Polykarp Ulin Agan, SVD*

RELIGIONS AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR PEACEBUILDING— AN OPEN WOUND?

There is a strong link between religions and violence, at least in the public perception. The article analyzes the internal commitment to peace of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism and their contributions towards a theology of peace or the guidance religions can offer to peaceful social behavior. A central question deals with the role God is supposed to play within each of the religious systems. Chapter 8 of FT tackles this commitment of all religions towards peace. Finally, the author comments on three proposals for religion and peace.

Nowadays it is almost natural to immediately associate violence and aggression with the dark side of religion. The religions themselves are to blame, as they are often involved in armed conflicts in political contexts. Religions that set peace as their central message are nevertheless often caught up in their quite fundamentalist views. The consequence of this is that the otherness in the expression of faith is considered as an "apostasy of faith" which should be overcome or eliminated as soon as possible.

It was for example in the name of Islam that Mohammed Atta, the man who steered the Boeing 757 on American Airlines Flight 11 at 8:46 a.m. into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York, wanted to save the evil world from the wrath of God. He firmly believed that there is nothing higher for a believer than to give his life in the name of God. In order to achieve this goal, all means are sacred to him, even and especially massive destruction whereby people who blaspheme the Almighty through their way of life have to be killed. The Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik was infected by this way of thinking, when on the island Utøya (Norway) he shot dozens of young

* Polykarp Ulin Agan, SVD, was born in Larantuka (Indonesia) in 1970. He studied theology in Germany and holds a doctorate in fundamental theology (2009). He teaches at the Kölner Hochschule für Katholische Theologie (Cologne, Germany). Since 2019, he is the Rector of the Missionspriesterseminar St. Augustin (Germany). He is a member of the Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut and the Akademie Völker und Kulturen where he has contributed regularly as the editor of the annual volumes and as author of theological reflections.

people, driven by the ideology to save Christianity from the non-Christian heresies, especially those of Islam.

How does it fit together that religions in their history are characterized on the one hand by such bloody events (cf. Jihad, Crusades), but on the other hand always claim to be a fountain of peace, charity and human dignity?[1] How can they make a valuable contribution to building up fraternity and defending justice in society (cf. FT 226) when violence is still being used on their behalf? How do they succeed to come together for a dialogue whose goal is "to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share moral and spiritual values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love?"[2] First of all it should be stated that the point here is to see what the various religions can contribute to peace from their own theological point of view, in view of the common reproach that they always tend to produce conflict and tension. Therefore, the question must be asked: Which theological core statements of the respective religions may be crystallized ways that are relevant to the development of peace concepts in the sense of Pope Francis' *Fratelli tutti*?

I. Christianity and Islam

1. God's Dynamic Relationship of Love in Christian Theology of Peace

Christian theology of peace is primarily guided by the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the central figure of Christian faith. In memory of the basic message of Christ, who lived and taught non-violence, Christian theology of peace is about getting across authentically his words and deeds to people around the world. What is conveyed will be nothing else than "the message of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18-31), which is the basis of true peace both between God and humans and between

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[1] On this dispute see: Christine Abbt et al. (eds.), *Im Zeichen der Religion: Gewalt und Friedfertigkeit in Christentum und Islam,* Campus Verlag 2009. The history of Christianity as well as Islam is full of bloody events. Fundamentalist violence shapes religions so much that many people often accuse religions of being the main cause of most of the unrest in this world. How can religions justify their claim that they can be the source of peace? The authors in this book deal with these two ambivalent attitudes regarding the role of religions in people's lives. The main question raised in this book is: What is the relationship between aggression and religion? On the one hand, this book helps to better understand the connection between religious self-image and violence, on the other hand it helps to open up a background that is rarely seen in the many debates.

[2] Indian Bishops' Conference, *Response of the Church in India to the Present-day Challenges* (March 9, 2016).

people among themselves. Accepting the message of the cross as the basis of true peace means recognizing that we cannot do anything only with our own power with regard to the peace of the world. We should trustfully place our concerns of peace in the hands of God, who in Christ overcame suffering and death, the dark forces and brutal violence with his own suffering and death without falling into pacifism. Aggressive violence has marked human history; hostility and disharmony were already always there in the natural evolution of the world from the start. We have to accept that, whatever our religious beliefs may be. The fact is: In the beginning of Christianity there was brutal violence. Later, Christians themselves used violence against heretics and deviants. And today we are living as Christians in a world where violence is reigning all around. All the more it is important to promote a religious attitude that advocates "an openness to the Father of all," because without this open attitude "there can be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity" (FT 272).

For a Christian theology of peace, it is recommended to cultivate and promote an open-door mentality and culture. What this means is a dialogical opening on the part of Christianity, which enables it in a prophetic way not to silence its critical voice in view of the phenomenon of religion which is rooted in transcendence, yet also "human work." This prophetic voice can be traced back to the endeavor of Jesus, who showed an open attitude towards strangers and sinners, but who at the same time did not shy away from raising his prophetic voice. Jesus showed the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-42) a welcome gesture, when he asked her for a sip of water, although he knew that it was forbidden for a Jew to interact with Samaritans, let alone drink from a vessel that belonged to a Samaritan woman, which could make him unclean. His welcome gesture did not prevent him from bringing his prophetic art of pastoral care onto the stage. Jesus pretends to send her to her husband. When she replies that she has no husband, he tells her straight into her face that she has already had five husbands and that she is not married to her current partner. With this prophetic art of pastoral care, Jesus reached the heart of the Samaritan woman, who finally testified: "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming" (John 4:25).

Here, Jesus is imparting a "theology of peace" that is far removed from an "ideology of peace." The peace that Jesus is passing on here does not fit into the logic of any human being, because it comes from an "infinite counterpart" whose heart is wide open for all who want to serve Him in truth. Such peace does not come "from" this world, but it does come "for" it (cf. John 14:27). This entails the peace brought by Jesus as a new dimension that is not bound to the all too human guid-

ing principles of peace. This new dimension is no longer to be understood as merely immanent-political, but transcendental-ethical, even transcendental-theological. In this sense, peace is primarily a matter of the relationship between God and man, whereby the initiator is basically God himself, who out of love—and only out of love—has concluded an eternal "peace treaty" with his people definitively through the incarnation in Jesus Christ after the covenants with Israel's forefathers.

The peace that comes from God is not nourished by the spirit of utopia, but is kept alive by the spirit of the real presence of God. It is precisely the grace of the real presence of God—which is so constitutive for human life—that defines the essence of the human being as a "being of peace" even under the conditions of finite existence. As a being of peace, the human person is still in need of God's peace, but because of his participation in the grace of God's incarnation he can be capable to be a peacemaker *hic et nunc*. Faith in Jesus Christ does not only hope for the realization of God's kingdom of peace in the eschaton, but understands it due to the incarnation of God as having begun. The consequence for the life of human beings is that they already now focus on the imperative that follows from Christ's view of reality, namely to protect, preserve and live the peace wrought by God in their creational possibilities.[3]

From this arises a threefold determination of the divine peace revealed in the program of God's Incarnation. "The area of peace includes, firstly, a creative feeling of secureness, secondly, the ability to trust, and thirdly, the responsibility for maintaining peace. There is a constitutive relationship between these three provisions of peace, insofar as the creative feeling of secureness is the condition for being able to trust at all, and insofar as the trust that is placed in people makes them responsible."[4] A person gains the creative feeling of secureness

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[3]   Cf. Christina Drobe, *Menschsein als Selbst- und Fremdbestimmung: Eine theologische Reflexion philosophischer, literarischer und sozialwissenschaftlicher Zugänge zur Identitätsfrage*, De Gruyter 2016, 270ff.

[4]   Eberhard Jüngel, *Ganz werden. Theologische Erörterungen* V, Mohr Siebeck 2003, 33. According to Eberhard Jüngel, the human person is a being of peace because and insofar as his existence is dependent on creative secureness. "Without such a minimum of creative secureness, man could not go out of himself. And without being able to go out of itself, the human 'I-ness' could not meet the demands of its environment and satisfy its very own needs. Secureness does not mean, for example, retreating into a reserve where there is no problem. An absolutely tension-free, so to speak germ-free type of life does not convey security, but at best the security of sterility. It would paralyze instead of making you fit for life. Because the security that belongs to peace does not paralyze, but stabilizes it an-

in God as the basis of trust and responsibility always in connection with a God who is himself defeated by death on the cross, so that a peace emerges that surpasses all reason (cf. Phil 4:7). That Almighty God does not shy away from dying a human death by dying on the cross shows how the utopia of peace can move into the reality of human hope through the one sent by him. The meaning of human peace extends from the "birth pangs of God's incarnation" beyond the cross to the hopeful resurrection of all creatures in God.

Christian theology of peace is not only christologically oriented, but also trinitarian, which can be important for the development of a just social structure in the world. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity of God focuses on a dynamic relationship of love between the Persons of the Trinity. The World Council of Churches (WCC) advocates a spirituality of the loving relationship within the framework of a just peace, taking the trinitarian dynamic relationship of love as its basis: "In its own limited way, this spirituality reflects the loving relationships between the persons of the Triune God who maintains, transforms and sanctifies his broken world."[5] The WCC central committee took this further in 2014: "The movement of love that is part of the being of the Triune God is manifested in the promise of justice and peace."[6]

Confessing to the Trinity in the sense of a theology of peace means taking this dynamic relationship of God's love as the reason for the confidence in peace in dialogue with people from other nations and cultures. In the pursuit of peace and justice in the sense of this trinitarian theology of peace, a "just war" is to be allowed, the means of which are however never weapons only (military), but only the word that is permeated by love. The Creator God—sensu Kitamori's theology of the pain of God[7]—suffers so much from his overflowing love that he sends his only Son into the world as Savior, so that people who actually deserve God's vengeance because of their sins and trespasses are able to share in this overflowing love. The Holy Spirit guarantees the effectiveness of this participation. The doctrine of the Trinity can therefore be viewed as a framework theory of a theology of peace, "because such an approach keeps in mind that the God of the Hebrew Bible (the Creator God, who frees Israel from slavery) is identical to that of the New

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thropologically in such a way that the I-ness dares to come out of itself and become active, we speak of creative security" (ibid., 34; my translation).

[5] WCC, "An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace"—Accompanying Document, chap. 2, §62.

[6] WCC, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," I.

[7] Cf. Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, Wipf and Stock, Reprint Edition 2005.

Testament (the God who became man in Jesus Christ and who hence-forth 'indwells' this violent world in his life-giving spirit in order to redeem it from violence and thus to accomplish it)."[8]

If peace is understood in the context of this Trinitarian theology, there will be no place for violence and war, even if war is often baptized as a "holy war." The holy war—also in Christianity!—was often legitimized as a service on behalf of God. We need only think of the words of Pope Urban II, who answered a call for help from Emperor Alexios I of Constantinople, when he asked him for warriors to fight the Turkish Seljuks because the Muslims already ruled many parts of Asia Minor: "When you attack and fight the enemy, all of God's army will shout one thing: God wills it!"[9] All who followed this call were promised the remission of sins, which was one of the strong motives of the Crusaders. "The latest research also describes the Crusades as a 'holy war' against those of different faiths. Only when the blood of the 'unclean' was shed could reparation be made… Equipped with pilgrims' robes and weapons on their way to the Holy Land, the crusaders felt very close to Jesus. Despite the immense danger, the crusaders confidently expected that they would go straight to Paradise should they die on the move."[10]

In place of the term "holy war," the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) declared "just peace" the key concept of Christian peace ethics in its contribution to steps on the path to peace.[11]

> The 1981 peace memorandum states programmatically: "Maintaining, promoting and renewing peace is the imperative that every political responsibility must obey. All political tasks are correlated to this peace imperative. Christian ethics is directed only towards peace, not war." Correspondingly the churches in the German Democratic Republic at the Ecumenical Assembly of 1988, turning away from the idea of a "just war," urged the development of a "doctrine of just peace." […] Security cannot be defined

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[8] Fernando Enns, Am Beginn eines ökumenischen „Pilgerwegs der Gerechtigkeit und des Friedens". Für eine theologisch begründete, politisch verantwortliche, und ökumenisch anschlussfähige Friedensethik – aus der Perspektive der Friedenskirchen: *Evangelische Theologie* 75 (4.2015) 269-285, here: 275.

[9] Saskia Gamradt, Dossier: Die Kreuzzüge. Krieg im Namen Gottes, http://www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/aktuelle-artikel/krieg-im-namen-got tes (March 23, 2021).

[10] Ibid.

[11] *Schritte auf dem Weg des Friedens, Ein Beitrag des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD-Texte 48), 1994 (3rd expanded edition 2001), 14.

militarily alone. It is primarily dependent on a fairer distribution of life opportunities between North and South as well as West and East, on observance of human rights, the strengthening of constitutional and democratic structures and the protection of the natural foundations of life. From this it follows that the analysis and elimination of the causes of conflict are the primary task in the long term and cannot be replaced by a short-term military crisis management of symptoms.

2. Peace in Islam Between the Impartiality of God and His Justice

A theology of peace of Islam is present already in its name, which is the program. The Arabic word Islam, which comes from the root s-l-m, stands for "intact, secure and at peace," means something like "attaining peace through submission to Allah." The name Islam is itself a program, because this term expresses the majesty of God in relation to the devoted little person. Only through submission to the majesty of God the human person can find peace with himself, with his fellow humans and with all of creation. With this conviction, after his call to prophethood, Muhammad called his fellow citizens in Mecca to give up their belief in a multitude of gods and to turn to the one true God, Allah. To the majority who were against his message, Muhammad was initially still tolerant when he said: "Now be lenient to them and say: 'Peace!'" (Q. 43: 89). Muhammad's leniency towards the "unbelievers" turned into a warning request: "Say: You unbelievers! I do not worship what you worship and you do not worship what I worship… You have your religion and I mine" (Q. 109: 1,2,3,6).

The fact that the name Islam is at the same time a program is shown in the greeting "Salam alaikum," which has been known as a general greeting since the time of Muhammad. It is even handed down that Muhammad himself made use of this greeting not only to the Muslims but to all people of his time as a greeting of peace. In a tradition by Abdullah ibn Omar, Muhammad's answer to a companion's question about what is best in Islam was noted: "That you feed the poor and offer the greeting of peace to those you know and those you do not know."[12] In the eyes of many Muslims, this form of greeting is already

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[12] Handed down by Abdullah ibn Omar in the hadith collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim. "Sahīh al-Buchārī (Arabic صحيحالبخاري, DMG Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī) is the common name of a collection of hadiths that go back to the Transoxan scholar Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Buchārī (d. 870)." The correct title of the work is "al-Jāmiʿas-sahīh / الجامعالصحيح / al-Ǧāmiʿaṣ-ṣaḥīḥ / The authentic collection." The work is at the top of the six canonical hadith collections and is still held in high regard in Sunni Islam to this day. In terms of its

very old, since the prophet Abraham had already used it when he met people he did not know. Q. 51: 24-25 says: "Have you not heard the story of the honorable guests of Abraham? When they entered, they said, 'Peace!' He said, 'Peace also be to you; (you seem to be) a group of strangers.'" Apart from the dispute between the Muslim scholars about whether such a greeting claims universal validity, it is to be appreciated that the Quran shows a certain openness with regard to this greeting. Q. 4: 94 says: "Believers! When you go forth in the way of Allah, discern (between friend and foe), and do not say to him who offers you the greeting of peace: 'You are not a believer.' If you seek the good of this worldly life, there lies with Allah abundant gain. After all, you too were such before, and then Allah was gracious to you. Discern, then, for Allah is well aware of what you do."

The good deed of God, however, is bound to his righteousness. God is just to all who are subject to him and who do not yet express their faith in him or who do not explicitly verbalize it, but who are not hostile to the believers. In Q. 60: 8 it can be read: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes—from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." The concept of God's righteousness here seems to be bound to a human condition: God is already righteous, but above all to those who believe in him (Muslims) and then to those who are friendly to the believers or who do not prevent them from believing to live. But so that the believers do not think that it is already automatically justified, the Prophet said: "Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Q. 60: 7).

This "impartiality" of God comes to a head in God's warning to the prophet when he said: "And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed—all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad,] would you compel the people in order that they become believers?" (Q. 10: 99). It is true that this verse does not forbid inviting other people to Islam and accepting it as the true religion, precisely because Islam has intellectual and spiritual peculiarities and advantages; but he would like

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authority and holiness, it is right behind the Quran here. Al-Bukhari is said to have worked on his Ṣaḥīḥ for sixteen years. Allegedly he selected around 2,800 of 600,000 hadiths—without repetitions in the work—according to the strictest criteria of traditional criticism, in order to include them in his collection Ṣaḥīḥ. The main aim of the work was to provide support for all subject areas of Islamic jurisprudence through authentic hadiths and to offer the reader the opportunity to clarify conflicting theses of the schools of law through the hadith evidence (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sah% C4%ABh_al-Buch%C4%81r%C4%AB; March 25, 2021).

to warn against using pressure and coercion in order to achieve the goal. "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing" (Q. 2: 256). Avoidance of coercion in faith is especially recommended to Christians and Jews as well as to the Sabeans, who also believe in God and the Last Day and do good works. Q 2: 62 says: "Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans [before Prophet Muhammad]—those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness—will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve."

This openness of Islam shows that there is a tradition of appreciating the other, even a tradition of calling for nonviolence in Islam. This is especially noticeable at the time of the reception of the first revelation around the year 570 and in the early days in Medina (622), when the Prophet was called as a peacemaker for the warring tribes because of his good experience in Mecca. At the time of the first revelation, Muhammad and his followers experienced hostility from many sides of society, because through this revelation of God he wanted to introduce elements into the structures of society that could be a thorn in the side, especially for the nobles of Mecca, who feared for their privileges. In addition, the Prophet, then known as "al-Amin" (the righteous, reliable one), in his statement about the unjust situation of the society of Mecca, was uncomfortable for many aristocrats in society. Muhammad and his followers, who mostly consisted of slaves, poor people, young people and women, endured the worst insults and threats of physical attacks with great patience without resistance. It was this extraordinary virtue which gave the Prophet a good reputation and which then established his role as a peacemaker among the warring groups in his early days in Medina.[13]

The fact that the prophet enjoyed his role as a peacemaker was due to the perception of the people of his time. In their eyes, making peace was always the heartfelt concern of the prophet in every conflict situation. This affection of the prophet for making peace finds its expression in the Holy Book when it is said: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing" (Q. 8: 61). Allah wants peace among people, and it is not his real joy to bring people under the roof of uniformity, but he created them as men and women with varied talents and in the most

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[13] For the detailed story of this early period in Mecca and Medina, see: Salih Suruc, *Das Leben des Propheten Muhammad*, Astec-Verlag 2010.

varied of colors so that they can complement each other. Q. 5: 48 expresses this when it says: "Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ."

On the one hand, this leaves room for pluralism in Islam; on the other hand, a competition for good is also announced. Applied to all religions, the call of the Prophet Muhammad: "So race to [all that is] good!" could be a challenge for all who sincerely seek God: that they should not obscure their search for God with ideological or purposeful interests (cf. FT 274). Because, "when, in the name of an ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from a society, that society ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way, their dignity is trampled and their rights violated. You know well how much suffering is caused by the denial of freedom of conscience and of religious freedom, and how that wound leaves a humanity which is impoverished, because it lacks hope and ideals to guide it."[14]

II. Buddhism and Hinduism

1. Buddhism: Inconceivable Killing under the Auspices of an Ethic of Self-love and Charity

Buddhism is widely considered to be the most peaceful religion. This widespread opinion-forming view loses its luster as soon as it is confronted with certain specific facts. Japan, for example, an apparently predominantly Buddhist country, is considered as a place from where heinous crimes of military recklessness were committed during World War II. There were Zen Buddhist voices who praised the suicide pilots' mission of *kamikaze* as an expression of the highest enlightenment.[15] At the present time we are amazed at the position of Buddhist

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[14] Pope Francis, Address to the Leaders of Other Religions and Other Christian Denominations, Tirana, Albania (21 September 2014): *Insegnamenti* II, 2 (2014) 277, quoted from FT 274.

[15] Cf. Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Buddhismus weit weniger friedfertig als oft angenommen, in: Exzellenzcluster „Religion und Politik," WWU Münster 2012, 13. The violence and expulsion against religious and ethnic minorities by Buddhists in Myanmar and Sri Lanka show that they are children of their time. At this time there is something like a crisis in the modern world, the main causes of which are "a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and the prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and trans-

monks in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, who support and even proclaim violence and expulsion against religious and ethnic minorities. The monks, who were supposed to raise their critical voice against the killing of helpless Muslims, even directly supported this action, as one of them, Ashin Wirathu, is one of the leaders of the Buddhist monks who destroy mosques and murder Muslims in Myanmar. The Dalai Lama saw such a danger and said thoughtfully at the awarding of a peace prize in Maryland: "Actually, killing people in the name of our religion is unthinkable. But now even Buddhists can be tricked into it."[16]

The inconceivability of killing, which according to the Dalai Lama should be regarded as part of the philosophy of peace for every Buddhist, goes back to the first written record of the Buddha's discourses, which was recorded in the Pali Canon 400 years after his death (around 100 BC): "All beings tremble before the violence. All beings love life. See yourself in others, and don't kill, don't hurt!" Despite the fact of violence, which especially in the 20th century appears through Buddhism in the form of acts of war as a justification for the defense of the Buddhist religion and culture, it can be stated with a clear conscience that "of all the spiritual traditions, world views and religions of humankind Buddhism is not only the oldest nonviolent movement, but also the one that has done the most justice to the cause of nonviolence in its history."[17] Gustav Mensching was convinced of the peacefulness of Buddhism and saw in it a fundamental tolerance in terms of content: "That Buddhism as a whole was and is an extremely tolerant religion is further shown by the fact that wherever Buddhism took hold, it was nowhere aimed at annihilating foreign or native religions, but exists everywhere alongside these religions and with multiple adoptions of their teachings and customs."[18]

The tolerant disposition of Buddhism is fed by the ethics of self-love and charity. In the Dhammapada, which contains the first commandment of Buddhist teaching—not to kill—this Buddhist ethic was formulated in a simple and uncomplicated way: "By being considerate of others such as yourself, you do not kill and do not encourage killing.

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cendental principles" (Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, Abu Dhabi [4 February 2019]: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4-5 February 2019, 6 (quoted from FT 275).

[16] See the reports on the anger of the monks from Zeit Online, May 16, 2013, http://www.zeit.de/2013/21/myanmar-buddhisten-muslime (March 26, 2021).

[17] Noémie Burger, Editorial: *Tibetfocus* 125 (September 2014) 2 (https://gstf.org/wp-content/files/TF125_Internet.pdf; March 21, 2021; my translation).

[18] Quoted from: Luana Laxy, Frieden und Gewalt im Buddhismus: ibid., 4.

Any action that harms others, that disturbs their peace and harmony, is detrimental action. Any action that helps others, that promotes their peace and harmony is beneficial." The Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda, one of the leading teachers of contemporary Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia and Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism in what is now Cambodia, developed this Buddhist ethic of self-love and charity in the following steps:

> Peacemaking requires compassion. It requires the ability to listen. In order to listen we have to give up our I-ness, even our own words. We listen until we hear our peaceful natures. As we learn to listen to ourselves, we learn to listen to others at the same time, and new ideas arise from this. It leads to openness and harmony. When we learn to trust each other, we discover new ways of resolving conflicts.

> Peacemaking requires mindfulness. There is no peace with jealousy, self-righteousness, or senseless criticism. We must conclude that peacemaking is more important than waging war. Peacemaking requires selflessness. It is selflessness taking root. The ability to work together is essential to peacemaking. As long as we believe we are the only ones who know the right way, there is little we can do for peace. A true peacemaker only seeks peace, not fame or honor. The pursuit of fame and honor only harms our endeavors.

> Peacemaking requires wisdom. Peace is a consciously chosen path. It is not an aimless wandering, but a journey step by step.

> Peacemaking is the middle path of equanimity, non-duality, and non-attachment. Making peace means balancing wisdom and compassion and reconciling humanitarian needs and political realities. It means compassion without concession and peace without appeasement.[19]

2. Hinduism: Between Ahimsa and Weapons for Self-defense

Hinduism is closely linked to the social movements of India, which is shaped by social structures that are as colorful and varied as the reality of India. The intertwining of religion and society or politics can best be seen in the history of the resistance against the British colonial

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[19] Maha Ghosananda, *Wenn der Buddha lächelt – Frieden finden, Schritt für Schritt*, with a foreword by Jack Kornfield, Verlag Herder 1997.

power. Under the motto: "Violence brings suffering!" Mahatma Gandhi took up the old Indian doctrine of "Ahimsa" (abstention from violence) in the course of the dispute with the British colonial government and intensified it through his non-violent actions. In order to better understand the teaching of "Ahimsa," Gandhi himself should speak here.

> I am happy to accept the interpretation of Ahimsa that Ahimsa is not just a negative state, namely inability to do evil, but a positive state, that is, showing love and doing good, even to the wrongdoer. But it does not mean to support the wrongdoer in his unjust action or to accept it in silent toleration. On the contrary, love as the active quality of Ahimsa requires the evildoer to be resisted, whether it offends him or affects him emotionally or physically…
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> For me, preparation for violence is out of the question. All preparation must be done for nonviolence if courage of the highest kind is to be developed. Violence can at best be tolerated insofar as it is always preferable to cowardice…
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> Nonviolence means conscious suffering. It does not mean humble submission to the will of the evil-doer, but to brace one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. I want India to practice nonviolence with awareness of strength and power…
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> I'd rather risk violence a thousand times than emasculate an entire race. If there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, then I would recommend violence. […] I would prefer India to take up arms to defend its honor than cowardly becoming or remaining a helpless witness to its own shame.

Even if the teaching of "Ahimsa" had a great influence on the life of Hindus, especially through Mahatma Gandhi, there are two reasons in Hinduism to wage a "just war":

a) Because of divine destiny

What is meant here is the divine destiny of the warrior caste (Kshatriyas), which was born as a warrior from eternity. It was narrated that in a war, Arjuna wanted to withdraw because he realized that his friends and relatives were on the enemy side. How can he kill people he loves? Then God Krishna came and was able to persuade him to go into battle. The reason he had to go to battle is because battle was a duty for him because of his destiny to be born a warrior from eternity. His duty to his caste to protect them from attack took precedence over his personal refusal to have to kill his own kin.

b) Exercise of violence in the context of self-defense

For Hinduism, lack of resistance is the highest of all virtues, as Vedanta testifies. At the same time, however, the Vedanta warns against understanding non-resistance as passivity, cowardice and lack of interest. "There are people who are not yet mature enough for this virtue and who first have to learn to resist evil so that they become morally strong enough to be able to endure it. In other words, we must gather strength and resist; and if we have it, then we have to give up using it. Only then is non-resistance a virtue."[20] The lack of resistance as a virtue presupposes an active resistance here, which can be so strong that one has the strength to be resistant to the evil one, even if one has enough reasons to be able to offer violent resistance. For the Rig Veda, resistance is not only effective internally, but also externally: "Your weapons may be strong for resistance and durable also for attack, and marvelous may your strength be, not that of the deceptive man" (Rig Veda 1-39:2). Prabhavananda would like to illustrate this with the example of a snake which in the end becomes a laughing stock if it not only refrains from biting but also from hissing. In his words: "The ever-good and ever-gentle who is deceived and duped is a fool and not a saint."[21] The exercise of violence is tolerated, but only within the framework of self-control and self-defense.

III. Peace in Religions: An Open Wound

Many recent attacks that are linked to a religious terrorist group are responsible for putting the discussion about the danger of radicalization in religions, especially in Islam, back into the spotlight. Many

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[20] Klaus von Stosch, Das Friedenspotenzial der östlichen Religionen, in: Christiane Tietz/Irene Dingel (eds.), *Das Friedenspotenzial der Religionen*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009, 21-34; here: 32-33; with reference to: Swami Prabavananda, *Die Bergpredigt im Lichte des Vedanta*, Munich 1994, 97. Mahatma Gandhi practiced non-resistance as a virtue in such a way that he urged his followers to adhere to what was known to be true within the framework of devotion to the truth and to use this knowledge to oppose injustice and violence without violence (Satyagraha). He fought British colonial rule in India primarily by not participating in government institutions ("non-cooperation"), by boycotting British companies and their products ("be Indian, buy Indian"), and by violently violating unjust laws ("salt-Satyagraha"). Important basis for the philosophy of Ahimsa, see: Nathaniel Altman, *The Nonviolent Revolution: A Comprehensive Guide to Ahimsa—the Philosophy and Practice of Dynamic Harmlessness*, Gaupo Publishing 2017.

[21] Swami Prabavananda, *Die Bergpredigt*, 98.

have come to the conclusion that the religions that keep trying to portray peace as their program are basically providing the fertile soil for the germ of radicalization to grow. Why? Because from them the ideas of violence are adopted, which could then easily lead to political violence.

How can religions act as peacemakers when an equal number of people exercise violence in the name of these religions?

The following thoughts can help us to define our existence as Christians in the midst of religious and cultural pluralism.

1. Religions Should Become "More Human"!

It is thanks to Karl Rahner's plea that a theology from below became possible—a theology that makes people the focus of theologizing. The peculiarity here is that these people—in order to be able to really become human—cannot do anything other than depend on a transcendental power (absolute dependence). In the sense of a descending theology, it can be said that religions are ultimately human works of art that must be distinguished from what is religious. What is religious is not tied to a particular religion. Seen in this way, the holy scriptures of the religions are drafts of conscience based on the religious experiences of the people *in illo tempore*, which can give light and orientation to today's people in their religious life. However, this assumes that they are constantly confronted with changing values and with the signs of the times. As long as holy scriptures or religious commandments and prohibitions are considered as pure "opus Dei" without human intervention, the radicalizations in the religions will not diminish, but will continue to increase.

2. Entry into the Common Project for a Just World

Because of the open wound in the pursuit of peace, it is time for all religions to work together for a common project for a more just world. From the point of view of their different theological perspectives, they can jointly stand up for overcoming social, political and economic problems. This is of the utmost necessity, since the radicalizations in the religions are causally related to unjust social, political and economic systems. Our world is still divided into rich and poor, civilized and uncivilized, truth holders and truth strangers, even believers and pagans. The followers of a religion can radicalize themselves very quickly if they are bound in this chain of injustice, and if, in order to free themselves from this chain, they feel so powerless that they believe they can only set something in motion through their radical interventions.

3. The "Global Ethic" Project as an Alternative?

With the "Global Ethic" project, which has been propagated since 1990, Hans Küng endeavored to make a contribution to peace in the world by trying to find ethical and theological answers to the problem of conflict in the religions. Küng writes about the necessity of this project in the context of the dialogue of cultures as follows:[22]

> I have found that it has been much easier to talk about Global Ethic since then. In the past, people, especially intellectuals, often complained about things, questioning dialogue as such and the values in the various religions. This tragedy of the WTC and the Pentagon opened the eyes of many to the fact that there really is only one alternative: Either talk to each other or shoot each other. And if people want to live together, then some common ethical standards are needed, i.e., if I cannot trust the other person, if I cannot rely on their truthfulness, if I think they are lying to me anyway, then there is no dialogue possible.

With the Global Ethic project all problems are by no means a thing of the past! Isn't that a sign that religions are causing more problems than uniting people? And shouldn't they therefore be abolished, as the supporters of aggressive materialistic-scientific atheism believe is right? Aren't they harmful after all, since they spread a belief that is insane at its core and represent a religious upbringing that is essentially child abuse?[23] In addition to this criticism of religion, many

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[22] Hans Küng, „Wozu Weltethos? – Religion und Ethik in Zeiten der Globalisierung," in conversation with Jürgen Hoeren, Deutschlandfunk, August 19, 2012, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/wozu-weltethos-religion-und-ethik-in-zeiten-der.700.de.html?dram:article_id=80617 (June 30, 2016). The Global Ethic project is mainly about asking what the individual's basic attitude is, which concrete values and norms are to be offered for people to follow. This project is not about a specific ethical system, be it that of Kant or that of Aristotle. In this respect, the global ethic does not primarily ask about the truth, be it scientific or one of the religions. Rather, the global ethic looks for practice, for the right action. The aim of the project is to highlight the need for an ethos for the whole of humanity. Küng writes: "It has become clear to me in recent years that the one world in which we live only has a chance of survival if it no longer contains spaces of different, contradicting and even conflicting ethics. This one world needs a basic ethos; this one world society certainly does not need a unitary religion and unitary ideology, but it does need some connecting and binding norms, values, ideals and goals" (Hans Küng, *Projekt Weltethos*, München [5]1999, 14) (my translation).

[23] See: Richard Schröder, *Abschaffung der Religion? Wissenschaftlicher Fanatismus und die Folgen*, Verlag Herder [3]2008.

people experience that religions are of the highest necessity for thinking, for culture and for human life. For them, religions are a place where the culture of thought is cultivated and promoted.

The religions make their contribution to the promotion of human culture by pointing out, with their rich religious traditions, that every social or cultural system is open. This means that every culture always has to do with a dimension of reality which—because it is inexpressible—can give it (the culture) a transcendental color, which can be necessary for the perception of culture as a transcendental quantity. On the part of the Catholic Church, the perception of cultures as a transcendental quantity is capitalized in its conciliar document *Nostra aetate*. She values the actions of God in other religions and "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which […] often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women" (NA 2).

If religions are understood on the basis of this way of thinking, they are fundamentally a great enrichment for people's lives, especially if they succeed in freeing people from their humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and contemptible existence. Human beings must be freed from their firm ties to matter and to the law of this world—the world which only degrades truth and morality to an object for biological, political, economic or social authority to interpret.[24] "A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God's way of seeing things. 'God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God's love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion. Even if they are atheists, his love is the same. When the last day comes, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are, we are going to find ourselves quite surprised'" (FT 281).

ABSTRACTS

Es besteht ein enger Zusammenhang zwischen Religionen und Gewalt, zumindest in der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung. Der Artikel analysiert das interne Friedensengagement von Christentum, Islam, Buddhismus und Hinduismus und ihre Beiträge zu einer Theologie des Friedens bzw. die Orientierung, die Religionen für ein friedliches soziales Verhalten bieten können. Eine zentrale Frage betrifft die Rolle, die Gott in jedem der religiösen Systeme spielen soll. Kapitel 8 von FT befasst sich mit diesem Engagement aller Religionen für den

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[24] Cf. Markus Widenmeyer, *Welt ohne Gott? Eine kritische Analyse des Naturalismus*, SCM Hänssler Verlag ²2015.

Frieden. Abschließend nimmt der Autor zu drei Vorschlägen für Religion und Frieden Stellung.

Existe un fuerte vínculo entre las religiones y la violencia, al menos en la percepción pública. El artículo analiza el compromiso interno con la paz por parte del cristianismo, el islam, el budismo y el hinduismo y sus aportaciones a una teología de la paz o la orientación que las religiones pueden ofrecer a un comportamiento social pacífico. Una cuestión central es el papel que se supone que desempeña Dios en cada uno de los sistemas religiosos. El capítulo 8 de FT aborda este compromiso de todas las religiones hacia la paz. Por último, el autor comenta tres propuestas sobre religión y paz.

Religions et violence sont fortement liés, au moins dans la perception publique. L'article analyse l'engagement interne pour la paix dans le christianisme, l'islam, le bouddhisme et l'hindouisme ainsi que leur contribution à une théologie de la paix ou la façon dont ces religions offrent un accompagnement des comportements sociaux pacifiques. Une question centrale traite du rôle que Dieu est supposé jouer dans chacun des systèmes religieux. Le Chapitre 8 de FT reprend cet engagement de toutes les religions envers la paix. Enfin l'auteur commente trois propositions concernant la religion et la paix.