provided.

Peacebuilding differs from peacemaking, which is limited to stopping the violence. Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding in 1992 as "action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict."[354] Therefore, for Boutros-Ghali, peacebuilding is not something that starts the peace process. It is an effort that comes in later to try to consolidate the peace what has been achieved.[355] During Kofi Annan's tenure as the UN Secretary-General, the UN still understood peacebuilding to be a process that

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[350] Wilbanks, The Church as Sign and Agent of Transformation, 35.

[351] Kelly, A Church Rooted in Mercy, 162.

[352] R. Scott Appleby, "Peacebuilding and Catholicism: Affinities, Convergences, Possibilities," in *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), 11.

[353] United Nations, *UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation* (United Nation Peacebuilding Office, 2010), 5.

[354] United Nations, *UN Peacebuilding*, 5.

[355] John L. Esposito and Ihsan Yilmaz too agree with Boutros-Ghali. For them peacebuilding is the effort which tries to make an existing peace more solid. John L. Esposito and Ihsan Yilmaz, "Islam and Peacebuilding: The Gülen Movement in Global Action," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Lee Marsden (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 15.

came only after some kind of peace agreement had been reached. Under the leadership of Kofi Annan, the UN construed peacebuilding as "post-conflict structural transformation, with a primary focus on institutional reform."[356]

John Paul Lederach agrees that post peace accord reconstruction is a critical phase, but he believes that peacebuilding is more than post peace agreement reconstruction. He understands peacebuilding as "*a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships*"[357] (Italics original). Marc Gopin's understanding of peacebuilding is that it "emphasizes long-term relationship building with a broad spectrum of society as the key to peace, as opposed to discrete sets of negotiations and settlements, usually between elites."[358]

In the section on theology of peace, this work mentions that peace first and foremost stems from God to human beings and the whole creation. That section also mentions that God has brought peace to the earth through the incarnation of Jesus and the purpose of the incarnation is reconciliation of God to all humanity. Therefore, one basic purpose of the incarnation is relationship building or relationship repairing. Consequently, this work favors the understanding of peacebuilding that puts relationship at the forefront. All levels of relationship building, including elite level, in a society are equally important in peacebuilding for this work.

Lederach believes that peacebuilding aims to transform conflicts into more sustainable and peaceful relationships. Along with Lederach's understanding of

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[356] Appleby, Peacebuilding and Catholicism, 11.

[357] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 20.

[358] Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 234-235.

peacebuilding, this work adopts Lisa Schirch's understanding of peacebuilding. Schirch's definition of peacebuilding captures the relationship building nature of peacebuilding well. For her, "peacebuilding is a relational task, seeking to improve the quantity and quality of relationships between people and their environment."[359] To build peace is to create the conditions that will prevent violence from erupting again; it addresses the root causes of violence.

Schirch points out that peacebuilding is more than an effort to prevent, diminish, transform violence and assist people to recover from violence. She believes that peacebuilding also seeks to help people to improve relationships at all levels in a society that will sustain them and their environment.[360] This work embraces these two definitions of peacebuilding because they agree with the theology of peace which asserts that at the heart of God's peacebuilding is relationship building. The following section explores the basic elements of a peacebuilding process.

Peacebuilding Process

Schirch argues that the peacebuilding process demands a variety approaches, and she groups those approaches under four different categories.[361] The first category is waging conflict nonviolently. Under this category, peacebuilders do things such as power creation, monitoring and advocacy, and protest and persuasion. For instance, peacebuilders seek to increase their power by nonviolent means. They would monitor a situation and report the human rights condition of that situation. They would protest those who use violence through public speeches.[362]

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[359] Lisa Schirch, "Ritual, Religion, and Peacebuilding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 518.

[360] Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace with Justice* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2004), 9.

[361] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 25.

[362] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 25-26, 28-34. The next chapter will discuss these four categories in more details in the light of Christian peacebuilding activities in Burma.

The second category is reducing direct violence. Here peacebuilders try to reduce direct violence in order to prevent and relieve the suffering of the victims of that direct violence. On the other hand, they try to create a safe space for peacebuilding activities. They also carry out activities such as humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and the creation of peace zones.[363] The third category is transforming relationships. Peacebuilders believe that it is necessary to recreate relationships if peace is to replace violence. Under this category, peacebuilders do things such as trauma healing, conflict transformation, peacebuilding through transitional justice.[364]

The fourth and final category is building capacity. This category generally aims at long-term peacebuilding efforts. Some of these efforts are such as the effort to prevent violence through education and training, development, the efforts to convert military institutions, and research on the causes of a conflict and evaluative research on what works and what does not in a peacebuilding work.[365]

This chapter correlated an understanding of peace from the perspective of people of Burma and the biblical definition of peace. After clarifying problematic biblical texts about God and Jesus´ relation to violence, this chapter put forward a theology of peace. Flowing from this theology, is the understanding of peacebuilding and its practical components. The next chapter will offer an exploration and assessment of Christian peacebuilding practices in Burma.

[363] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 25-26.
[364] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 26.
[365] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 26, 60-61.

CHAPTER FIVE. ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN PEACEBUILDING PRACTICES IN BURMA

The aim of this chapter is to identify and evaluate peacebuilding practices implemented by Christians Burma classifying them according to the four peacebuilding categories proposed by Lisa Schirch. Peacebuilding efforts have been advanced mainly by Christian in Burma. These efforts need to be assessed in order to identify the positive and negative outcomes and possible weaknesses. This will be the basis for the new or improved strategies that will be presented in the last chapter of this work.

Peacebuilding Practices of Christians in Burma

Peacebuilding work in Burma has been developed by Christians to a greater extent than by peoples from other faiths.[366] For instance, Buddhist monks are rarely known to be brokers of peace in relation to militarization in Burma.[367] Christians, on the other hand, enjoy a better reputation on this matter. Churches and church-based organizations have been able to influence armed ethnic rebels to some extent, especially in ethnic minority areas with substantial Christian population. These Christians have been able to encourage armed ethnic rebels to hold negotiation talks with the government and the military, or with other armed ethnic rebel groups.[368]

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[366] Aron Tegenfeldt, "In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding: Burma and Beyond," (Master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2001), 5, accessed, April 15, 2018, permalink: http://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/538/tegenfeldt_2004.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[367] Mir Mubashir, *Tradition- & Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs) as Crucial Actors in Conflict Transformation: Case Study: Myanmar/Burma* (Helsinki (?): The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, 2016), 5. This is not a criticism of Buddhist monks or Buddhists in Burma in relation to peacebuilding there. There can be a variety of reasons why Buddhists monks are rarely known for their peacebuilding work in Burma; and that deserves a separate research project. However, this work will later mention that Buddhists and Buddhist monks are among peacemakers in Burma, though this work is mainly about Christian peacebuilding in Burma.

[368] Mubashir, *TFIMs*, 5.

This chapter will explore the work of Christian peacebuilders using the four categories that were mentioned in the previous chapter as a tool to map and assess these efforts.

Category 1. Waging Conflict Nonviolently

Under the first peacebuilding category, Schirch includes power creation, monitoring and advocacy, protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and intervention.[369] Peacebuilders try to create power by nonviolent tactics to prove how others rely on their cooperation.

Peacebuilders also monitor issues such as human rights situation and environmental problems. Then they make the public aware of human right abuses and environmental violations.[370] Through protests, publications, and speeches they try to make others aware of injustices and seek to make aggressors accountable.[371]

Non-cooperation is way of resisting another group by no longer doing the usual activities. They do things such as boycotts of sporting or social events, refusal to pay rents, and worker strikes.[372] Within the intervention approach, peacebuilders aim to interrupt the existing state of affairs and try to draw people's attention to violence to mobilize them for change. They do things such as occupation of public spaces, internet networking, and non-violent seizure of assets and of land.[373]

Christian peacebuilders in Burma have carried out a some of these approaches. For instance, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of the Roman Catholic Church in Burma asked people in Burma to build peace at Easter in 2018. In his Easter message of that year, he urged his fellow citizens to strive for peace. Bo urged them to get rid of

[369] See chapter seven of Schirch's *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*.
[370] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 30-31.
[371] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 31.
[372] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 31-32.
[373] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 33.

hatred, injustice and ethnic conflict. He encouraged them to adopt qualities such as compassion, tolerance, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, and respect for human dignity and rights.[374]

He appealed to the government and ethnic insurgent groups to abandon the decades-long conflict between them, and argued that peace is the only way forward for Burma. He reminded his Catholic hearers that the church is instrument of peace and the church needs to work with all stakeholders to build peace on justice in Burma. The Cardinal also promised that the Roman Catholic Church in Burma will use her local and international influence to work for a durable peace in Burma.[375]

Representatives from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam formed the Religions for Peace-Myanmar (RfP-M) in June 2012. Cardinal Bo is one of the three patrons of the RfP-M.[376] Bo and other Christians from RfP-M work together with people from other faiths and sometimes they send out letters and statements regarding peace. On May 24, 2018, the RfP-M wrote a letter regarding peace to the people of Burma. This letter reminds the people of Burma that they need to avoid divisiveness and hatred, and need to build peace and solidarity in Burma. This letter points out that all four major religions in Burma teach to love peace and justice, and to avoid hatred. This letter also requests the government and all relevant groups to settle for peace and protect displaced and marginalized persons.[377]

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[374] Vatican News, "Cardinal Bo's Easter Message to Myanmar," *Vatican News*, March 26, 2018, accessed July 3, 2019, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-03/myanmar-cardinal-charles-bo-easter-message-2018.html.

[375] Vatican News, Cardinal Bo's Easter Message to Myanmar.

[376] Religions for Peace-Myanmar, "About Us," accessed July 3, 2019, https://www.rfpmm.org/profile/.

[377] Religions for Peace-Myanmar (RfP-M), *Letter to the People of Myanmar*, accessed July 3, 2019. https://rfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Letter-to-the-People-of-Myanmar-Final-Statement-Letter-24-May-2018-2.pdf.

Some Christian peacebuilders have also raised their voice to protest violence and request those who were involved in violence to stop use of violence. Catholic and Protestant leaders issued a statement in January 2013 after three civilians died because of the fighting between government troops and the KIO. Bishop John Hsane Hgyi, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, and Yin Yin Maw, president of the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) urged the government and insurgents to stop fighting and to return to negotiation table.[378]

Thousands of Catholic Christians in Kachin State marched for peace on May 28, 2017. These Christians marched through the streets of Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. Msgr. Francis Daw Tang, bishop of Myitkyina, led the procession and prayed with the marchers. Many Protestants and non-Christians participated as well. This event was not simply a prayer event, it was also Kachin Catholics's first public demonstration for peace.[379]

Category 2. Reducing Direct Violence

This second peacebuilding category includes practices such as preventing victimization, restraining offenders, and the creation of safe spaces. The prevention of victimization basically aims to protect civilians. Civilians are targeted as a strategy of war in many civil wars. Victimization of civilians has the potential to fuel more wars and revenge killings. If peacebuilders can protect civilians from victimization in a

[378] Thomas Toe and John Zaw, "Church Leaders Make Rare Call for Peace," *ucanews*, January 18, 2013, accessed July 3, 2019, https://www.ucanews.com/news/church-leaders-make-rare-call-for-peace/67152.

[379] Lawrence Jangma Gam, "Myitkyina, Thousands of Catholics march for Peace and Displaced Kachin used as Human Shields," *AsiaNews*, May 29, 2018, accessed July 4, 2019, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Myitkyina,-thousands-of-Catholics-march-for-peace-and-displaced-Kachin-used-as-human-shields-44012.html. Here this work does not mention all of the prophetic and advocacy work for peace that the Christians named in this section have done. For more information about this kind of prophetic and advocacy work for peace of some of the Christians mentioned and not mentioned in this section see Benedict Rogers, "The Contribution of Christianity to Myanmar's Social and Political Development," *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 13, no.2 (2015), accessed November 17, 2016, doi:10.1080/15570274.2015.1104973.

conflict, there is a chance that they will likely prevent war expansion and direct violence. Efforts to restrain offenders is also largely about stopping violence against civilians.[380]

The creation of safe spaces aims to reduce violence and allows people to cool down and to make preparations for peacebuilding. Direct violence should be reduced primarily by the legal and judicial systems, whose responsibility is to create order in a society, protect human rights, and work for human security. Ceasefire agreements, peacekeeping efforts, and the creation of peace zones also fall under the category of reducing violence.[381] Humanitarian assistance relieves human suffering and has the potential to disturb the cycle of violence as victims may become less committed to revenge.[382]

Christians peacebuilders in Burma have been involved in the efforts to reach ceasefire agreements. For instance, the late Reverend Saboi Jum, who was then the general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention, was particularly instrumental for reaching the ceasefire agreement between the KIO and the government in 1994, which lasted for seventeen years.[383] Other Christian peacebuilders that worked closely

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[380] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 35-36.

[381] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 440-44.

[382] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 36-39.

[383] Mubashir, *TFIMs*, 5. The work of these Christians peacebuilders did face criticism and suspicion from some people. For instance, see Ardeth Maung Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance: Ethnonational Politics in Burma (Myanmar)* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2011), 53. Some people view these peacebuilders as those who betray ethnic minorities' struggle for their rights. See Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking*, 141. Sometimes, these peacebuilders faced criticism because people believed that their work caused disunity within an insurgent group. For instance, a group of Karen peace mediators, which was predominantly Christian, came under severe criticism when they brokered peace between the government and a splinter group from the KNU. See Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 56.

People who were suspicious of or against any peace talks with the government suspected that these peacebuilders were not really after peace. Instead, they were after personal gains such as business opportunities and gifts that would come either from the government or insurgent groups, or both. For such accusations, for instance, see Naw Seng, "Brothers-In-Peace," *The* Irrawaddy, February 2004, vol. 4, no. 2, 1, accessed, June 20, 2019, https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=3299&page=1. However, it seems that in many cases, it is very difficult to determine the veracity of these accusations against some (all) of these Christian peacebuilders. It is also difficult to definitively claim that none of those accusations reflects some truth.

with Jum for this 1994 ceasefire agreement between the KIO and the government were Hkum Myat (Jum's younger brother and businessman), Lawhkum Lawt Naw (a Catholic priest), and La Wawm (a former ambassador to Israel and the Philippines).[384]

Jum started his peace initiative as early as 1980. In that year, he travelled to the KIO headquarters in the jungle. Then, he came back to government controlled area and had meetings with government representatives. His efforts finally paid off. Ne Win's BSPP government and the KIO reached a ceasefire agreement that year. However, later this ceasefire agreement broke down because the attacks from communist insurgents, who were active in the KIO area, undermined the sustainability of this agreement.[385]

Later Jum formed Burma Peace Committee (BPC), and the BPC was able to hold talks with government officials and some ethnic insurgent leaders separately. These talks later led to the first face-to-face meeting between the government and insurgents in almost a decade. These events eventually led to the 1994 ceasefire agreement between the government and the KIO.[386] When Jum formed the BPC, its members were overwhelmingly Kachin Baptists and later the BPC struggled to add more members from other ethnic groups to be better represented for all ethnic minorities.[387]

Despite this particular weakness of the BPC, its mediation efforts convinced the government to issue an appeal to all insurgent groups for a nationwide ceasefire in

[384] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 53; and Seng, Brothers-In-Peace, 1.

[385] Daniel L. Buttry, *Peace Warrior: A Memoir from the Front* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2012), 40.

[386] Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking*, 140-142; and Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 53.

[387] Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking*, 140-141.

1992 [1993?].[388] After the government's announcement of its willingness for ceasefire, the government and various insurgent groups were able to sign about twenty-five ceasefire agreements.[389] In addition to Kachin Christians peacebuilders like Jum, there were also Christian peacebuilders from other ethnic minorities who worked for ceasefires.

Between 1994 and 1997, some serious initiatives for talks and actual talks between the government and the KNU took place. Many of the principal mediators for these efforts were Christians. In 1994, then Anglican Bishop Andrew Mya Han, a Karen, was one of the people who tried to help to make these negotiations happen.[390] Bishop Han visited the KNU leaders at their headquarters near Thai-Burma border to request them to hold peace talks with the military government that came to power in 1988. Han's attempt to mediate between the government and the KNU is one of the foremost attempts that sought to bring the military government that came to power in 1988 and the KNU to the negotiation tables.[391]

Other Karen Christians such as Mar Gay Gyi, Tun Aung Chain, Alfonso Soe Myint, Hanson Tadaw, and Saw Richard (also known as P'Doh Saw Richard) acted as mediators and messengers between the government and the KNU for the negotiations that took place between 1995 and 1997.[392] These Karen Christians efforts did not have any tangible results in the 1995-1997 talks, but they were able to

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[388] Buttry, *Christian Peacemaking*, 141-142; and Tom Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace: The Future of Cease-Fire Agreements in Burma* (Amsterdam: Transitional Institute, 2009), 9-10.

[389] South, *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar*, 11.

[390] Paul Keenan, *The Karen National Union Negotiations 1949-2012* (Chiang Mai: The Burma Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2012), 21; and Karen History and Culture Preservation Society (KHCPS), *The Karens and their Struggle for Freedom* (Mae Sot: Karen History and Culture Preservation Society, 2006), 19.

[391] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 14.

[392] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 54; and KHCPS, *The Karens and their Struggle for Freedom*, 20.

convince both the government and the KNU to come back to the negotiation table again in early 2004.[393]

This 2004 peace talk led to a verbal ceasefire agreement (popularly known as the Gentlemen's Agreement) between the government and the KNU. This initial agreement precipitated follow-up meetings between the two groups. However, this verbal agreement lasted only for a year or so. Both sides did not reach any substantial peace agreements during the negotiations that followed the Gentlemen's Agreement. The fighting between them resumed with as well.[394]

Like Karen Christian peacebuilders, Bishop Phamo of Loikaw Diocese of the Catholic Church in Karenni State mediated between the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the government. In this mediation work, Phamo worked together with a group that included leaders from religious, cultural, and business sectors. Phamo played a leading role in this group and they successfully brought the government and the KNPP to the negotiation table.[395] The KNPP signed its first ever peace agreement with the government in March 1995. Unfortunately, this peace agreement broke down after three months.[396]

While there were Christians who worked to reach ceasefire agreements, some Christians have done some kind of peacekeeping. For instance, on May 7, 2012, the government and the Chin National Front (CNF) reached an agreement to give an official mandate to a network of Chin Christians to monitor the peace agreement between them.[397]

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[393] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 54-55.

[394] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 55; and KHCPS, *The Karens and their Struggle for Freedom*, 36-42.

[395] Mubashir, *TFIMs*, 6.

[396] Nyein Nyein, "KNPP, Gov't Agreed to Further Peace Negotiations," *The Irrawaddy*, April 27, 2018, accessed June 29, 2019, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/knpp-govt-agree-to-further-peace-negotiations.html.

[397] South, *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar*, 20.

Some Christians in Burma also try to build peace through humanitarian assistance. The fighting in Kachin State has displaced a lot of people, and some churches have been helping these IDPs.[398] Catholic and Baptist Christian individuals in Kachin State have worked together with some non-government organizations (NGOs) to bring aid for tens of thousands of IDPs in Kachin State. They also work with an NGO to provide education for children from IDP families.[399]

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has also been helping the victims of war in Burma with several programs. The CRS runs programs such as mine-risk education and victim assistance for landmine survivors, agriculture and livelihood, and peacebuilding.[400] Many churches too have opened their doors to IDPs. The properties of a number of churches in Kachin State have become shelters for many IDPs in Kachin State.[401]

The war between the government and the KNU in Karen State has forced a lot of Karen to abandon their homes and to become either IDPs or refugees in the refugee camps in Thailand.[402] The Karen Baptist Convention in Burma has been reaching out to some of the most vulnerable communities in Karen State and has partnered with the Christian Aid, an international development agency, to help these victims.[403]

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[398] David Wright, "1.6 Million Kachin Christians in Myanmar Trapped as Targets in Genocidal War," *Open Doors*, August 3, 2018, accessed July 4, 2019, https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/1-6-million-kachin-christians-in-myanmar-trapped-as-targets-in-genocidal-war/.

[399] Frances Khoo Thwe, "Kacin State: Church and Caritas helping Refugees, Victims of New Ethnic Clashes," *AsiaNews*, March 9, 2013, accessed July 4, 2019, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kachin-state:-Church-and-Caritas-helping-refugees,-victims-of-new-ethnic-clashes-28907.html.

[400] Catholic Relief Services, "CRS in Myanmar," *CRS*, accessed July 4, 2019, https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/where-we-work/myanmar#toc-link.

[401] Mathias Eick, "Kachin: Thousands of Internally Displaced Persons face uncertain future," *European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations*, accessed July 5, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/field-blogs/stories/kachin-thousands-internally-displaced-persons-face-uncertain-future_en.

[402] Joe Nicholson, "Baptists save Poor Communities in Myanmar," *Ethics Daily*, February 10, 2016, accessed July 5, 2019, https://ethicsdaily.com/baptists-save-poor-communities-in-myanmar-cms-23247/. It is important to note that the war between the government and the KNU is fought not only in Karen State, but also in Mon State, Bago Division, and Tanintharyi Division.

[403] Nicholson, Baptists save Poor Communities in Myanmar.

According to one official of the organization, the Karen Baptist Convention aims to help villagers to overcome poverty and to help displaced people to get enough food and to build their new homes.[404]

Category 3. Transforming Relationships

One core task of peacebuilding is to transform relationships. In fact, transformation is a key principle in peacebuilding:[405] "Peacebuilding seeks to transform individuals, families, communities, businesses, structures, and governments away from destructive expressions of conflict and toward growth and development."[406] The aim here is to achieve right relationships and Schirch suggests that peacebuilders can try to achieve right relationships through three approaches: (1) healing trauma, (2) conflict transformation, and (3) doing justice.[407]

Traumas can cause lasting physical, emotional, and spiritual injury to people. Sometimes people have trauma even for centuries and use those traumas as a cry for revenge. Trauma healing is an important part of peacebuilding as it seeks to heal physical, emotional, and spiritual traumas. Trauma healing helps people to name harms and their needs. It can also prepare people to be ready to meet with people from other group or even their own offenders.[408]

The core idea of conflict transformation aims to create satisfactory solutions for all groups involved in a violent conflict through addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. Some of the strategies of conflict transformation are dialogue,

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[404] Nicholson, Baptists save Poor Communities in Myanmar. There could be people both inside and outside Burma who believe that the Karen Baptist Convention has done only too little for Karen victims of civil war in Burma. Some may even want to argue that the officials (past and present) of the Karen Baptist Convention were more worried about their welfare (safety) than the welfare of victims of civil war and this led them almost to non-action. These perceptions about the Karen Baptist Convention may have some merits. However, there have been individuals from the Karen Baptist Convention in Burma who were sincerely concerned for the victims and tried their best to help them.

[405] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 45.

[406] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 45.

[407] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 45-46.

[408] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 46-47.

principled negotiation, and mediation. One thing dialogue can do is to bring people from different groups together to address crucial issues among them and increase understanding among themselves.[409]

In principled negotiation, people do more than dialogue. Here people negotiate for what they want, but not at the expense of the other group. People try to maintain their relationships and try to get solutions that will satisfy all parties. Mediation is also a negotiation process assisted by a trusted person. With the help of a mediator, groups share their viewpoints and experience, name their needs, think about solutions for needs, and in the end, make a final agreement.[410]

The Christian peacebuilders that the previous section mentioned also did mediation work in their efforts to secure ceasefire agreements between the government and various ethnic armed groups. The previous section also pointed out that these Christian peacebuilders were from ethnic minority groups such as Kachin, Karen, and Karenni. Ardeth Maung Thawnghmung believes that though these non-armed ethnic minority actors were small in number, they did play an important role in ceasefire negotiations.[411]

For instance, Jum and his Christian friends mostly facilitated the ceasefire negotiations between the government and the KIO.[412] Schirch believes that "mediation is a process of guided negotiation assisted by a trusted person."[413] It seems that in the case of Jum, he was a trusted person in the KIO and government negotiations in 1994. For example, before the 1994 negotiations, Jum always tried to get messages to the KIO leader in the jungle. At the same time, he tried to reach Khin

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[409] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 48-49.
[410] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 50.
[411] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, xi.
[412] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 53.
[413] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 50.

Nyunt, an important general in the government. His message did reach to general Khin Nyunt and finally in 1990 Khin Nyunt responded that the government would meet with the KIO.[414]

It also seems that many of the Karen Christian peacebuilders mentioned in the previous section were also able to perform as trusted mediators between the government and the KNU at least in the 1990s. In the mid 1990s, Bo Mya, who was at that time the leader of the KNU, sent a letter to a big city in Burma. In his letter, Bo Mya requested Karen leaders in the government-controlled area to act as mediators between the KNU and the government.[415]

This request led to some Karen leaders to form a mediator group. This group consisted of Alfonso Soe Myint, Hanson Tadaw, Mar Gay Gyi, Saw Richard, and Tun Aung Chain, and all of them were Christians. This team was recognized as a mediator team both by the KUN and the government. This team later facilitated negotiations between the KNU and the government.[416] Schirch lays out that the roles of a mediator as to help "people in conflict share their perspectives and experiences, identity underlying needs, brainstorm about creative options for addressing needs, and then make a final agreement."[417]

The Christian mediators mentioned above were able to fulfill some of the roles of a mediator that Schirch suggests. For instance, in her analysis of the work of the ethnic mediator's work in Burma, Thawnghmung points out that these mediators carried information between two sides, facilitated contacts with the government, clarified and interpreted messages, helped ease tension, provided their opinions both

[414] Buttry, *Peace Warrior*, 44.
[415] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 54.
[416] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 54.
[417] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 50.

to the government and the insurgents, and organized meeting places.[418] The previous section also pointed out that sometimes because of their mediation work, the government and some insurgent groups did reach ceasefire agreements.

Category 4. Building Capacity

Schirch's fourth and last peacebuilding category is capacity building. The aim here is to build the capacity that can shape cultures to become more of cultures of peace and justice. This category seeks to help people to know how to shape their culture, and their society's structures, institutions, policies, and organizations. The key principle of this category is sustainability and long-term planning. This category uses approaches such as training and education programs, development, transformation, the conversion of military structures to the ones that focus on human security, and research and evaluation.[419]

All forms of education have the potential to promote love and respect between people. Education can also enable people to shape and impact their environment in positive ways. Education and training programs that focus on peace, conflict transformation, human rights, and environmental issues are important in peace education approach. Media at the service of peace seeks to provide objective information about conflicts and help people to become aware of propaganda, and educate on peaceful means to deal with the problems in society.[420]

Development is an ongoing process that aims to promote human prosperity, and quality of life. War is detrimental to human development, but development has the potential to sustain and nurture peace. There are many forms of developments. Economic development focuses on businesses and seeks to help people meet their

[418] Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 52.
[419] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 56-57.
[420] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 57-58.

basic material needs. Political development tries to make sure that leaders at both community and national levels have the skills that can create an environment with fair process in decision-making and institutions that are necessary for that process.[421]

Social or community development includes programs such as "leadership training, dialogue, organizational development, and the creation of civil society organizations and institution."[422] The aim here is to improve the capacity of communities, and civic and religious organizations.[423] Development also includes reconstruction, which seeks to replace and repair damaged infrastructure in order to help the economy to recover.[424]

In the military conversion approach, peacebuilders try to change the nature of military institutions. They try to bring military under more civilian authority, and focus on trainings that would steer military efforts toward human security.[425] Research is also important for peacebuilding. Research of a conflict can provide people with more insights about that conflict. Evaluative researches want to learn from current and former efforts of peacebuilding. It wants to know what worked, how it worked, and what did not work.[426]

The ceasefire agreements reached between the government and some ethnic insurgent groups paved way for social development work. It created space and opportunity for the creation of indigenous NGOs. The two most well-known local NGOs that Christians founded at that time were Metta Development Foundation and Nyein (Shalom) Foundation.[427] Metta Development Foundation (or Metta

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[421] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 58-59.
[422] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 59-60.
[423] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 59.
[424] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 60.
[425] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 60-61.
[426] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 61.
[427] Aron Tegenfeldt, "In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding: Burma and Beyond," (Master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2001), 86, accessed, April 15, 2018, permalink:

Foundation) was founded in 1998 and its main objectives are to help communities with self-help initiatives, support sustainable community–based projects, and humanitarian emergencies, facilitate skills training, create partnerships with similar organizations or individuals.[428]

The main visions of Metta Foundation are the "evolution of self-reliant and peaceful societies through social and economic growth."[429] This foundation is committed to relationships building and works at community level. It also has connections with the international community. This has made Metta Foundation a resource for relationship building and the ability required to encourage and support peacebuilding in Burma.[430]

Nyein Foundation started in 2000, and Jum was the one who approached the military government with the proposal to set up this foundation.[431] Nyein Foundation's goal is "to build sustainable peace in Myanmar with justice …"[432] Nyein Foundation has become an organization where ethnic minorities come for support, to share their experiences, and to do peacebuilding work for Burma.[433] Now this foundation has six offices in different parts of Burma and its main office is in Kachin State.[434]

In addition to social and community development works, some Christian peacebuilders in Burma have also been involved in peace education. The Judson Research Center (JRC) at Myanmar Institute of Theology offers high quality

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http://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/538/tegenfeldt_2004.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[428] Tegenfeldt, In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding, 87.

[429] http://www.metta-myanmar.org/what-is-metta/.

[430] Tegenfeldt, In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding, 87, 88.

[431] Tegenfeldt, In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding, 86, 87; and https://www.nyeinfoundation.org/about-us/vision-goal-stance/.

[432] https://www.nyeinfoundation.org/about-us/vision-goal-stance/.

[433] Tegenfeldt, In Need of a Spiritual Framework for Peacebuilding, 87.

[434] https://www.nyeinfoundation.org/.

theological education and academic research in relation to interfaith relations. The JRC also works with Nyein Foundation.[435] The JRC offers the Master of Arts in Interfaith Dialogue Studies (MAID) degree, and offers trainings such as Peace Journalism.[436]

The Myanmar Institute of Theology itself offers the Master of Arts in Peace Study. In addition, the Myanmar Institute of Theology's Peace Study Center offers programs such as Trauma Awareness and Trauma Healing Training of Trainers.[437] Nyein Foundation has also provided a particular peace education. This foundation has provided peace education to women. It has hosted workshops for women Members of Parliament and women from ethnic insurgent groups. These workshops aim to help these women to improve their negotiation and public speaking skills, and knowledge of the peace process in Burma.[438]

So far, this work has explored some of the Christian peacebuilding work in Burma in light of the four peacebuilding categories identified by Lisa Schirch. However, the first step in peacebuilding is reaching a ceasefire agreement. The next two sections assess the positive and negative outcomes of the ceasefire agreements of the 1990s. In the final section of this chapter, this work will point out the weaknesses of the peacebuilding efforts that have been achieved to this point.

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[435] Mubashir, *TFIMs*, 7.

[436] "Judson Research Center," accessed July 2, 2019, http://judsonresearch.center/tag/peace/.

[437] "Myanmar Institute of Theology," Academics, accessed July 2, 2019, http://www.mit.edu.mm/mit-academics.html; and Peace Study Center, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Facebook post, May 19, 2019 (11:58 p.m.), accessed July 2, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/Peace-Studies-Center-Myanmar-Institute-of-Theology-763442013751849/.

[438] Roslyn Warren et al., *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict: Lessons from Myanmar and Ukraine* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018), 23. The United Nations Women (UN Women) even adopted this particular model of Nyein Foundation and expended on it in their efforts to teach woman leaders in Burma about ceasefires and peace agreements from other parts of the world. Warren et al., *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict*, 23.

Positive Consequences of the Ceasefire Agreements

The ceasefire agreements that were reached between the government and some ethnic insurgent groups in the 1990s brought some significant relief to conflict-effected populations.[439] Ceasefire agreements ended fighting immediately and brought relief to local communities. No more fighting meant no more bloodshed and misery for local communities. Ceasefire agreements also reduced many serious human rights violations. These agreements curtailed serious abuses such as extrajudicial killings and summary executions, torture, rape, and confiscation of land and property of local people.[440]

Ceasefire agreements also made travel and communication easier for local communities. During war, travel and communication between people living in insurgent-controlled areas and government-controlled area were difficult. Ceasefire agreements allowed people to be able to travel to town, cities, and other government-controlled areas. Farmers were able to go and work at far away cultivation sites without the distress of being suspected as supporters of insurgents. Ceasefire agreements also kept communication channels between insurgent groups and the government open. In some cases, insurgents were even able to communicate with top leaders in the government and expressed what they wanted.[441]

Most ethnic minority areas suffered not only from war damage, but also government's neglect. As a result, communication, infrastructure, and healthcare and education facilities in ethnic minority areas were poorer than the rest of the country. In that situation, ceasefire agreements paved the way for reconstruction and development of former war zones. Ceasefire agreements also created space for civil

[439] South, *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar*, 11.
[440] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 20.
[441] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 21.

society organizations to develop. For instance, Metta Foundation and Shalom Foundation were founded in Kachin State after the 1994 ceasefire agreement between the KIO and the government. Karen civil society organizations also rapidly emerged following the peace talks between the government and the KNU.[442]

The previous chapter pointed out that some Christians were among main actors in these ceasefire agreements and peace talks. If the ceasefire agreements of the 1990s brought considerable amount of relief to the civilians, it means that the work of Christian peacebuilders in Burma did bring some positive results. The local population were the most benefitted because they were able to feel some relieve in their situation of brokenness and experience some form of wholeness.

Negative Consequences of the Ceasefire Agreements

Despite their positive outcomes, ceasefire agreements have also brought negative results. After ceasefire agreements, the government sent more troops to former conflict areas and increased the construction of government troop compounds and bases in those areas.[443] For instance, the number of government forces increased in Kachin state after the 1994 ceasefire agreement. In 1994, there were only 26 Infantry Battalions, but there were 41 battalions by 2006, and 100 battalions by 2011.[444] More government troops in these areas means more human rights abuses for the locals. Abuses such as confiscations of lands, forced labor, and extortion increased in these areas.[445]

In addition to the presence of more government troops, local people also suffered from the negatives effects of development/economic projects. For example,

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[442] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 21-22.
[443] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 23.
[444] Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Economics of Peace and Conflict* (Chiang Mai: Burma News International, 2013), 3.
[445] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 23.

the 1990s ceasefire agreements paved way for some of those projects. The government initiated development projects in minority areas with little attention for environmental or social effects.[446] These development projects damaged the natural environment and cultural heritage sites in ethnic minority areas. The government also increased military presence in those places in the name of security for those projects. The increase in government troops in turn brought more mistreatment for local people. For example, government troops and local authorities forced local people to relocate and also used them as forced laborers for these development projects.[447]

Local populations not only suffered from the negative impacts of these projects, they also did not receive the profits from these projects. Profits from development projects in these areas go to foreign businesses such as from China or the ceasefire groups, but not to local communities.[448] Some insurgent leaders from ceasefire groups have also been accused of making personal business profits out of peace process.[449]

The unstable situation in ceasefire areas led to illegal logging, mining, gambling, drug and human trafficking, and other black-marketeering.[450] Opium production in Burma grew significantly after 1989. Part of the reasons for this growth in opium production was that some ceasefire insurgent groups, at least initially, allowed the growing and transporting of opium in their areas.[451]

The widespread corruption among government officials and government's army officers also gave incentive to some illegal business activities.[452] Ceasefire

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[446] Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Economics of Peace and Conflict*, 42.
[447] Myanmar Peace Monitor, *Economics of Peace and Conflict*, 42.
[448] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 23.
[449] Charles Petrie and Ashley South, "Development of Civil Society in Myanmar," in *Burma/Myanmar: Where Now?*, ed. Mikael Gravers and Flemming Ytzen (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2014), 226.
[450] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 24.
[451] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 27.
[452] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 25.

insurgent groups still needed to fund their groups after they reached ceasefire agreements with the government. The government was unable and not willing to provide the resources that these insurgent groups needed. Therefore, ceasefire groups engaged in some illegal business activities.[453]

Foreign actors such as Chinese and Thai logging companies and drug traders had also economically benefitted from ceasefire agreement areas in Burma without benefiting local people. Companies and authorities from neighboring countries such as China and Thailand were able to obtain natural resources from ceasefire areas in Burma at low prices with huge profits. However, these companies and individuals invested very little for the development of local people in these areas.[454]

The previous section of this chapter pointed out that ceasefire/peace agreements in Burma brought some forms wholeness for victims of militarization in Burma. However, in many instances, these ceasefire/peace agreements also brought new forms of brokenness for victims of militarization in Burma. Christian peacebuilders were among main actors who helped reach ceasefire agreements in the 1990s.

Weaknesses of Christian Peacebuilding Practices in Burma

This final section of this chapter will assess the weaknesses of Christian peacebuilding practices in Burma following Schirch's suggestions for peacebuilding.

Assessment Under Waging Conflict Nonviolently Category

Christian peacebuilders in Burma have failed to monitor closely human rights situations and environmental problems. This could have helped the public and even

[453] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 24.
[454] Kramer, *Neither War nor Peace*, 24.

the international community to become aware of the human rights abuses and environmental violations.[455]

They could have monitored the victimization of civilians and made the people inside and outside Burma aware of it. Schirch points out that the intention of this peacebuilding approach is to publicly expose the behaviors of the perpetrators to force them change their behaviors.[456] If Christian peacebuilders in Burma were able to do this the perpetrators might have changed their behavior.

Assessment Under Reducing Direct Violence Category

Christian peacebuilders in Burma worked for ceasefire agreements and provided humanitarian aid to some victims. However, they have not succeeded in preventing direct victimization through their relationship with the military and insurgents. Many of the Christian peacebuilders that this work has mentioned had connection with both government official and insurgent leaders. They could have used their relationship with government officials and insurgents to ask them not to victimize civilians. These armed actors might not heed this kind of request from these Christians. However, they did have the chance to request them to stop direct victimization of civilians.

Assessment Under Transforming Relationships Category

Christian peacebuilders in Burma have not done much in the area of trauma healing. Trauma healing programs can bring victims of violence physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. It also helps an individual to be released from the psychological effects of trauma and regain a sense of personal control. Schirch believes that the absence of trauma healing makes other activities such as humanitarian aid,

[455] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 30-31.
[456] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 31.

peacekeeping, or negotiation more difficult.[457] Christian peacebuilders in Burma failed to create programs that would train trauma healing practitioners for victims of violence.

Christian peacebuilders in Burma also failed to explore and utilize indigenous peacebuilding rituals. Schirch points out that "rituals and symbols are forms of communication that help people express themselves."[458] For instance, candlelight and prayers help people feel safe to express their emotions in trauma healing programs.[459] Use of local rituals in peacebuilding could have empowered Christian peacebuilding work more.

Assessment Under Building Capacity Category

This work pointed out earlier in this chapter that Christian peacebuilders in Burma have done some peace education programs. Peace education is available at a master's degree level. It is unknown if church leaders, pastors, and grassroots church members have received peace education or if programs are available at different levels. It is not clear if peace education is well integrated into Christian education programs and curricula, nor in educational programs of people from other faiths.

Research and evaluation has not been done extensively. Since many Christian peacebuilders in Burma were connected to local communities, they could have done research on the causes, dynamics, and nature of the conflict in Burma. This kind of research can provide peacebuilders with a better understanding of the conflict. Evaluative research is a critical practice to understand what has not worked and why it has not worked, and what has worked and why it has worked in the peacebuilding efforts in Burma.

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[457] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 47-48.
[458] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 54.
[459] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 54.

Weakness in the Integration of Peacebuilders

Schirch believes that a peacebuilding work needs to combine all four peacebuilding categories that she suggests, and this combination of all four categories requires a strategic design of peacebuilding. One element of this strategic design is the integration of peacebuilders at all levels. Schirch uses Lederach's pyramid model of peacebuilding to talk about three levels of peacebuilders in a society.[460]

Lederach conceives these three levels of leadership in terms of a pyramid. Top-level leadership is at the top of Lederach's pyramid. This level consists of people such as highly visible military, political, and religious leaders. The middle-range leaders occupy the middle section of Lederach's pyramid. These middle-range leaders are not as visible as top-level leaders. This group consists of people such as respected ethnic and religious leaders, academics, intellectuals, and leaders from NGOs. At the bottom of the pyramid is the grassroots leaders. These grassroots leaders are people such as local community leaders, members of indigenous NGOs, health officials, and refugee camp leaders.[461]

In terms of integration of all levels of peacebuilders, this work identifies three weaknesses of Christian peacebuilding practices in Burma. The first weakness of Christian peacebuilders is that they failed to mobilize grassroots Christians. Apart from Cardinal Bo, many of the Christian peace workers belong to the middle-range peacebuilders. Most of them are not highly visible. They are leaders of religious organizations, intellectuals, and ethnic leaders. Lederach points out that these middle-range leaders are connected both to the top and grassroots levels leaders.[462]

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[460] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 71.
[461] Lederach, *Building Peace*, 37-43.
[462] Lederach, *Building Peace*, 41-42.

It seems that these middle-range Christian peacebuilders in Burma were not able to mobilize their fellow Christians to work for peacebuilding. Even leaders from churches and religious organizations failed to convince their churches and constituents to work for peace. If they were able to mobilize a lot more Christians to participate in the peacebuilding work, it could have built more pressure both for the government and insurgent groups to work harder for peace. If more Christians worked with them, it would have created more transparency, accountability, and they would have also gained more trust from grassroots Christians.

The second weakness is that these Christian peacebuilders also failed to bring in people from other faiths, especially the Buddhist majority. Schirch points out that "the success of peacebuilding is ultimately linked to the ability of individuals, groups, communities, and nations to work together …"[463] This means that the lack of significant success or limited success of Christian peacebuilding in Burma is partly due to Christians' failure to work together with the Buddhist majority.[464]

The third weakness is lack of women participation in their peacebuilding efforts. All the Christian peacebuilders mentioned in the previous chapter were men. Only women in Burma are in the best position to understand and speak for the injustices that many women and girls in Burma have endured, and what they want to see in the peacebuilding process.[465] In addition, in a conflict situation, women are not

[463] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 82.

[464] For instance, see Maung Zarni, "An Inside View of Reconciliation," in *Burma/Myanmar: Inside Challenges, Outside Interests*, ed. Lex Rieffel (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 70-71 for Maung Zarni's discussion on how unintegrated peacebuilding in Burma will not work.

[465] Ivone Gebara believes that some men have the ability to understand and express the evils that women have gone through. However, she also points out that the preferred way to express women's experience of evils is to let women speak for their experiences. Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, trn. Ann Patrick Ware (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 15-16.

simply passive victims, but they are also active agents.[466] Nevertheless, their "voices and experiences have regrettably been overlooked"[467] in peacebuilding.

Women peacebuilders are usually active at the grassroots level.[468] It seems that as Christian peacebuilders in Burma failed to mobilize grassroots peacebuilders, they inevitably failed to work with women. If these Christian peacebuilders included women among them, women would have had the opportunity to advocate for their rights, expend women participation in civil society organizations, and advocate for gender equality.[469] Therefore, it is unfortunate that the male Christian peacebuilders, mentioned in this work, in Burma failed to bring in women into their different peacebuilding processes.

Failure to Bring in Outsiders

Another element for strategic design for peacebuilding that Schirch suggests is the contribution of inside and outside peacebuilders.[470] Insiders have a better understanding of local culture, context, and the conflicts. Local people are more likely to trust them and they tend to have extensive networks of relationships.[471] On the other hand, insiders have connectedness to the conflict parties.[472] This connectedness can raise question about the neutrality of these insider Christian peacebuilders in Burma.[473]

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[466] Meena Sharify-Funk and Christina J. Woolner, "Women, Religion and Peacebuilding," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Lee Marsden (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 138.

[467] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 138.

[468] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 71.

[469] Warren et al., *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict*, 7. When women are not included in peace process, their rights, equality, and issues related to socioeconomic reforms are largely missing in formal peace agreement accords. Jana Krause, Werner Krause, and Priia Bränfors, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiation and Durability of Peace," 44, no. 6 (2018): 991, accessed, October 24, 2019, doi: 10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386.

[470] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 74.

[471] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 74.

[472] Paul Wehr and John Paul Lederach, "Mediating Conflict in Central America," *Journal of Peace Research* 28, no. 1 (1991): 87, accessed February 21, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/424197.

[473] For instance, the grassroots level KNU members did not have a lot of respect for some members of Karen Christian peacebuilder team that this work mentioned earlier in this chapter. Some

For instance, there were people who were suspected that these Christian peacebuilders were not really after peace. Instead, they were after personal gains that would come either from the government or insurgent groups, or both.[474] On the other hand, outsiders have the advantage of being viewed as neutral in their mediation work. Outsiders have no connection with the conflict parties that they try to help to build peace. Therefore, they are deemed to be unbiased to any side, to have no investment in any possible outcome, and not expecting rewards from any side.[475]

If Christian peacebuilders in Burma were able to bring in outsiders in their peacebuilding work, especially in their mediation work, the outsiders might have done the job that these Christian peacebuilders were not able to do because there were people who did not trust them entirely. People from outside could have also brought outsider's perspectives, suggestions, perhaps more developed peace negotiation skills, and resources. Outsiders can also bring in international help that is crucial for peacebuilding works.[476]

This chapter has accessed the Christian peacebuilding practices in Burma in the light of Schirch's suggestions of peacebuilding approaches. It also pointed out the positive and negative outcomes of Christian peacebuilding work. It also discussed about the weaknesses of Christian peacebuilding work in Burma. The next chapter will provide suggestions for Christian peacebuilding work in Burma.

KNU members believed that some people from this team had a close relationship with the government. Some of these peacebuilders also in the past had made some public statements that apposed the KNU. Thawnghmung, *Beyond Armed Resistance*, 55.

[474] For such accusations, for instance, see Seng, Brothers-In-Peace, 1.

[475] Wehr and Lederach, Mediating Conflict in Central America, 86-87.

[476] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 74-75. Nevertheless, to be fair to these Christian peacebuilders, it was not easy for them to bring in help from outside. The government would ultimately make the final decision whether to involve people from outside or not. It was not easy for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to convince the government to accept international help in peacebuilding also because the government's longstanding mistrust of outsiders. The government has always been suspicious of external interference of Burma's internal affairs. South, *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar*, 25.

CHAPTER SIX. STRATEGIES TO ADVANCE PEACE IN BURMA

After identifying the weaknesses of Christian peacebuilding work in Burma in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on new and expanded practices that can advance the process of peace this country. It seeks to answer the final sub question of this research: How can Christians in Burma contribute to the peacebuilding process in Burma? Peacebuilding is understood not just as an end to militarization and elimination of armed conflict, but as creating the conditions and capacities where true peace can flow and the people of Burma can enjoy life with dignity.

Promote a Public Practical Theology of Peacebuilding

Chapter two of this work explained that a misunderstanding about separation of church and state keeps Christians away from political issues. In addition, the influence of this-world-denying theology and the minority status of Christians may be at the root of social indifference and fear. Therefore, the first step to develop a peacebuilding process is to promote a practical public theology of peacebuilding among church leaders and Christian grassroots communities. A practical public theology of peacebuilding recognizes in the incarnation the foundation of Christian participation in society.

Christians seek to make a difference in this world because this world matters to God. The kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurated begins with the transformation of society here and now. Christians are invited to take an active role in this transformation. As oppressed minorities in Burma, they may experience fear as the early disciples did, but this cannot be an excuse to refrain from action.

Mobilize Christian Communities

The previous chapter mentioned that on May 28, 2017, thousands of Catholic Christians in Kachin State did a prayer march for peace. However, this was an

isolated event. Active participation of Christians from grassroots communities in public demonstrations has not been encouraged by church leadership.

Since the majority of the Christian peacebuilders are middle-range leaders, they can link up with grassroots Christian leaders to try to motivate them to work for peace. They have the ability to do so because they have connection not only with top-leadership, but also with grassroots leaders.[477] These middle-range Christian peacebuilders may only know the grassroots leaders within the localities that they are familiar with. Therefore, they can also seek out other middle-range Christian peacebuilders in other geographical regions and work together with them to motivate as many grassroots Christians as possible to build peace.[478]

More Peacebuilding Connection and Cooperation through Middle-Range Leaders

Since middle-range leaders have connection with top-level leaders,[479] they can inform the people at the top of the pyramid about the peacebuilding work that grassroots Christians are doing. This will enable top-level leaders to be aware of the concerns and experiences of grassroots people. This will give the top-level leaders the opportunity to address the concerns of grassroots in their high-profile peacebuilding work.

In the same way, the middle-range leaders have the ability to inform grassroots peacebuilders about the peacebuilding work that top-level Christian peacebuilders are doing.[480] This will help the grassroots to get more information

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[477] Lederach, *Building Peace*, 41-42.

[478] The relationship building work among people from the same level of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid is called the horizontal capacity. Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 72.

[479] Lederach, *Building Peace*, 42.

[480] The integration of all three levels of peacebuilding is important. Peace studies have paid greater attention to the integration of top, middle-range, and grassroots levels peacebuilding. Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 140. The relationship between all three levels

about of the peacebuilding efforts at high-profile level.[481] This may lead to a more coordinated peacebuilding efforts between all three levels. A peace process is more likely to be successful when there is a good connection between top-level people and grassroots.[482]

Enhance Women's Participation

The previous chapter pointed out that Christian peacebuilding work in Burma has been male dominated. Anna May Say Pa[483] believes that the role of women in Burma is restricted largely within the household realm. Public space and decision-making realm are not open to them.[484] Since Christian women are not visible in Christian peacebuilding work, it seems that the wider societal view of women has also permeated Christianity in Burma.[485] It may well have influenced male Christian peacebuilders in Burma.

Traditionally, the military rule in Burma never granted powerful positions for women in the government.[486] This male dominated military mentality in Burma probably influenced male Christian peacebuilders.[487] Normally, as it is men who wage armed conflicts, those who dominates negotiation tables are men.[488]

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of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid is called the vertical capacity. Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 73.

[481] In some peace processes, there is the disconnect between the top-level and grassroots. For instance, many grassroots women in Burma are not aware of the peacebuilding work of top-level women. Warren et al., *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict*, 5-6.

[482] Krause, Krause, and Bränfors, Women's Participation in Peace Negotiation and Durability of Peace, 990.

[483] Anna May Say Pa is former principal Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon, Burma.

[484] Anna May Say Pa, "Boundary Crossers and Risk Takers: Ruth and Justa in the Struggle for Life," *Rays, MIT Journal of Theology* 10 (2009): 30.

[485] It might also be worthwhile to try to find out if Christianity in Burma itself is one of the factors that discourage women participation in peacebuilding.

[486] Pa, Boundary Crossers and Risk Takers, 44.

[487] However, the invisibility and marginalization of women in religious peacebuilding is not peculiar to Burma. Women have been largely invisible and marginalized in religious peacebuilding work anywhere. Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 140.

[488] Susan Hayward, "Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby and David Little (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 312.

Because men have marginalized women from formal and high-level peacebuilding works, women peacebuilding work is active at grassroots level, where it goes unnoticed.[489] At this level, women perform roles such as community leaders, educators, care-givers, healers, food preparers, and social organizers.[490] Women's peacebuilding work find space only largely within grassroots does not mean that their work is insignificant.[491]

For instance, women played an important role in peacebuilding on the Filipino island of Mindanao. Bual is a place in central Mindanao. Bual community has been suffering both from the conflict between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front, and the violence that comes from warring Christian and Muslim vigilante groups. However, because of the efforts of a Muslim NGO and a Catholic relief service, the Muslim and Christian residents of Bual were able to declare their village to be a Zone of Peace in 1998.[492]

Although women participation in this formal peace process in Mindanao was minimal, the varied and essential roles women played there were indispensable for peacebuilding. Fundamentally, women played as catalysts of peace. Women built relationship between Muslim and Christian women, and this relationship laid the ground work for peace. The relationship they built influenced men leaders in their community to meet with each other. Women in Mindanao were also community mobilizers. They used their roles such as wives, mothers, sisters, and peers to encourage men in the community to participate in the peace process.[493]

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[489] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 140.

[490] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 140.

[491] Susan Hayward points out that the marginalization of women from traditional power structures allows them to work with more freedom and flexibility in peacebuilding work. However, she does not believe that it is an ideal because this can give more legitimacy to the efforts to keep women's peacebuilding work out of the formal peacebuilding efforts. Hayward, Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding, 321.

[492] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 141.

[493] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 141-142.

These women were also facilitators. They helped in consultations, workshops, and meetings. They also acted as healers/inspirers. Their traditional role as caretakers allowed them to act as peace educators, and foster a culture of peace both in homes and the community. These women collectively also acted as a peace constituency. They translated the suffering they endured into a commitment of peacebuilding. These crucial acts of women played a key role in initiating and sustaining the Bual Zone of Peace.[494] This kind of women activities is not limited to the Bual women alone. Instead, women play an important role in all communities.[495]

This chapter already pointed out that it is important to integrate all three levels of peacebuilding. Women peacebuilding mostly finds its space among grassroots. The fact that Christian peacebuilders in Burma failed to include women substantially in peacebuilding work serves as another reminder that they need to work more with grassroots peacebuilders. It also means that the peace that these male Christians try to build lacks one significance benefit that women peacebuilding brings in. That benefit is that women participation improves the quality and durability of peace.[496]

Jana Krause, Werner Krause, and Priia Bränfors argue that women participation in peace process enhances the quality and durability of peace.[497] They argue so, for instance, because their research found that peace agreements that include women signatories have "a higher number of provisions and a higher rate of provision implementation 10 years after the agreement compared to those not signed by women."[498] The Christian peacebuilding work in Burma lacks this important

[494] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 142.
[495] Sharify-Funk and Woolner, Women, Religion and Peacebuilding, 148.
[496] Krause, Krause, and Bränfors, Women's Participation in Peace Negotiation and Durability of Peace, 987.
[497] Krause, Krause, and Bränfors, Women's Participation in Peace Negotiation and Durability of Peace, 987.
[498] Krause, Krause, and Bränfors, Women's Participation in Peace Negotiation and Durability of Peace, 987.

contribution from women. Therefore, it is crucial for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to allow women participation in peacebuilding at all levels, recruit more women peacebuilders, and work with them in peacebuilding.[499] Women participation in peace can give Burma the chance to enjoy a quality peace which is also durable.

Despite the fact that peacebuilding is a male dominate business in Burma, a number of women have been involved both at high-level and grassroots level.[500] This means that it cannot be too difficult to identify women peacebuilders in Burma, appreciate their work, welcome them in peacebuilding, learn from their peacebuilding work, recruit more women, and allow women to affect peacebuilding in Burma positively. When women get the opportunity to participate and contribute more in peacebuilding in Burma, it will be a testimony to one important thing. It will be a testimony that Christians in Burma understand the work of building up the reign of God in Burma is not the work mandated only to men, but to women as well.

Interreligious Work

Historically, the Buddhist majority in general and particularly governments in Burma have never trusted Burma's Christians' loyalty to their country. Christians have even been accused of being the source of division between Bamar majority and ethnic minorities. Students are also taught that Christianity is an instrument of western colonial powers.[501] This means that if Christian peacebuilders want wider credibility with their peacebuilding efforts, it is important for them to work together with Buddhists in peacebuilding.

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[499] Here this work not only means to talk about Christian women, but all women in Burma.

[500] Warren et al., *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict*, 5-6, 15, 18-19.

[501] Mang, Christianity and Ethnic Identity in Burma, 78-79. The majority of Buddhists in Burma believe that for one to be truly a citizen of Burma is to be a Buddhist. Therefore, to be a Christian means to be a Westerner. Tint Lwin, "Contextualization of the Gospel: An Effective Strategy for the Evangelization of the Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979), 175.

If Christians can involve more Buddhists in peacebuilding endeavors, it may compel the government, who is majority Buddhist, to trust Christian peacebuilders. This can in turn create more pressure both for the government and insurgents to stop violence and try to solve their differences in peaceful ways, and to try to build a long-lasting peace.

Expand Peace Education

There is the need for Christian denomination leaders to empower churches to be able to offer peace education for people at grassroots level. They can use conferences, seminars, and sermon series to teach about peace. They can also use bible study classes and church school classes for peace education. Large religious organizations can issue official positions that support peace education, provide peace education materials for local churches, provide training and funding to churches involved in peace education, and connect local churches with other peace organizations and persons involved in peacebuilding.

The expansion of churches' peace education may help more Christians to come to understand that God is the God of peace and God's sons and daughters build peace. The peace education that they offer to the people in their communities may also enhance the peacebuilding network between Christians and people from other faiths. Christians learn what peace means in other faith traditions through peace education programs where people from other faiths participate. This can lead to a robust understanding of peace in the context of Burma.

There are many insurgent groups in Burma means that there are many stakeholders, including the government, in the current peace process. Different stakeholders in Burma understand peace differently and act according to their

understanding of peace.[502] If peace education of Christians in Burma can come up with a more robust and agreeable definition of peace for all stakeholders in Burma, that will be an important contribution to peacebuilding. The common consensus on the meaning of peace can help people to set clearer goals for peacebuilding that will not only end the violence but achieve a sustainable peace.

Schirch points out that peace education is not always explicitly about peace. Peace education can come under the name of conflict transformation. Education of conflict transformation teaches people analytical, communication, and relationship skills. Human rights education can help people to understand more about their rights and how they can use international laws and judicial systems to safeguard their rights. Environmental education can increase awareness about the negative impacts of human behaviors on the environment and how to reduce those negative impacts on the environment.[503] Therefore, it is important for Christians in Burma to be aware of the plurality of peace education routes, and utilize them well.

Improve Ethnic Relations

The first chapter of this work pointed out that the distrust between the Bamar majority and ethnic minorities is a centuries-old reality in Burma and even some ethnic minorities regard Bamars as their main enemy. That chapter also pointed out the ethnic tension in Burma was largely responsible for the start of civil war in Burma. Schirch believes that for a peacebuilding work to be successful there is the need for individuals, groups, communities, and nations to work together.[504]

Since ethnic division is one of the root causes of the conflict in Burma, building better relationships between ethnic groups is unavoidable task for Christians

[502] Ashley South, "Update on Peace Process," in *Burma/Myanmar: Where Now?*, ed. Mikael Gravers and Flemming Ytzen (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2014), 250.
[503] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 57.
[504] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 82.

in Burma. With the existence of ethnic division in Burma, peacebuilding may not get beyond steps such as ceasefire agreements. Ethnic divide can always derail and reverse peace negotiations and peace agreements.

Stop Direct Violence

The previous chapter pointed out that Christians in Burma have tried to help conflict parties to reach ceasefire agreements, provided humanitarian aids to victims, and done peacekeeping to prevent direct violence. However, there is the need to step up their work in these three areas. The world's longest civil war is still going on in Burma despite the existing peace process.[505] This means that there is the need and opportunity for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to work harder to help the government and insurgents to reach ceasefire agreements.

As the fighting continues in Burma, there are also more victims of that direct violence.[506]

As humanitarian aids can not only ease human suffering, but also interrupt the cycle of violence,[507] it is important for Christian peacebuilders to step up their humanitarian assistance for these victims. There is also the need to try to find out why violence returned in some cases. For instance, the 1994 ceasefire agreement between the government and the KIO lasted fourteen years and it broke down in the end. The ceasefire agreement that Bishop Phamo brokered between the government and the KNPP lasted only for three months. These incidents indicate that there is the need for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to find out why ceasefire agreements broke down.

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[505] Verena Hoelzl and Cape Diamond, "Myanmar Military steps up attacks as coronavirus spreads," *Aljazeera*, April 16, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/myanmar-military-steps-attacks-coronavirus-spreads-200416060255091.html.

[506] Hoelzl and Diamond, Myanmar Military steps up attacks as coronavirus spreads.

[507] The previous chapter explained why Schirch believes humanitarian aid has these capacities. Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 39.

They can also put more effort in the peacekeeping work in the aftermath of ceasefire agreements. If they can do more peacekeeping, they have the chance to prevent the resurgence of violence.[508] Schirch's suggestion for the need to do evaluative research can help these Christian peacebuilders in this case.[509] It is crucial for them to research on what did not work and why it did not work, and what has worked and why it has worked in their efforts to secure ceasefire agreements, humanitarian aids, and peacekeeping efforts.

Trauma Healing

This research was unable to identify trauma healing programs offered by Christian communities. Some mental health services are available to some refugees outside Burma. For instance, mental health evaluations are available to refugees in who live in camps in Thailand. However, those services are not available to victims of war inside Burma, and mental health is often overlooked in conflict areas.[510] Trauma healing cannot only improve victim's mental health, it can also improve the victim's relationship with others, including the victim's offenders. It can also reduce the victim's desire for revenge.[511]

Trauma is not simply a mental health challenge for victims of war in Burma, but it is also a source for the continuation of violence.[512] For example, sometimes young boys joined insurgents to become combatants because the military slaughtered their parents before their eyes.[513] The absence of trauma healing and recovery

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[508] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 41.
[509] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 61.
[510] Andrew George Lim et al., Trauma and mental health of medics in eastern Myanmar's conflict zones: a cross-sectional and mixed method investigations," *Conflict and Health* 7, no. 15 (2013): 3, doi: 10.1186/1752-1505-7-15.
[511] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 47.
[512] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 48.
[513] Benedict Rogers, *A Land without Evil: Stopping genocide of Burma's Karen People* (Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2004), 241.

programs for victims can make other peacebuilding activities humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and negotiation more difficult.[514] Therefore, it is important for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to provide trauma healing to the victims of war.

Integrate Justice in Peacebuilding

Christian peacebuilders in Burma seem to have focused a lot on ending the conflict and failed to give enough attention to issues related to justice. The previous chapter pointed out that though the ceasefire agreements that some Christian peacebuilders help to reach did not end human rights violations. That chapter also pointed out that in many instances local populations suffered from new forms of abuses as a result of those ceasefire agreements. Schirch argues that in a post-violence situation, societies need to improve the situation of the society.[515]

Justice is not limited to procedural justice to right wrongs, justice has a social dimension. The justice necessary in Burma involves a distributive dimension which seeks the economic development of all groups, the fair share of goods, and protects the disadvantaged. It requires equal opportunity in the government and decision making. Minorities often recur to violence because they feel left out of the power structures. Inclusion and participation of all groups in society is the best way to avoid ongoing strife.

The current high political level peace efforts in Burma also neglect justice for victims. Political leaders in Burma believe that at this time of transition in Burma, it is important not to upset military leaders. They believe that the discussions on crimes that the military may have committed can derail the transition in Burma. They also believe that they can achieve peace without talking about justice.[516]

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[514] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 48.

[515] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 76-77.

[516] For instance, see the following sources on how the issue of justice is missing in the peace process in Burma. Aileen Thomson, "Prospect for Justice in Myanmar: Does new Political Reality

In this kind of atmosphere which does not want to talk about justice for victims, Christians peacebuilders have the opportunity to be the ones who try to seek justice for victims. Schirch points out that state-based legal and judicial systems can be a channel to seek justice for victims.[517] However, the state-based legal and judicial systems themselves can be unjust and work against the victims.[518] The state-based legal and judicial systems in Burma have never been known for fairness, transparency, and its independence from political interference.[519]

If the state-based legal system does not serve the victims, Schirch suggest that, restorative justice process can be an alternative or a supplement to the state-based legal system.[520] Restorative justice deals both with the victims and offenders.[521] It focuses on the needs and healing of the victims. It is after things such as "information about the crime, a place to tell their story of victimization, truth telling by the offenders, empowerment in the justice process, and restitution by offenders to victims."[522] Establishing restorative justice programs can be a church-based initiative where victims can share their stories and offenders are invited to confess their crimes. Ideally, government would sponsor these programs for them to reach full effect.

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offer Opportunities for Addressing Violations?," The International Center for Transitional Justice, November 3, 2016, accessed March 9, 2020, https://www.ictj.org/publication/myanmar-justice-prospects-nld; and Catherine Renshaw, "Myanmar's Transition without Justice," in *Civil Society and Transitional Justice in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Lia Ken, Joanne Wallis, and Claire Cronin (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2019). 127-153.

[517] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 38.

[518] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 51.

[519] Burma's Lawyer's Council, "Rule of Law in Burma," *Legal Issues on Burma Journal* 2, special issue (2009):3-5; and James Coe, "Broken Justice," *Frontier (Myanmar)*, January 27, 2016, accessed April 10, 2020, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/broken-justice.

[520] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 51.

[521] One disadvantage for victims even in a fair and just the state-based legal system is that its process usually leaves out the victim in the process of justice, does not seek to address the needs and traumas of the victim, and it does not require the offenders to understand the victim's harms and their responsibility to the people they have harmed. Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 52.

[522] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 52.

Local Rituals in Peacebuilding

Schirch believes the performance of traditional rituals in some cultures are important to peacebuilding. The formality of a ritual signals that people are serious about peace and are in the peace process with serious intensions.[523] Burma does have local rituals of peace. For instance, there is a peace ritual of *lephet*. People in Burma not only drink a lot of tea, they also eat tea. They eat *lephet* (fermented pickled tea leaf). In the ancient times, warring kingdoms used the offering of *lephet* to another party as a symbol of peace.[524] Since local rituals can help build peace, Christian peacebuilders in Burma will want to research on peace rituals in Burma and figure out how they can integrate those peace rituals into their peacebuilding work.

Research

This chapter has pointed out the need to do research in peacebuilding work in Burma. Research is needed to understand ceasefire agreements breakdowns, deficiencies in peacekeeping work and humanitarian assistance. Christian peacebuilders in Burma may also want to research how their existing peace education programs are working. They may also want to research how people in other countries with the situations similar to Burma try to build peace.

They will also want to know more about how women can contribute to the peace process in Burma and what are the causes and dynamic of conflict. This means that there is the need for Christian peacebuilders in Burma to dedicate their time, energy, and resources for research in peacebuilding.

This chapter has suggested some strategies for peacebuilding in Burma, but the transformation of Burma will encompass a variety of approaches at different

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[523] Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, 54.

[524] Liis Tuulbert, "Making Tea Edible: Laphet from Local Plans in Three Ways," *Nordic Food Lab* (blog), March 29, 2017, accessed April 10, 2020, http://nordicfoodlab.org/blog/2017/3/28/making-tea-edible-laphet-from-local-plants-in-three-ways.

levels. Christians can play an important role and lead the way for a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding that is grounded in their faith, but open enough to invite the participation of all people of good will.

CONCLUSION

This work has developed a public practical theology of peacebuiliding in Burma by first exploring the history of militarization there and exposing the long suffering of this people. It then addressed the causes of inaction by Christians, especially the lack of a biblically based understanding of Christian social commitment.

Informed by a theological reflection on peace and peacebuilding, this work argues that Christian discipleship involves the work of peacebuilding because it is part of the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated. This work has pointed out that while Christians are a small minority in Burma, they have not been absent from the peacebuilding work in Burma. They have contributed significantly to the peacebuilding process in Burma. However, peacebuilding is at an initial stage.

Peacebuilders need to address the causes of violence and militarization, such as the lack of distribution of power, lack of inclusion, and opportunities in society. This is aggravated by lack of interreligious and intergroup dialogue that date back in history. This work proposes a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding in Burma which begins with ending direct violence, but aims at the transformation of social structures and relationships.

Christians have a prime opportunity to make a difference in this peacebuilding process, and the author of this work humbly hopes Christians in Burma will use the theology of peace and peacebuilding and the practices that this work has provided to implement a process whereby peace may become a reality in this country.

This work hopes to be helpful to existing Christian peacebuilders in Burma, providing both the rationale and the practices for Christians and non-Christians to become active agents in the peace process of this country. The political situation in Burma may change with time. There might come a day where there is no more

fighting in Burma. But the work of peacebuilding does not stop there, it continues until a there is a just society where peace reigns.

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