
VIEWING LIFE THROUGH DEATH'S PERSPECTIVE: The Confluence of the Theravada Buddhism's Theology of Death with the Christian Faith

Markus Kurniawan,¹ Yogi Prihantoro²
Bina Nusantara University, Kemanggisan¹
Evangelical Theological Seminary, Cairo, Egypt²
Email: markuskurnia73@gmail.com¹

Submitted: 12 April 2022 Revision: 22 May 2024 Published: 30 June 2024

Abstract

Death is a very close thing in human life, even a certain thing. It is impossible to predict when this death will occur. Therefore, death is also part of a mysterious phenomenon that occurs repeatedly with the same subject, namely people. The saying that the closest friend is dead. Sooner or later, willingly, or not, every human being will experience death that no one can avoid. When it comes to reacting to death, some people are afraid, some are worried, and some sincerely accept it. This article uses descriptive – analysis using *Zur Theologie des Todes* – ‘On the Theology of Death,’ published in 1958. Karl Rahner developed his theological approach to death. Death, according to Rahner, is an event that affects the whole human being, not just the body, while the immortal soul remains fundamentally intact. According to the Buddhist concept, death is the end of suffering. Birth, dissatisfaction, pain, and dissatisfaction, are suffering in life. So, death is a possible way to reduce pain. Death, which is seen as the end of one's life, should be seen as an act in itself. Rahner interprets fulfillment as belonging to death itself. Nonetheless, Rahner's theory, like Augustine's, continues to evolve, and his treatment of the "liberty of the sick," if wrong, offers an important addition to moral meditation on the issue of the end of life.

Keywords: Theology of death; Christian faith; Theravada Buddhism; Confluence.

INTRODUCTION

Every religion has sacred values as long as it is not reduced to an ideology.¹ The word "ideology" can be used with different meanings and there is no one unified meaning.² In this paper, we interpret it more neutrally. Ideology is seen as the whole system of thinking, values and basic spiritual attitudes of a movement, social group or culture. This neutral meaning, according to Suseno, depends on the content contained in it, if the content is good then it is positive and vice versa, for example if the content justifies hatred then as an ideology it is bad.³ If religion is reduced to an ideology then it is prone to abuse for the purposes of the ideology. Reduction of sacred values in religion

¹ Th. Sumartana. "Kemanusiaan Titik Temu Agama-Agama". in Martin L. Sinaga (Ed). *Agama-Agama Memasuki Milenium Ketiga* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2000), 196.

² Franz Magnis-Suseno. *Filsafat Sebagai Ilmu Kritis* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 1992), 229.

³ Suseno. *Filsafat Sebagai Ilmu Kritis*, 230.

also occurs when there are parties who understand the basics of other religious teachings from their own perspective - so not from the point of view of the religion they want to understand - so that they misinterpret and use certain terms.

In previous research on death, Arloka in his book entitled 'The concept of life and death is an important approach in Theravada Buddhism' explains that studying the concept of life and death in Theravāda Buddhism and is intended to study in the following three purposes, (1) studying life in Theravāda Buddhism, (2) studying death in Theravāda Buddhism, and (3) criticizing life and death.⁴ In other sections, Bond examines Theravada Buddhist meditations on death and death initiation symbols.⁵

In research on death from a Christian perspective, Chukwuedo examines life and death from a Christian perspective. As per Chukwuedo, life and death are important for holding mystical beliefs in different religions. Christianity believes that God created life. Death is the end of all life cycles such as birth, puberty, marriage, old age, and others.⁶ In another section, Ayodeji examines Christians' perceptions of the two concepts of death and judgment.⁷

In this paper, one of the sacred values of Buddhism, especially the Theravada school, will be raised regarding the concept of death. This theology of death from Theravada Buddhism will be discussed and compared with the theology of death according to Christian understanding. This comparison needs to be done in an effort to avoid misunderstanding the meaning of the terms used. The author does not see both – Theravada Buddhism and Christianity as an ideology where religion can be abused, as tools of negativity for example.

The hypothesis to be tested is that the theology of death in the Christian faith can be contextualized – at least with a point of contact – to adherents of Theravada Buddhism. The purpose of this study is to find common ground in theology, especially the theology of death, in the context of developing Christian contextual theology. The

⁴ Arloka H. B. *The concept of life and death is an important approach in Theravada Buddhism* (Sacramento: Mohakmangalyt, 2022).

⁵ George D. Bond. "Theravada Buddhism's Meditations on Death and the Symbolism of Initiatory Death." *History of Religions* 19, no.3 (1980): 237–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062469>.

⁶ Mercy Uwaezuoke Chukwuedo. "The paradox of life and death: a Christian perspective." *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies* 8, no.1 (2019): 42-49. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/mjas/article/view/187372>.

⁷ Olowu Ayodeji. "Christians' perception of the concepts of death and judgment: A multimodal discourse analytical study of selected editions of Christian Women Mirror Magazine." *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4, no.10 (2013): 508-515. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2013.0446>.

research method used in writing is descriptive – analytical.⁸ The authors will explain the concept of the theology of death in Theravada Buddhism and Christianity (Protestant) after which it will be analyzed based on theories in contextual theology. Finally, conclusions and suggestions are drawn.

DISCUSSION

The Four Pillars of Theravada Buddhism

In Buddhism there are various schools. This paper discusses the basic teachings of Theravada Buddhism, especially those related to death. The founder of Buddhism was a prince named Siddhartha Gautama from India (563-483 BC). The condition of society with its religious condition when Siddhartha lived was the right time to spread his teachings. The old religion was judged to be unable to answer the spiritual needs of the community.⁹ For Siddhartha Gautama, there are four noble truths (*cattari ariya saccani*),¹⁰ namely: life is suffering (*dukkha*), suffering has a cause (*samudaya*), suffering can be overcome by eliminating desire (*nirodha*), and the way to overcome suffering is to follow the 8 paths main (*magga*). The eight main paths are: Right understanding (*samma ditthi*); Right thought (*samma samkappa*); Right speech (*samma vaca*); Right action (*samma kammanta*); Right livelihood (*samma ajiva*); Right effort (*samma vayama*); right mindfulness (*samma sati*) and right concentration (*samma samadhi*).

Life is seen as a moment of suffering. All that humans experience is suffering. Loving, marrying, giving birth, possessing property and so on (all that can be absorbed by the five senses is *dukkha*). Suffering comes from desire (*tanha*) which is in man. These desires can lead to attachment caused by internal demands to be continuously fulfilled. Desires in question are desires controlled by the defilements that give rise to lower desires. These desires cause misery or suffering in humans. It can be read in the Dhammapada: "From clinging arises sorrow, from clinging arises fear; for one who is free from attachment, there is neither sorrow nor fear".¹¹ The eight main paths are

⁸ Sugiarto, dkk. *Metodologi Penelitian Hospitaliti & Pariwisata* (Gading Serpong: Matana Publishing, 2015), 42-43.

⁹ F.X. Mudji Sutrisno. *Buddhisme, Pengaruhnya Dalam Abad Modern* (Jogjakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 1993), 32-33.

¹⁰ "Kesunyataan" berarti apa yang sesungguhnya atau fakta yang tidak dapat dibantah. Narada Mahathera, *Sang Buddha dan Ajaran-ajaran-Nya*. Bagian 2 (Jakarta: Yayasan Dhammadipa Arama, 1998), 38.

¹¹ Dhammapada, *Sabda-sabda Buddha* Gotama (Jakarta: Hanuman Sakti, 1997), 95.

basically ways to control the desires that give rise to these lower desires. Siddhartha Gautama concluded that life is suffering based on his experiences and struggles with temporary (sickness-old-death).

In addition to teaching about the cattari ariya saccani (four noble truths), Siddhartha teaches other things that form the framework of Buddhism, namely: first, the teachings on the law of karma and re-birth. This teaching is a legacy that comes from Hinduism. This teaching is the basis for the theology of death in Theravada Buddhism. Second, the teachings on the Trilakhana (three general features), namely: the teachings on the non-existence of "I" (*annatta*); the doctrine of impermanence (*anicca*) and the doctrine of man consisting of the *pancakkhanda* (five aggregates).

Death in Theravada Buddhism

Siddhartha's teachings are realist, all these teachings can be practiced by all levels of society from various backgrounds, not limited to certain people (priests, monks, ascetics, etc.). Buddhism does not promise its adherents anything (eg. heaven, immortality, wealth, happiness, etc.) but offers. Those who want to experience the depths of the Buddha's teachings must be willing to do it themselves instead of expecting help from other people or supernatural beings (Gods, angels, etc.). Buddhism places more emphasis on practical behavior (ethics) and philosophy of life, rather than strict and systematic religious dogmas.¹² Life is seen as suffering overcome by eliminating desire (*tanha*). The word "Tanha" can be translated as thirst, desire, greed, greed or addiction.¹³ The cessation of negative desires is the life goal of a Theravada Buddhist (re-incarnate or re-birth).¹⁴ The cessation of evil desire is *nibbana* or nirvana.

Bond explained that death is something of a paradox in Theravada Buddhism.¹⁵ Arloka describe that in Buddhism, it is believed that death is a natural part of life. When someone is reborn, they will eventually die again. Buddhism talks about two different

¹² Daisaku Ikeda. *Buddhisme: Falsafah Hidup* (Jakarta: Indira, 1988), 48.

¹³ Walpola Sri Rahula. *What The Buddha Taught. Revised ed.* (Thailand: Kurusapha Press, 1988) 29.

¹⁴ Desires, according to Gautama Buddha's observation, are threefold: First, desires caused by the human senses (sound, fragrance, delicacy, form or touch, etc.), such desires are called Kamatanha. Second, the desire in the heart that continuously demands to be fulfilled (Bhavatanha). For example, the desire to be someone else, the desire for something one already has, etc. Lastly, desires that after being fulfilled make people dissatisfied, and do not want to see or feel the desire again. This kind of desire is called Vibhavatanha.

¹⁵ Bond. "Theravada Buddhism's Meditations on Death and the Symbolism of Initiatory Death."

ways to die. One is when someone dies at the end of their natural life, this is called Kāla-Maraṇa. The other is when someone dies while they are still young, this is called Akāla-Maraṇa. Additionally, one can use the idea of death to grow as a person by practicing mindfulness of death. After learning about Buddhism, it teaches about death in a thorough way and shows how to practice dealing with death so it can be used in everyday life.¹⁶

In Pali (*Nibbana*) or Sanskrit (Nirvana), it consists of two syllables, *Ni* and *Vana*. *Ni* is the negative element while *Vana* is desire or connection. The two words are combined and give rise to the sense of a separation from desire. *Nibbana* can also be interpreted as the extinction of desire (*lobba*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). There are two types of *Nibbana*, namely *Nibbana* with residue (*Saupadisesa Dhatu*) and *Nibbana* without residue (*Anupadisesa Dhatu*). *Saupadisesa Dhatu* is a state without desire that can be achieved by a person during his life, while *Anupadisesa Dhatu* is *nibbana* that is achieved after a person dies (more precisely experiencing *Parinibbana*, namely a state that is no longer experiencing reincarnation).¹⁷

Theravada Buddhism, does not recognize the concept of heaven or hell as in Christianity. *Nibbana* is a condition or condition not a place like the concept of heaven and hell. *Nibbana* is also not a mere metaphysical state but a concrete present and present condition. Death is the end for those who have reached *saupadisesa dhatu*, the extinction of desire during life but has not ended for those who are in a state of *anupadisesa dhatu*. Thus, life is not seen to stop as suffering alone but is filled with actions to overcome that suffering.

Death According to the Bible

The Bible understands physical death as the separation of the soul from the body (Ecclesiastes 12:7: Gen 2:7: James 2:26). According to Berkhof, "The body is considered as a living organism and the psuche is evidently the pneuma of man, the spiritual element which is the principle of his natural life."¹⁸ Karl Rahner in *On the Theology of Death*, argues, the description of death as the separation of the body from the soul is a view that has long been held by the early church fathers so that it is considered a classic

¹⁶ Arloka H. B. *The concept of life and death is an important approach in Theravada Buddhism*.

¹⁷ Walpola Sri Rahula. *What The Buddha Taught*, 29; comp. Olaf H. Schumann, *Filsafat dan Agama. Pendekatan Pada Ilmu Agama-Agama 2* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2016), 359-360.

¹⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 668.

view in theology of death. The Bible also asserts that physical death is not a natural consequence of the continuation of the chain of life but is the result of spiritual death (Rom. 6:23; 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:56; James 1:15).¹⁹

In the book of Revelation, spiritual death is understood as eternal death or a second death. Those who are still living in sin will share in the fiery lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8 cf 20:15) while believers do not experience a second death. They will be priests of God and reign as kings with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).²⁰ Spiritual death is more understood as the separation between man and God which will lead to eternal death as a result and end of the separation.²¹

Etymology of Death in the Old Testament and New Testament

Etymologically the word death in the Old Testament (OT) is *maveth*, (Heb) meaning to die (used 630 times in the form of qal), destroy, destroy, end (used 9 times), fall (used 138 times in the form of hiphil), suffering death (used 68 times in the hophal form), death, death or the underworld parallel to *sheol*.²² Geoffrey W. Bromily defines *mavet* as a shadow of death, a state of sleep that is synonymous with death.²³ In the OT text death begins with the story in Genesis 3:3, God announced Adam's death as a result of his disobedience to His commands.²⁴ The human body cannot be freed from the destruction and suffering that leads to death as a consequence and punishment for sin (cf. Gen. 2:16-17, 3:15, etc.).²⁵ Humans experience separation from God's holiness, because there is no harmony with His character.

The parallel of the word *maveth* is *thanatos* (Greek), which means the state of death, the end of the activities of human life, the closing of the period of human life, the destruction of human existence, it can also mean the soul that is in the realm of the

¹⁹ Karl Rahner, *On The Theology of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 16-17.

²⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 1170; comp. George Arthur Buttrick, "Death", *The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Vol I/IV (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 804.

²¹ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood: Revell, 1907), 982.

²² G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, Heinz-Josef Fabrey. *Theological Dictionary of The Old Testament*. Vol 8 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997) 190-91.

²³ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 898.

²⁴ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1170. Erickson says that Adam's death was a physical death that was not the original human condition. Adam's death was part of a spiritual death resulting from going against God's command.

²⁵ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Worldbook of The Old Testament*. Vol 1 (Chicago: Moody Prfess, 1980), 496-497.

dead.²⁶ *Thanatos* is found used in the New Testament (NT) 20 times in the Synoptic Gospels, 8 times in the Acts of the Apostles, 32 times in the Johannine literature (John 8 times, I John 6 times, Revelation 18 times), 47 times in the apostles' letters. Paul (22 times in Romans 1-8, 8 times in I Corinthians, 9 times in 2 Corinthians, 6 times in Philippians, 1 time each in Colossians and 2 Timothy), 10 times in Hebrews and 2 times in the letter of James.²⁷

Etymology of life after death in the Old Testament and New Testament

The term for life after death in the OT is sheol (*hades*, *Gehenna* in Greek). The word *sheol* is used 65 times in the sense of a grave, the realm of the dead, a dark land/hell or a pit. The word grave is used 31 times.²⁸ The realm of the dead 30 times and the hole 3 times.²⁹ The word *sheol* as the underworld, is sometimes contrasted with heaven (cf. Ps 139:8; Job 11:8; Amos 9:2; De 32:22; Isa 57:9).³⁰ In addition, the Old Testament uses the word sheol more in the sense of grave than hell.³¹

The word *hades* which is equivalent to *sheol*, has the meaning of the underworld, a place of darkness which God no longer remembers (Job 10:21f; 26:5; Ps 6:5; 30:9 (LXX 29:9); 115:17 (LXX 113:25; Pro 1:12; 27:20; Isa 5:14). In the Septuagint (LXX) the word *hades* is used 100 times.³² While in the New Testament (only in Matthew, Luke, Acts and the book of Revelation) is used 10 times, in the sense of being a place of punishment or purification for evil which is used 3 times (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:23)³³ and as a place that has a locked gate with Christ as the key holder, used 7 times (Mt 16:18; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14).³⁴

The words *hades* and *gehenna* basically have sharp differences, namely: (a) *hades*, accepts evil only in the intervening period between death and resurrection, while

²⁶ Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 1 (Zondervan: Regency, 1975), 430-431.

²⁷ Horst Balz- Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of New Testament*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 129-130.

²⁸ The Old Testament gives a picture of a grave like the one in Palestine which has a depth of 2 meters, dark, dusty and mixed with bones. The human soul does not go to one place, but to the grave, as is the fate of the soul in a temporary state.

²⁹ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, vol 2, 892.

³⁰ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 686.

³¹ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, vol 2, 892.

³² Brown, *The New International Dictionary*, Vol 2, 206-207.

³³ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*. Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 148. According to Kittel, *hades* is contrasted with the state of heaven, which is on high, and death, which is in the underworld.

³⁴ Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 374.bdk dengan Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, vol 1, 149.

gehenna as their place of punishment in the final judgment;³⁵ (b) An evil soul is out of the body in hades, while the word gehenna makes body and soul reunite at the resurrection and is destroyed in eternal fire (Mark. 9:43,45, 47-48 parallels Matt. 10:28).³⁶

Human Death Due to Sin

Since Adam and Eve sinned, people couldn't get to the 'tree of life' and couldn't live forever. This means that people will eventually die and be buried in the ground. You were made from it: you are made of dust, and you will return to dust, "You will go back to dust" (Genesis 3:19). According to the Bible, humans were created in the image and likeness of God. God's image and likeness became corrupted, when humans no longer obeyed God's commands in the garden of Eden by transgressing against His commands (cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:3,6, 8-11). They were sentenced to death (inanimate) and lived in slavery to sin (cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:19; Rom. 5:12, 17; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:21; Jas 1:15). They cannot be released from this punishment (Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor 15:56). In the perspective of Christian faith, death (Hebrew: *maveth*; Greek: *thanatos*) is the result of sin.³⁷ Adam's sin has spread to all mankind (Rom. 5:12-17).³⁸ There is no one in this world who is without sin (1 Ki. 8:46; Eccl 7:20; Psalm 14; Isa 64:6; Rom. 3:9, 23; 1 John 1:8,10). All humans have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23) and separated from God.³⁹ Sin has made the human body created from the dust element unable to be freed from the decay and decay or pain and suffering of life that is now experienced. Man cannot free

³⁵ Kittel, *Theological Dictionary* vol 1, 658.

³⁶ Kittel, *Theological Dictionary* vol 1, 658. According to Kettel, the word gehenna, which is used 12 times, refers more to the notion of eternal punishment (Heb: *ge hinnom*) in hellfire as a judgment that has an eternal time and not annihilation (comp. Mat 33:15,33; 25:41,46); Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 375.

³⁷ The corruption of sin occurs from the inside out, such as the inner man (mind, heart, will) which will then be seen in the deeds he does (Rom 1; Eph 4:17-19), and vice versa from the outside in, the apostle Paul mentions in Rom 7:14 that what is done, he does not know, because it is not what is desired that is done. The will to do good is there, but it is not the good that he does. He is under the power of the flesh and sold under the power of sin. Harun Hadiwijono, *Iman Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997), 241.

³⁸ "The fact that man since Adam brings to accomplishment the death which is his act, in the empty finality of the death which he undergoes, so that death as a human act is obscured by death as suffering, visibly manifests the absence of divine grace. Death is the penalty of sin" Rahner, *On Theology of Death*, 43.

³⁹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley mengatakan bahwa, "Death is manifested at the break in the fellowship between God and men. It is not just an expression of the quantitatively dynamic distinction between time and eternity, nor is it characterized only by the autonomy of the *bios* as this is tied to development and destruction and thus to a quantitative measure". Geoffrey W. Bromiley. *Living With Death by Helmut Thielicke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 125.

himself from the curse of sin. Any effort made is in vain (cf: Isa. 59:2; Mark 7:20-23; Eph. 2:8-9).⁴⁰

In the sight of God, sin still has to be cleansed. The cleansing is through redemption made only by a person chosen by God Himself, a person who is without blemish (John 3:16). In the Bible story, he is Jesus the Christ who died on the cross in place of sinful humans from the penalty of death. Man can receive salvation and victory over death, only if he has faith of hope in suffering, death and resurrection in Christ.⁴¹ The Bible asserts that physical death is the "wage of sin." But for believers the element of punishment is removed from death. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as their savior, are no longer under eternal damnation. They have received complete forgiveness for their sins. They have been renewed in Christ through the response of faith.

Grace Doesn't Eliminate Death

In 1985, Erickson showed that some scriptural passages used to say that people die because of sin don't actually prove that. An example is Ezekiel 18:4, 20, which says "the person who sins will die". The passage is talking about how someone who is spiritually dead can become alive again by turning away from their sins. Both believers and non-believers both die, so the reference here cannot be about dying in a physical sense. Death happens because of sin. It could be possible that people were made to live forever. He was not naturally able to live forever, but he would not have lived forever even if he could. Instead, if he hadn't done anything wrong, he could have eaten from the tree of life and lived forever. Erickson said that people are not meant to die. It's something from a different place and it feels unfriendly.⁴²

Humans who are in the grace of Christ are not free from the reality of physical death which is the beginning of a perfect life. The apostle Paul saw death not as an enemy to be feared, but as a transition to a life of hope in the life-giving Lord (Rom. 4:17) and to be an integral part of faith (2 Cor. 5:1-10; Rom. 5:1-5). Followers of Christ enter death with the assurance that the sting of death has been broken (1 Cor. 15:55) and the gates of heaven are open to them (Berkhof, 671.). Death for the apostle Paul was

⁴⁰ Brown, *The New International Dictionary*, vol 1.438. Comp. J.I. Packer, *The Death of Death in The Death of Christ: Introductory Essay To John Owen's* (Montana: Gospel Mission Press, 1980), 19.

⁴¹ John Hick said, "In facing death we face total destruction and non-existence; and holy faith in gracious goodness of God gives hope beyond the grave". John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 180.

⁴² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*.

an expression of gratitude (2 Cor. 5:6-9; Phil. 1:21-24) (Bailey 1979, 90-91). Even though he often has to face the threat of death (1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:8; 11:23, etc.) (Bailey 1979, 438), so when he talks about the end of his life, he can say, "I have ended the match well, I have reached the finish line and I have kept the faith..." (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Death is an opportunity to experience the complete victory of faith.

Finding Common Points: The First Steps to Contextualization

The first meeting point, we find theologically. The understanding of the two beliefs about death converges on an appreciation of life. That life is suffering does not mean that it is unimportant. To overcome so that there is no repetition of life (read: suffering) life must be directed by practicing it, life is actually seen as an opportunity to overcome suffering. In the Christian view life is also seen as an opportunity to do the will of the creator. God incarnated to redeem the living, not the dead.

Second, ethically-practical synergy can also be done. Through joint praxis in developing human values, among others, developing sensitivity to situations of grief (cf. Rom 12:15). Death is something that must be experienced by every living being. Despite religious and philosophical explanations of death, the event itself always creates a deep sense of loss. The closer the relationship between those left behind and those who leave, the greater the sense of loss. The understanding of life and death from adherents of the faith of the two religions can elevate the essential human value, namely compassion. Empathy can only exist when there is compassion. Compassion will develop precisely in the presence of others. Relationships between people can then enter into the highest relationship as stated by Martin Buber.⁴³

In the Indonesian context, it takes more than just mutual respect and appreciation which is more often formal. It also requires mutual compassion, compassion. An honest relationship with a clear view will be created – even if it requires a process – when every believer is willing to step out of a dogmatic attitude. Instead of making faith threatened, the courage to confess other truths, will enrich our faith and gratitude to Christ.

The third meeting point, psychologically can be seen using logotherapy which believes that finding meaning in one's life is the main motivator. Meaning has to be

⁴³ Martin Buber 1948, 10-13; 1951, 113 f.

created over time. Frankl calls it the desire to find meaning (will to meaning).⁴⁴ In Theravada Buddhism meaning is articulated with efforts to achieve liberation from desire. Christian faith articulates it with a victorious life in Christ (cf. Phil 2:12). Both of them put *meaning* as motivation in life.

A Life Worth Fighting For Because of the Presence of "Others"

In the second perspective of living faith, death is a sacred thing. The fact that death does not cause fear but respect. The respect is actually done before death comes to someone, namely in life. Both appreciations of faith view life as something valuable and worthy to be lived with sincerity. In the Christian faith life is filled with carrying out the commands and will of God in Christ not to get happy eternal life. Life is lived as a form of gratitude for the gift of salvation that God has given. For Theravada Buddhism, life is not only seen as suffering but is an opportunity to prepare for the next life or at least to strive for a life that undergoes a guided practice with the aim of escaping the cycle of re-incarnation.

Life is precious because of the presence of "the other". Other people to me and vice versa, I to others can be involved in a relationship that is meaningful and honest. This relationship which is based on mutual respect and awareness of mutual need and is not manipulative is a realization of the recognition that life is valuable and must be lived seriously. The existence of "the other" is not to be used or ignored. Thus, sacredness lies not only in death but also in life. Life, even though in the perspective of Theravada Buddhism is seen as suffering-is a sacred thing because it is seen as valuable and worthy of being lived with respect and sincerity.

CONCLUSION

Death is not an event to be feared. Life would be absurd without the reality of death. Making peace with the certainty of death makes life more quality. In Theravada Buddhism and the Christian faith, death is seen from a different perspective. The difference occurs because in theology the view of life is also different. Reincarnation is the starting point for Theravada to see life. Life is defined cyclically. In the Christian faith life is seen as linear, there is a starting point of creation that leads to its end point,

⁴⁴ Viktor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Haris Priyatna (trans.) (Jakarta: Penerbit Naura Books, 2017), 143-145.

namely the second coming of the Messiah. The Christian faith sees life as an opportunity to glorify God.

The two experiences of faith differ in their view of life and death. But both have a common ground, namely their respect for life. Life is seen as a precious thing that must be lived with sincerity. A life that is compassionate towards others and a life that has meaning (meaning) is a real manifestation of this seriousness. The two faith beliefs make death a friend as a companion in life rather than making it an eternal enemy. Death is inevitable so it doesn't need to be avoided (no need to look for it either). Death requires more anticipation than the living, in the form of preparation.

REFERENCES

- Ayodeji, Olowu. "Christians' perception of the concepts of death and judgment: A multimodal discourse analytical study of selected editions of Christian Women Mirror Magazine." *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4, no.10 (2013): 508-515. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2013.0446>.
- Bailey, R. Lloyd. *Biblical Perspectives on Death*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Balz, Horst and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of New Testament*, vol 2. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.
- Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994.
- Bond, George D. "Theravada Buddhism's Meditations on Death and the Symbolism of Initiatory Death." *History of Religions* 19, no.3 (1980): 237-58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062469>.
- Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabrey. *Theological Dictionary of The Old Testament*. Vol 8. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997.
- Bromiley, W. Geoffrey. *Living With Death by Helmut Thielicke*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983.
- Buttrick, Arthur George. "Death", *The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Vol I/IV. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
- Chukwuedo, Mercy Uwaezuoke. "The paradox of life and death: a Christian perspective." *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, 8, no.1 (2019): 42-49. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/mjas/article/view/187372>.
- Colin, Brown. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 1. Zondervan Regency, 1975.

- Dhammapada, *Sabda-Sabda Buddha* Gotama. Jakarta: Hanuman Sakti, 1997.
- Enns, Paul. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1989.
- Erickson, J. Millard. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- Frankl, E. Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Haris Priyatna (Penterjemah). Jakarta: Naura Books, 2017.
- Geoffrey, W. Bromiley. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- H.B., Arloka. *The concept of life and death is an important approach in Theravada Buddhism*. Sacramento: Mohakmangalyt, 2022.
- Hadiwijono, Harun. *Iman Kristen*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997.
- Hick, John. *Death and Eternal Life*. San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Ikeda, Daisaku. *Buddhisme: Falsafah Hidup*. Jakarta: Indira, 1988.
- Kittel, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*. Vol 1, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Laird, R. Harris. *Theological Worldbook of The Old Testament*. Vol 1., Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Mahathera, Narada. *Sang Buddha dan Ajaran-ajaran-Nya*, vol 2, Jakarta: Yayasan Dhammadipa Arama, 1998.
- Packer, J.I. *The Death of Death In The Death of Christ: Introductory Essay To John Owen's*. Montana: Gospel Mission Press, 1980.
- Rahner, Karl. *On The Theology of Death*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1961.
- Rahula, Sri Walpola. *What The Buddha Taught. Revised ed.* Thailand: Kurusapha Press, 1988.
- Schumann, H. Olaf *Filsafat dan Agama. Pendekatan Pada Ilmu Agama-Agama 2*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2016.
- Sinaga, L. Martin (Ed). *Agama-agama Memasuki Milenium Ketiga*. Jakarta: Grasindo, 2000.
- Strong, H. Agustus. *Systematic Theology*. Westwood: Revell, 1907.
- Sugiarto, Tonny Hendratono, and Djoko Sudiby. *Metodologi Penelitian Hospitaliti & Pariwisata*. Antonius Andy Permana (ed.). Tangerang: Matana Publishing, 2015.
- Suseno, Magnis Frans. *Filsafat Sebagai Ilmu Kritis*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 1992.
- Sutrisno, F.X. Mudji. *Buddhisme, Pengaruhnya Dalam Abad Modern*. Jogjakarta: Kanisius, 1993.



QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.