EDUCATING FOR PEACE - A THEOLOGICAL TASK IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Introduction

In situations of conflict, religions appear with different faces. In media reports we can take part in a continuous flow of information on acts of violence that are committed in the name of religion. At the same time, religious convictions inspire to the building of peace, the maintenance of human rights, and the commitment to social justice and reconciliation.[1] The same religion that motivates destruction and violence can motivate peace, forgiveness, tolerance, and hope. The ambiguity of religions in conflict is apparent.[2] This ambiguity has been portrayed by scholars in book titles such as *Holy War – Holy Peace*, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, and *Between Eden and Armageddon*.[3] Religions have even been described in terms of a "double-edged sword", with the one edge representing the inclination for violence and the other edge signifying the devotion to peace.[4] This ambivalence has generated the question of whether religions in conflict situations, while being part of the problem, can also contribute to the solution.[5] Increasing efforts of research are dedicated to exploring the ways that they can. Today, the role of religions in resolving violent conflicts is an issue which attracts more and more attention.[6] Conflict resolution processes are considered to be served not only by a deeper understanding of the religious factors that heighten violent conflicts, but also by a greater knowledge of the way resources for peacebuilding can be found within religions.[7] The search for such knowledge has involved explorations of the ways in which religious leaders, communities, and organisations bring a peaceful turn to conflicts.[8] When it comes to the possible role

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[1] Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon. The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 13.

[2] Jesper Svartvik, "Monotheism and Monopoly. A Match Made in Heaven or a Marriage of Inconvenience?" *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92(3) 2004, p. 453.

[3] See: Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace. How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*.

[4] Douglas Johnston, Brian Cox, "Faith-Based Diplomacy and Preventive Engagement" in D. Johnston (ed.), *Faith-Based Diplomacy. Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 14.

[5] Svartvik, "Monotheism and Monopoly", p. 453.

[6] Tannenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding Program on Religion and Conflict Resolution, "The Peacemakers in Action" in D. Little (ed.) *Peacemakers in Action. Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 4

[7] Douglas Johnston, "Introduction. Realpolitik Expanded" in D. Johnston (ed.) *Faith-Based Diplomacy. Trumping Realpolitik* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3-9. Cynthia Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding" in I. W. Zartman (ed.) *Peacemaking in International Conflict. Methods and Techniques* 2nd edn. (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), p. 273-94.

[8] See e.g.: Judy Carter, Gordon S. Smith, "Religious Peacebuilding. From Potential to Action" in H. Coward, G. S. Smith (eds.) *Religion and Peacebuilding*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004,

of *theology* in peacebuilding, however, the discussion appears to be in its initial stages. Even though several peacebuilding resources in the life of religious individuals and communities have been identified and researched, theology is not so far a widely discussed dimension. This is where the dissertation *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding* makes a contribution. The dissertation brings light to the way theology can provide resources for faith-based peacebuilding pursuits.

Many areas of religious life, such as religious education, the interpretation of religious texts, the message of sermons, and the purport of religious documents can provide for the building of peace, if they are influenced by a peaceful mind.[9] The underlying resources for the peaceful formation of believers therefore call for investigation. Such investigations have brought to light the resourcefulness of theology. Theological language and symbolism appear to be crucial to the ways in which believers interpret their reality. Theological texts and ideas might have a powerful impact on the mind of believers in their search for guidance in ambiguous political and ethical situations. For the believer, sacred phenomena such as images of God or gods can be signposts for either a conciliatory or a violent approach to conflict. Knowledge about the impact of theological ideas and texts on the minds of believers can thus give insight into what creates, sustains, and prevents violence. In other words, the study of sacred texts, symbols, myths, and traditions may provide clues to the deeper motives behind acts of violence and peace.[10]

Scholar of religion and conflict resolution Mark Gopin has pointed out that if religions are to thrive without gaining their support through intolerance, there is need for a creative and continuous development of theological approaches which bring to the fore the inclusive and tolerant dimensions within sacred texts.[11] According to Gopin, such theologies may sustain the development of theoretical approaches to conflict analysis. They may leave considerable contributions to the discussions on communal conflict

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p. 294-97. David Little, R. Scott Appleby, "A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict" in ibid, p. 1-20. David Little, "Religion, Violent Conflict, and Peacemaking" in D. Little (ed.) *Peacemakers in Action. Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 438-48. Tannenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding Program on Religion and Conflict Resolution, "The Peacemakers in Action" in ibid, p. 3-21.
[9] Carter, Smith, "Religious Peacebuilding", 279-80. Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, p. 11, 59-61, 223-25. Little, "Religion, Violent Conflict, p. 438-48.
[10] Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, p. 14-18.
[11] Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, p. 28-29.

resolution. However, the benefits of these theological perspectives have so far eluded international diplomacy.[12]

Given that theology can be resourceful to processes of conflict resolution and the building of peace, the question arises: how can such peaceful theological perspectives develop, thrive, and be employed? This Development Dissertation Brief responds to this question by discussing the contents and results of the dissertation *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*. The text also aims at encouraging reflection on the existing and possible forums of education in our society, where the knowledge and development of peacebuilding theologies are stimulated and promoted.

A Call for the Construction of Peacemaking Theologies

The metaphor of the "double-edged sword", which signifies the ambiguity of religions in the face of conflict, reflects also the delicacy of the task of theological development. The construction of theologies can maintain perspectives that contribute to peacebuilding. However, theological elaboration can also turn into a vehicle for steering the minds of believers in the opposite direction. An urgent task is thus to find ways of developing theologies that nurture a peaceful approach to the other. With a view to this task the two theologians Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland describe theology in terms of a "life-and-death endeavour".[13] Religious beliefs, they maintain, can tear down and build up, cause death and enhance life. Therefore, theology needs to speak in critical and constructive ways on how faith relates to urgent contemporary concerns. Theology can explain the meaning of pressing social motifs within contexts of belief today, such as peace, justice, and hope. Furthermore, theology explores what difference religious beliefs can make to the meaning of such motifs.[14]

Theology, Jones and Lakeland underscore, involves searching for an understanding of faith here and now. It involves considering the actual meaning of life-giving faith in this world. They stress that religious faith profoundly can shape the way in which human beings perceive the world and how they engage in it. A critical task is therefore to explore how theology might enable a responsible understanding and practice of faith. Jones and

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[12] Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, p.14-19, 28.
[13] Serene Jones, Paul Lakeland (eds.) *Constructive Theology. A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 1.
[14] Jones, Lakeland (eds.), *Constructive Theology*, p. 1-6.

Lakeland point to the way theological concepts and images are comprehensive in their reach and have the capacity of shaping life experiences and imaginations. How theologians choose to draw the outlines of a theological concept can affect the way believers perceive its meaning as well as the way they live in light of it. Hence, to construct theology involves sketching the lay of the land with respect to faith in order that religious individuals and communities are enabled to reflect on their theological course of direction.[15]

Considering the art of theological construction, the theologian Gordon Kaufman wrestles with the question of what forms of human life theological concepts facilitate in different contexts. To follow up this question involves inquiring into the possibilities that theological concepts open up, but also into the possibilities that they close off. Kaufman maintains that metaphysical ideas can be indispensable to human beings in their orientation in life. This means that theological work, by the elaboration of such ideas, opens up certain opportunities for constructing concepts that enable believers to envision and find guidance for developing a more humane and peaceful society.[16]

Theological Education Preparing for Peace

These insights motivate reflection on the ways in which opportunities for such theological work are provided for in our society. They call attention to the need for endeavours of theological education which prepare for peace. Whereas forums for such education exist in the academy as well as within communities of faith, the different kinds of theological education that they supply need to be taken into consideration.

The deepening of knowledge about the multifaceted, comprehensive, and complex nature of religious life, which is provided for in academic faculties and schools of theology and religious studies, respond to the increasing contemporary call for further insight into religious dynamics in peace and war. Theological schools and faculties can provide the balanced, thoroughgoing, and multidimensional knowledge which is needed in many parts of society today in order to grasp both the challenges and the opportunities for peacebuilding that are implied in religious life. In this regard, they can serve as helpful partners in processes of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Theological schools and

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[15] Jones, Lakeland (eds.), *Constructive Theology*, 1-2, 9-12
[16] Gordon Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 3rd edn. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 39- 41, 47.

faculties are moreover forums where scholars and future religious leaders can deepen and develop their skills of constructing peaceful theologies. However, many faculties and schools of theology and religious studies today experience a continuous decline due to shrinking means and resources.[17] Potential peacebuilding capacities are in this way missed out.

Peace oriented theological education is also conducted from the side of religious communities. In being performed within the framework of certain religions, this kind of theological education brings out resources for peace which exist in religious scriptures and traditions. It serves the formation of a peaceful mind among believers by providing knowledge of theological motifs which call for the building of peace and the resistance to violence. Hence, religious education for peace is an expression of a contemporary movement which evolves from within communities of faith and which counteracts religiously motivated violence through bringing out peaceful resources within religions.

Such a religious movement, with a long-standing experience of peacebuilding and resistance to violence, is the international *ecumenical movement*. The movement, which gathers a variety of Christian representatives as well as scholars of theology, is a significant cradle for theological discourses that prepare for peacefully oriented faith-based teachings in the religion of Christianity. It is thus a relevant movement to study when exploring theological bases for peace oriented teachings. In the following, attention will be given to the international ecumenical movement as a setting for the development of peace oriented theology.

A Faith-Based Movement for Peace

The ecumenical movement brings together representatives from a wide range of Christian traditions in dialogue and cooperation. The ecumenical movement has become known as a movement for peace in the human community, since it has more than a century of experience in peacebuilding activities. Since the beginning of the last century, its history has been shaped by periods of intense international conflict. In the time of the two world wars, ecumenical pioneers endeavoured to serve peace through the nurturing of accountability and mutual understanding between Christians across national borders.

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[17] This refers to the current situation among schools and faculties of theology and religious studies in the Swedish academy.

During the Cold War, the Iron Curtain did not prevent continuous contact between ecumenically engaged Christians in the east and west. Even at the height of nuclear tension ecumenical representatives expressed a profound sense of community.[18] Today, the ecumenical peacemaking agenda is characterised by the resistance to religiously motivated violence, the engagement in interreligious dialogue, and the building of a just peace. This is apparent in the life of the World Council of Churches, which is the largest international organisation in the ecumenical movement.[19]

In the years 2008-2011 the World Council of Churches carried out a textual process which aimed at the composition of an international ecumenical declaration on just peace. The declaration was intended to gather Christians over the world in a common engagement for the overcoming of violence and the building of peace. Moreover, it aimed at clarifying the meaning of a just peace from the perspective of different Christian traditions. The array of texts which emerged from this process includes drafts, response giving, statements, preparatory declarations, and two published documents: *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* and *Just Peace Companion*, both issued in 2011. This body of texts is called the "peace documents".[20]

The question "What are the prospects for theology in peacebuilding?" calls for a two-layered investigation of the peace documents. This means, firstly, that the actual theological meaning of just peace is identified and that the concept of just peace is constructed theologically. This endeavour is carried out from the starting point of the four perspectives of *theological ethics*, *scriptural interpretation*, *spirituality*, and *ecumenical vision*, which are all accounted for below. Secondly, it means the discernment of whether and how just peace, as a theological concept, can provide a faith-based peacebuilding resource. This discernment takes place with a view to the role of theological peace education. The investigation is carried out within the framework of the disciplines of

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[18] Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement Be Renewed? Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014), p. 21-23.
[19] The World Council of Churches represents more than 500 million Christians in 110 countries. For more information about its members, see: https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us.
[20] This is the name which is given to the documents in the dissertation *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*. The "peace documents" form the source material of the dissertation.

moral imagination and *faith-based diplomacy*, intending to display the possible benefits that peacefully oriented theologies can supply to conflict resolution strategies.[21]

Faith-Based Diplomacy and Moral Imagination

Faith-based diplomacy intends for a growing political awareness of the urgency of making religious dynamics work in the service of peace. It aims at making religious agents helpful and respected collaborators in the field of conflict resolution. Moreover, faith-based diplomacy aims to provide a balanced picture of religion in relation to peace and violence. Whereas religiously motivated violence calls for vast attention, faith-based diplomacy brings to the fore also the abundant religious endeavours for peace which are carried out behind the scenes, far away from the attention of the media. Among faith-based diplomats it is often underscored that even in those cases when a religion is central to a conflict or works as a mobilizing vehicle, it still embraces teachings in its core of tradition that encourage the peacefulness of humanity and care for the neighbour.[22]

In stimulating teachings of this kind within a range of Christian traditions, the peace documents provide elucidative examples of theological contributions to faith-based diplomacy at a middle-range and grass-roots level. The theological teachings on just peace, presented in the peace documents, provide impetus to the intellectual, moral, and cultural agenda which supports the work of many faith-based diplomats at a middle-range level. They also expound such worldviews and value-based frames of reference which serve the work of faith-based diplomats who at a grass-roots level seek to build peace by means of initiating reflexive dialogue and self-critical introspection among agents of conflict. Such reflexive processes support the transformation of conflicts through the promotion of personal change and the redefinition of one's earlier violent aspirations.[23]

This motivates consideration of how theological reflection might promote the development of such frames of mind which break the grip of violent patterns. The

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[21] This is a short presentation of the structure of the study as well as of the aims and research question which guide the analysis performed in the dissertation.

[22] Johnston, Cox, "Faith-Based Diplomacy", p. 11-27. Johnston, "Introduction. Realpolitik Expanded", p. 3-9.

[23] Research results, dissertation: Sara Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peace Building. A Theological Analysis of the Just Peace Concept in the Textual Process towards an International Ecumenical Peace Declaration, World Council of Churches 2008-2011* (Lund University, 2016), p. 79-91, 246-51. Researcher on peace and conflict Isak Svensson discusses the redefinition of religious aspirations with reference to the desacralisation of conflicts, see: *Ending Holy Wars. Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2012), p. 4-6, 12, 160-62.

discipline of moral imagination brings significant insights to this issue. In reference to peacebuilding, the moral imagination is the capacity to give birth to new ways of thinking, hearing, and seeing. It is the capability to imagine and give constructive responses that go beyond and break destructive cycles, even while being rooted in the everyday challenges of violence. The role of the moral imagination is to give life to that which does not yet exist. It means refusing to be bound by what appear to be narrowed and determined dead ends. Rooted in the experience of the challenges of this world it heartens discourses that break new ground.[24] In this respect, the moral imagination gives vital framing to the theological discourse on just peace that is carried out in the peace documents. Here, the concept of just peace signifies the breaking of new ground. The discourse that the peace documents present involves a re-evaluation of existing Christian positions on war and peace. In a situation when the centuries-old discussion between Christian pacifists and just war theories has reached a deadlock, just peace represents a new theological stance that reaches beyond the cul-de-sac of their debate.[25]

The consideration of just peace as such a new theological stance forms the starting point for the construction of the concept and the exploration of its theological meaning. In the following, this endeavour is carried out with a view to its possible role as a basis for theological education which prepares for peace.

A Theological Basis for Peace Education

Theological Ethics

To explore just peace as a concept which infuses new dynamics into the polarised debate between Christian pacifists and just war theorists necessitates reflection on the intertwinement between theology and ethics. Theological perspectives on just peace are, in the peace documents, considered with a view to their ethical implications. At the same time, ethical perspectives on just peace are mediated on the basis of theological reasons. It is a discourse which gives heed to experience while at the same time venturing upon imagination.[26] Nevertheless, this theological discussion needs to be seen against the

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[24] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 27-29.

[25] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 93-94, 98-125.
[26] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 92-94.

background of a wider interdisciplinary debate on the actual meaning of a just peace. In this debate justice and peace are at times seen as coupled concepts and at times as concepts on a collision course.[27] Despite this far from uncomplicated relation between the notions of justice and peace, the concept of just peace is considered to represent a ground-breaking step in the contemporary ecumenical debate. Just peace is even described as a paradigm shift in Christian ethics and theology, as it provides new starting points for the Christian debate on peace and war: It shifts the focus away from the issue of whether wars can be justified or not. Instead, it involves concentrating on the questions of how peace can be built and contemporary violence and terrorism can be prevented.[28]

This understanding of just peace can be related to the directions for building a culture of peace developed by the UNESCO and issued by the United Nations in their Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace.[29] It can be discerned that certain standards of these documents provide significant framing for the theological development of just peace. They bring to the fore the wide-angle perspective of the theological just peace concept, which spans political and social as well as environmental and economic dimensions. They also clarify that the theological development of just peace presupposes authenticity in contexts where civil society is characterized by violence. Moreover, in view of a culture of peace, the role and relevance of theological teachings in peacebuilding in civil society clearly come to the fore. The Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace, intending at the formation of a peaceful mind among human beings, bring light to the wider educational context of the theological development of the just peace concept: the pursuit of forming a peaceful mind among

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[27] Pierre Allan, "Measuring International Ethics. A Moral Scale of War, Peace, Justice and Global Care" in P. Allan, A. Keller (eds.) *What Is a Just Peace?* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 116-17. Pierre Allan, Alexis Keller, "Introduction. Rethinking Peace and Justice Conceptually" in ibid, p. 1-3. Stanely Hoffman, "Peace and Justice. A Prologue" in ibid, p. 12-18. David Little, "Peace, Justice, and Religion" in ibid, p. 150.

[28] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 121-25, 130-35. The "just peace paradigm" is elaborated in Glenn H. Stassen (ed.) *Just Peacemaking. The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).

[29] See: United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution A-53-243A. Declaration on a Culture of Peace" (1999-10-06), http://cpnn-world.org/resolutions/resA-53-243A.html, accessed 2017-03-07. United Nations' General Assembly, "Resolution A-53-243B. Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace" (1999-10-06), http://cpnn-world.org/resolutions/resA-53-243B.html, accessed 2017-03-07. David Adams, "Toward a Global Movement for a Culture of Peace" *Peace and Conflict. Journal of Peace Psychology* 6(3) 2000, p. 259-63.

believers.[30] This calls for reflection on the actual ways in which such theological concepts, which serve the pursuit of peaceful formation, can be constructed. Hence, attention will be paid to the practice of scriptural interpretation which lies at the foundation of theological construction. As concerns the theological construction of just peace, this means inquiring into a range of passages in the Hebrew Bible.

Scriptural Interpretation

The Hebrew Bible concept of *shalom* attains a key function for the development of the theological meaning of just peace.[31] In the peace documents, just peace is described as a way of rendering in contemporary terms the biblical meaning of *shalom*.[32] However, a close study of the concept in the Hebrew Bible clarifies how *shalom*, rather than being limited to one meaning, comprehends a whole landscape of meanings which are shaped through different epochs and contexts. These understandings are not always peaceful.[33] It can therefore be assumed that just peace, in the contemporary ecumenical debate, represents a peaceful interpretation of *shalom* which gives weight to particular areas in a multifaceted field of interpretations. A focus on other passages could have generated interpretations which point in a different, in the worst case violent, direction.[34]

In regard to the practice of scriptural interpretation that is performed in the peace documents, *shalom* can be seen to supply a clue to the construction of theological approaches that are accepting of the other, envision future realities, and make peace a defensible metaphysical possibility. *Shalom*, as interpreted in the ecumenical debate, lays essential foundations for such constructive theological work with the just peace concept at its axis. These peaceful interpretations of *shalom* frame the development of just peace as a holistic concept which entails an all-encompassing vision for the well-being of all life on earth. Just peace, as a contemporary rendering of *shalom*, unfolds in terms of a process towards the transformation of society.[35]

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[30] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 125-35.

[31] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p.137-73.

[32] Second Drafting Group, *Just Peace Companion* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2011), p. 16.

[33] See the thorough analysis of concept of *shalom* by the biblical scholar Franz-Josef Stendebach, in G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H-J. Fabry (eds.) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. XV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 15-49.

[34] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 143.

[35] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 144-168.

The transformative dimension of the theological just peace concept is apparent in the peace documents. However, transformation not only refers to societal change but also to the transformation of the human being. Just peace, in its theological sense, aims at a spiritual way that involves the continuous formation of heart and mind.[36]

Spirituality

As a theological concept, just peace signifies a spiritual way which is concerned with inward transformation of individuals and communities. This inward transformation is presumed to underlie the building of just peace in the world. The shaping of a peaceful heart and mind is seen as fundamental to the attainment of a peaceful society. For the believer, this entails practices of conversion, repentance, and forgiveness. These practices emerge as a criterion for Christian just peace building, since they involve a self-critical approach to the problem of religiously motivated violence in which one's own faith community may be complicit. In these practices of self-critical introspection the way of just peace begins.[37]

To construct just peace theologically thus necessitates paying regard to its dimensions of spiritual formation. As a spiritual way, just peace represents a process of conscience and character building for the nurturing of peace. It is based on a course of education which turns towards the inner capacities of the human being. This process is not considered isolated from the struggles for justice and peace in society, but is promoted in their midst. Just peace is understood as a way of life which is adopted through spiritual practices directed towards service within society.[38] These practices include washing each other's feet, to provide training in the practice of serving the fellow human being. They also include fasting, so as to assess one's patterns of consumption and one's relation to the earth.[39]

The way of just peace is essentially guided by the practice of peace education. Peace is regarded as a habit of mind, which can be taught. The peace documents therefore give

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[36] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 168-173.

[37] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 175-81.

[38] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 183-88.

[39] These practices are promoted throughout the textual process towards an international ecumenical declaration on just peace, from the first draft to the eventual publications, see: First Drafting Group, *Initial Statement towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace* (2008), Archives of the Ecumenical Peace Declaration, World Council of Churches, Geneva, File 5, p. 16; Second Drafting Group, *Just Peace Companion*, p. 46-47.

weight to enabling human beings to grow and mature into agents of peace. In faith communities peace education thus presupposes active support from the side of fellow believers. This involves the practice of personal scrutiny regarding lifestyles, actions, and choices. Peace education is promoted as a holistic process of character formation, in which the formation of the heart, ethical guidance, and practical peace work cannot be separated. As promoted in the peace documents, peace education aims at enabling the individual to apply a faith-based understanding of peace in everyday life practice. Accordingly, peace education is described in terms of applied theology.[40]

The understanding of just peace as a spiritual way also affects the art of building attitudes and managing differences within and between religious communities. The spiritual approach to just peace that is maintained in the peace documents promotes learning before teaching, humility and self-criticism before insisting upon one's own agenda. The building of such attitudes can be seen to play a central role in the construction of faith-based peacebuilding approaches, which aim at responding to tendencies of mutually adverse attitudes and violence. In the contemporary ecumenical debate these endeavours are considered to strengthen the building of community within and between religious communities as well as in the world. The way in which religious communities engage with difference and commonality has become a matter with impact on peace and violence. To give this engagement a peaceful outcome is a core commitment of the ecumenical movement.[41]

Ecumenical Vision

How to make adverse religious groups become fellow travellers on the peacemaking journey is a question which engages ecumenical representatives today. This engagement is expressed through profound ecumenical resistance to any pursuit of homogeneous unity within faith communities.[42] Since Christian unity is the principal goal of ecumenism,

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[40] This understanding of peace education is fostered throughout the textual process and is eventually explicated in the *Just Peace Companion*, p. 39, 111-13. For an account of these perspectives in the dissertation, see: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, 185-88, 202-04.

[41] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 190-204. This course of analysis is carried out with regard to the theory and practice of "receptive ecumenism". The foundations of receptive ecumenism are presented in: Paul D. Murray, "Introducing Receptive Ecumenism" *The Ecumenist. A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2014, p. 1-7.

[42] See e.g. Paul M. Collins, "The Church and the 'Other': Questions of Ecclesial and Divine Communion" in G. E. Thiessen (ed.) *Ecumenical Ecclesiology. Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*

ecumenical theology continuously unfolds around the issue of the actual nature of this unity. In ecumenical circles, unity is often described as a "unity in diversity". Ecumenical theological models thus largely maintain the mutual accountability and relationality which a unity in diversity requires.[43] Just peace, as a theological concept, can be seen to find important background in these models.[44]

In the ecumenical theological debate, the strivings towards a unity in diversity have been considered to serve not only the peace among communities of faith, but also the peace of humanity.[45] However, as the ecumenist and theologian Vincent Miller points out, this presupposes that faith communities resist the creation of faith-based enclaves of similar values. When communities of faith cease to be places where people of different theological commitments interact, they become more and more homogeneous. Instead of turning to religious traditions for their complex vision, believers tend to form groups of the likeminded, with less and less contact with fellow believers beyond their own borders. However, when faith communities cease to image the diverse, they also lose their habit of negotiation and acceptance that is necessary for dealing with intramural diversity. This, Miller underscores, can engender seedbeds for religious extremism and violence.

In this situation ecumenical theology provides means for engaging the dynamics of bridge building and dialogue in faith-based groups. Since it promotes a unity which demands rather than excludes difference, it encourages believers to intentionally work to hear, acknowledge, and respect what is true for the other side and to consider this within the framework of their own tradition. Ecumenical theology can in this way foster relationships that challenge tendencies towards extremism. By encouraging a unity which cannot be achieved without engaging difference, it provides theological resistance to the violent use of religions. Miller admits that this theological engagement does not always

(London: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 102-12; John D'Arcy May, "Visible Unity as Realised Catholicity" *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92(1) 2004, p. 55-61. Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement*, p. 30; James Sweeney, "Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning, and the 'Tribe'" in P. D. Murray (ed.) *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning. Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 333-342.

[43] See e.g. Miriam Haar, "The Struggle for an Organic, Conciliar and Diverse Church. Models of Church Unity in Earlier Stages of the Ecumenical Dialogue" in G. E. Thiessen (ed.) *Ecumenical Ecclesiology. Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 49-60; Fernando Enns, *Ökumene und Frieden. Bewährungsfelder ökumenischer Theologie*, Theologische Anstösse Band 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2012), p. 14, 33-34.

[44] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 205-38, 242-44, 249-50.

[45] See e.g. Enns, *Ökumene und Frieden*, p. 188, 206; Olav Fykse Tveit, "Unity. A Call to Be Strong or Humble?" *The Ecumenical Review* 65(2) 2013, p. 175.

lead to harmony or a clear outcome of the dialogue. He however argues that the search for a unity in diversity remains a theological responsibility, if communities of faith are not to withdraw into aloof enclaves but serve the peaceful community of believers as well as of humanity.[46]

Educating for Peace – A Theological Responsibility and Commitment

As a theological concept, just peace is rooted in the ecumenical commitment to build communities where differences are respected and valued. It promotes religious teachings which counter religious isolation, extremism, and violence by setting issues of relationality and mutual accountability high on the agenda.[47] Researcher on religion and education Ursula King has pointed to the immediate relevance of a religious peace education which brings such issues to the fore. She stresses that religions of the world need to inculcate postures that contribute to peace, such as the acceptance of religious pluralism, openness to interreligious elaboration, and the conversion of the heart. She maintains that an effective and balanced religious peace education involves supplying correct information on other religions and fostering reconciliation and forgiveness. King stresses that the world religions possess an immense reservoir of seeds for peacemaking which can be utilised to develop the art of peaceful coexistence. However, if religious education is to serve the peace and flourishing of the entire earth community it is not enough only to teach the abolition of war. Religious peace education must address violence, strife, and hatred in all their ramifications. According to King, religious education needs to focus on peace not simply as one of many options, but as an imperative that concerns life in its wholeness.[48]

The activation of their reservoirs for peacemaking represents an opportunity and responsibility for faith communities today. Faith-based peace education represents a crucial endeavour in taking up this responsibility. This endeavour is vitally complemented by academic theological education. The tools for critical analysis, reflection, and discovery, which can be acquired at schools and faculties of theology and religious studies, are of immense importance in processes of discerning and evaluating religious

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[46] Vincent Miller, "Where is the Church? Globalization and Catholicity" *Theological Studies* 69(2) 2008, p. 412-32.

[47] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospect for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 191-238.

[48] Ursula King, "Religious Education and Peace. An Overview and Response" *British Journal of Religious Education* 29(1) 2007, p. 122-23.

contributions to processes for peace. Such a discernment and evaluation requires insight into the foundations of peacefully oriented religious teachings. It demands knowledge of how theologies of peace can be constructed and how theologies that legitimate violence can be resisted. Hence, the knowledge of dimensions such as ethics, scriptural interpretation, spirituality, and inter-faith relations are of significance for understanding and finding constructive solutions to religiously framed conflicts today.

The contributions to peacemaking which result from the engagement with theological concepts and traditions need to be seen both in view of their resourcefulness and limitations. The theological just peace concept provides a lucid example of this simultaneous capacity and restriction. When evaluating the possible role of the theological just peace concept in processes for peace the resources of the concept emerge within the framework of certain limits. On the one hand, by promoting a holistic understanding and pursuit of peace, it contributes to the building of common grounds and social cohesion between groups of different faiths and philosophies of life. On the other hand, it is constructed by means of a vocabulary, imagery, and symbolism that are Christian. It represents a contribution to peace which derives from within the Christian tradition. Therefore it needs to be seen in its particularity. As such, it addresses Christian believers in order to make peace an imperative and commitment for their lives. It serves the particular task of bringing out peaceful resources in the Christian tradition.[49]

The theological just peace concept does not primarily give rise to an agenda for quick solutions to urgent situations of conflict. It is largely confined to provide impetus for long-term efforts of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It supplies a resource for the time-consuming processes of forming a peaceful mind, converting towards peaceable life-styles and attitudes, and opposing theological legitimisations of violence. Peacemaking theologies can serve the conduct of faith-based diplomacy in ways that extend over long periods of time.[50] Theological peace education is one such way, wherein students over time acquire keys and tools for scriptural interpretation and theological construction that prepare for the prospering of peacefully oriented values, beliefs, perceptions, and world-views.

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[49] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 246-47.
[50] Research results, dissertation: Gehlin, *Prospects for Theology in Peacebuilding*, p. 248-51.

Education which supplies the knowledge and skills of how to understand, construct, and apply theologies of peace is essential in our time. To educate for peace is a critical task in faith communities as well as in schools and faculties of theology and religious studies. However, in order to flourish and not diminish, their work needs to be supported. In a time when theological legitimisations of violence need to be resisted by peaceful theological means, there is every reason to consider deeply the relevance of their work as well as the possible ways of sustaining the peaceful impact it might have in society.

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