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The Concept of Peace in Christianity

Peace – who among us does not desire to live without war and struggles, without need and fear? Considering peace in this comprehensive way, most would admit that we are not living in peaceful times. Furthermore, these desires were described in the negative (“without”) – how to name the opposite, the affirmative features of peace, is indeed debated. As in most religions the Christian faith has developed an understanding of peace. For Christians this is grounded in the Bible as Holy Scripture and can be extended through history of the Church, and is now facing today’s challenges. One of the basic assertions concerning peace is found in the Hebrew Bible:

I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is near them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

(Ps. 85:8–13)¹

Accordingly, in Christian understanding, peace, the righteousness of the people and justice in the land must be inseparably connected. Peace is not only a personal experience, but a political and social achievement as well. To unfold the Christian understanding of peace, this chapter is divided in three sections, each containing four subsections. The sections follow the historical development starting [1.] with the Bible, then [2.] going through some main insights in Church history, and ending [3.] with the current tasks. The four subsections address the different aspects of peace; namely: the political, the social, the personal, and the religious.

1 Biblical References Regarding Peace

For Christians, the Hebrew Bible (also called the Old Testament) and the New Testament together form the Holy Scriptures. This collection of writings came into being in a process that took about eight hundred years, so there are a lot of

¹ The quotations from the Bible follow The American King James Version.

descriptions of peace and there is a development of insights concerning living together without war, violence, need, and fear. Firstly, peace is interpreted in a positive and in a negative way; so the prevalent distinction between positive and negative peace in the political sciences is also found in the Bible.² Peace (שלום / shalom) is described in the Hebrew Bible negatively as the absence of war, and positively as living together as God's chosen people contently and safely, protected against defamation and false accusations (Ps. 4).³ Perhaps God's salvation experienced on earth is the best paraphrase for peace. The New Testament mostly adopted this understanding of peace (εἰρήνη / eirene). Peace is as well negatively understood as the absence of war, and positively unfolded as the reconciled relationship between God and humans through Jesus Christ and out of this as the virtue of brotherly love and humility.⁴

Secondly, the Biblical authors compare these desired conditions with their experience in the real world. In the real world this positive peace is not naturally granted. Instead, the Biblical scriptures stress the fact that violence has been ruling this world from the beginning, when Cain slew his brother Abel (Gen. 4). As people often harm each other, even negative peace is rarely found.⁵

2 Cf. for the following Otto, Eckhart, *Krieg und Frieden in der Hebräischen Bibel und im Alten Orient. Aspekte für eine Friedensordnung in der Moderne*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999; Krochmalnik, Daniel, "Krieg und Frieden in der hebräischen Bibel und rabbinischen Traditionen," in: Ines-Jacqueline Werkner/Klaus Ebeling (eds), *Handbuch Friedensethik*, 191–202, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017; Schnocks, Johannes, *Das Alte Testament und die Gewalt. Studien zu göttlicher und menschlicher Gewalt in alttestamentlichen Texten und ihren Rezeptionen*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014; Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ludger, "Recht und Gewalt im Alten Testament," in: Nadja Rossmann et al. (eds), *Sprachen heiliger Schriften und ihre Auslegung*, 7–33, Institut für Religion und Frieden (Ethica Themen), Wien: BMLVS Heeresdruckerei, 2015.

3 Ps. 4: "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: you have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity, and seek after leasing? [. . .] But know that the LORD has set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call to him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart on your bed, and be still. [. . .] Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD. There be many that say: Who will show us any good? LORD, lift you up the light of your countenance on us. You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety."

4 Cf. Forderer, Tanja, "Frieden in den neutestamentlichen Schriften," in: Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt/Julian Zeyher-Quattlander (eds), *Friedensethik und Theologie. Systematische Erschließung eines Fachgebiets aus der Perspektive von Philosophie und christlicher Theologie*, 117–36, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018.

5 Cf. Die deutschen Bischöfe, *Gerechter Friede*, Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2000, first chapter; Baumann, Gerlinde, "Gewalt in biblischen Texten.

Israel experienced many wars during its history. In the year 587 BC, the capital Jerusalem, the temple, and the entire state of Israel were destroyed, and the people were sent into the Babylonian exile. Thus the desire for peace and the experience of violence contradict each other. Nevertheless, there is a vivid hope in the Scriptures not only for negative, but also for positive peace. This positive peace is characterized by just conditions for everyone and not only by the absence of war and violence. Living together in peace indicates that neither poverty nor exploitation nor breaching of contracts will occur (Isa. 11:3–5), but that there will be harmony among peoples and that they will live in accordance with nature (Isa. 11:6–9). The Lord of justice will eliminate the wrongdoers, so that tranquility and security will reign (Isa. 32:15–18).⁶ And God will overcome poverty and need (Ps. 9:16–18).⁷

Thirdly, the main point in awaiting this desired peace is its dependence on God. As mankind is weak and sinful, we are not able to put these paradisiac conditions into execution. It is the Lord who will bring peace. From the initial fratricide, God has helped humans in limiting violence. He marked Cain allowing no one to kill him (Gen. 4:15); by this God prevents a cycle of violence. Later, God chose Abraham and then Moses as his partners, making a covenant with them representing his chosen people. The rules in this covenant were also limiting the use of force. For example, the prescription “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Exod. 21:23–25) hinders an exaggeration of violence in prosecution by stressing the proportionality of harmful answers. These limitations helped establishing and keeping the negative peace, although they cannot bring positive peace – this will be achieved by God’s Messiah, a chosen messenger of God that will fulfill the promise of living together contently and safely:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the

Hintergründe, Differenzierungen, hermeneutische Überlegungen,” in: Severin J. Lederhilger (ed.), *Gewalt im Namen Gottes. Die Verantwortung der Religionen für Krieg und Frieden*, 83–95, Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2015.

6 Isa. 32:15–18: “Until the spirit be poured on us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”

7 Ps. 9:16–18: “The LORD is known by the judgment which he executes: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. [. . .] The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.”

LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatted calf together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:1–9)

This profound peace is a vivid hope for Christians (and for Jews as well) and it will not be realized by humans but by God via his Messiah. He, the Prince of Peace, will not only bring violence to an end (negative peace) but will furthermore create this ideal world in God's authority (Isa. 9:1–5).⁸ Thus, positive peace is a hope for the future. God will certainly intervene and will reward the faithful (Deut. 12:1–12).⁹

8 Isa. 9:1–5: “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before you according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.”

9 Deut. 12:1–12: And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was on the waters of the river: How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was on the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not:

Then God's enemies will be gone completely and swords will be hammered to ploughshares (Mic. 4:1–4).¹⁰

According to Col. 1:15–20¹¹ and Luke 4:16–21,¹² Christians actually believe that Jesus is this Messiah (“Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah”), whereas Jews do not agree, and therefore still wait for the arrival of the redeemer. At this juncture, the main difference between the Jewish and the Christian understanding of peace arises. As Christians are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they also claim that the negative and the promised positive peace are already accessible here on earth. To emphasize this, Christians refer mainly to the

then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

10 Mic. 4:1–4: But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it.

11 Col. 1:15–20: [Christ,] “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

12 Luke 4:16–21: “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered to him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say to them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

religious, the personal and the social perspective, whereas Jews stress the fact that in the political perspective peace has not yet arrived on earth. This implies that the Messiah did not yet appear. I will now focus on the Christian interpretation.

1.1 From the Religious Perspective

In his letter to the Romans, apostle Paul outlines the salvation Jesus brought to humans in reference to the peace that is established through Jesus as the Christ:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.
(Rom. 5:1–5)

According to Paul, peace with God is the main aim that Jesus has achieved. In Jesus Christ God overcomes violence with love and reconciliation. Whilst violence can merely be limited by other violence, and even this only as long as it is used proportionally, God's love is able to bring violence to an end and to establish the positive peace. Since this love is stronger than the sin of humans, love can drain the sources of violence. According to most of the authors of the New Testament, including Paul, sin as a broken relationship of all humans to God, and indeed causes evil deeds such as violence (Rom. 3:11–18).¹³ Furthermore, they are convinced that humans are too weak to overcome these sins by themselves; God himself has rendered redemption through Jesus Christ instead (Rom. 3:23–24). The itinerant preacher Jesus from Nazareth has preached God to be a merciful father, willing to forgive all sins (Luke 15:11–24). Thus, only repentance and faith are needed to be redeemed. After being condemned and crucified as a criminal by the political and religious leaders, Jesus was resurrected by God. Ipso facto it was evident for the believers that those leaders were wrong, whereas Jesus was in the right and had proclaimed God as he really is (Acts 2:23f). This implies

13 Rom. 3:11–18: “There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

that the forgiveness of sins has become reality and that the hostility between God and the sinners has been overcome (1John 4:8–11).¹⁴

As a result, positive peace within Christian communities can flourish on the foundation that was laid by Jesus Christ (1Cor. 3:5–11).¹⁵ Jesus has broken down the walls not only between God and humans, but those between humans as well: they are also reconciled with each other and by this can live together contently and safely (Eph. 2:13–19).¹⁶ Consequently, in the Christian communities the religious controversies between humans shall come to an end, since they all have united in Jesus the Christ as the one body with many different limbs (1Cor. 12:12–14),¹⁷ although their unification neither implies giving up all individual characteristics nor denying everyone's specific spiritual gifts (1Cor.12:4–7).

This is, of course, an idealistic description that neither in the Ancient Church nor through history has become reality. Most of Paul's letters are dealing with controversies already in the first communities. These debates were partly about theological quarrels, how to understand the creed "Jesus is the Christ" and to unfold the implications, but they were also approaching concrete problems about the living together in a Christian community and in a non-Christian surrounding. The presence of such controversies was interpreted as evidence that sin is still

14 1John 4:8–11: "He that loves not knows not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

15 1Cor. 3:5–11: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

16 Eph. 2:13–19: "But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

17 1Cor. 12:12–14: "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

there and still mighty, even amongst the Christians, who should not deny this (1John 1:8–9).¹⁸ The realization of peace is a process, having started with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and now leading to the Kingdom of God. Not only humans, but the whole of creation is eagerly waiting for this salvation (Rom. 8:19–23).¹⁹

Furthermore, there are still quarrels between religions and there are still many who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ, which the New Testament clearly admits. Thus Paul calls on all humans to become reconciled with God (2Cor. 5:17–21).²⁰ Reconciliation and Salvation are, so to speak, in progress; the Son of God and the Holy Spirit testify these deeds of God and use the apostles and other Christians as their fellow workers (1Cor. 3:9; 1Thess 3:2). When the work is fulfilled, God will rule and will be all in all (1Cor. 15:28). So it is the future hope for Christians that peace with God as the starting point will spread all over the world – then the Kingdom of God will be realized and the positive peace will become universal reality.

1.2 From the Personal Perspective

Being reconciled and having found peace with God has impacts for the Christians. The main effect of trusting in Jesus Christ is to be content with one's own life. Christians are satisfied and joyful, because they live in certainty of faith: nothing will be able to separate them from the love of God (Rom. 8:31–39).²¹ They have all they need to gain everlasting peace. The certainty of faith that God is the merciful

18 1John 1:8–9: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

19 Rom. 8:19–23: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

20 2Cor. 5:17–21: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

21 Rom. 8:31–39: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him

father is sufficient to lead a content and safe life on earth (John 14:8).²² No efforts before God are needed, for example, neither to circumcise nor to observe dietary laws is necessary to be accepted by God. It has become superfluous to distinguish oneself in front of God and at the expense of other humans; the way to heaven is not a competition. Instead, Christians are liberated from such a self-centered perspective and thus became able to focus on neighborly love – and shall henceforth do this. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul expressed this insight as follows:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say to you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect to you, whoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love. You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth? This persuasion comes not of him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he be. And I, brothers, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you. For, brothers, you have been called to liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Gal. 5:1–14)

The twofold law of love (Matt. 22:35–40)²³ is the principle rule for Christians to obey. They know on the one hand that they have come into this world with nothing and that they will carry nothing out (1Tim. 6:6–7).²⁴ On the other hand

also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

22 John 14:8: "Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us."

23 Matt. 22:35–40: "Then one of them [Pharisees], which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like to it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

24 1Tim. 6:6–8: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

they can accept these conditions in humility and will engage for the benefit of their neighbors (Rom. 12:16–21),²⁵ since this “nothing” is enough facing the merciful God.

The engagement of Christians shall support peace. This implies mainly to remain in the freedom of faith. Freed through Jesus Christ they tend not to be overruled again by other powers. On the one hand, this denotes self-discipline to avoid a fall back, on the other hand it implies living thankfully and peacefully in the parishes (Col. 3:12–16).²⁶ Christians shall foster justness by neither oppressing nor exploiting nor betraying their neighbors. Up to now, controlling one’s emotions and engaging in humanities are central means for a society to live together peacefully, as Dieter Senghaas has analyzed.²⁷ Enviousness and hate are expendable for Christians, since injustice and inequity cannot set aside God’s promise. Christians do not deny that injustice, poverty, misery and violence still exist. However, facing this, Christians are not obsessed with their own well-being and salvation; they are exempt from these selfish concerns and therefore can engage for the welfare of their neighbors. Ideally, Christians will be content with what they have and will engage in favor of others who suffer under bad conditions. Furthermore, they will not lament the trouble they are undergoing, but will stand up for diminishing the pain of their neighbor. By this means, reconciliation and peace become reality – fragmentally and symbolically. And the Christians following Jesus Christ act towards their neighbor just like Christ acted towards them.

25 Rom. 12:16–21: “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, said the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

26 Col. 3:12–16: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

27 Cf. Senghaas, Dieter, “Frieden als Zivilisierungsprojekt,” in: id., *Den Frieden denken. Si vis pacem, para pacem*, 196–223, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1975. Senghaas listed six features in his civilizational hexagon that support social peace, namely: the monopoly on the use of force, the rule of law, democratic participation, social justice (including engagement in humanities), a constructive conflict culture, and control of emotion.

However, in the Christian perspective, these social improvements are grounded in the peaceful mind of the believers. Therefore, the New Testament stresses that Christians are able to and shall seek and ensue peace (1Pet. 3: 10–11).²⁸ This refers to the blessing Jesus spoke out in his sermon on the mount: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Gifted with the divine peace Christians will support peace on earth by serving the others (Mark 10:42–45).²⁹

1.3 From the Social Perspective

The peace-engagement of the Christians, grounded in their certitude of faith, is oriented not only to live together in a parish or a community, but to foster the commonwealth of their society. The Hebrew Bible already expects God or God’s anointed (the Messiah) to overcome poverty and need (Ps. 72:1–4)³⁰ so that everyone will own land and will be able to fend for himself (Deut. 15:4).³¹ The New Testament picks up this expectation and simultaneously modifies the realization: While Jesus the Christ has already reconciled humans with God, it is now up to Christians as fellow workers of God’s Son to help realize this peace in society (Col. 4:11). As already mentioned, the Christians follow the law of love by practicing neighborly love and even love for enemies. And in the congregations, especially in the service they bear the tension between the reconciliation that is already there and the eternal peace that is still outstanding.

This love became reality firstly in the personal relations of the congregations, but was not limited to this. More and more the brotherly love of Christians spread

28 1Pet. 3:10–11: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”

29 Mark 10:42–45: “But Jesus called them to him, and said to them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority on them. But so shall it not be among you: but whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whoever of you will be the most chief, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

30 Ps. 72:1–4: “Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king’s son. He shall judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”

31 Deut. 15:4: “Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it.”

out into society. In the times of the Ancient Church, the engagement for social welfare was a specific feature of the Christians. They promoted solidarity by helping the poor, the old, the ill, and the disabled.³² Furthermore, they ended the isolation from those people who were living at the edge of society, as Jesus had done by healing the ill (Mark 6:53–56) and having meal with the sinners and the tax-collectors (Luke 15:1–2). In the congregations, the rich Christians were exhorted not to become arrogant but charitable (1Tim. 6:17–19).³³ Besides this, Christians should realise soberly that this progression in society may be helpful, but will not suffice to establish extensive peace. After all, they should support in word and deed the peace God has accomplished through his love and reconciliation, since God’s deed has overcome the enmity between God and mankind. Christian life and action is therefore meant to be a symbolic re–presentation of this peace.

Thus, righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη* / *dikaiosynai*) is the most important word the New Testament uses in this context. This term comprises three meanings: Firstly, it means the redemption by God (Rom. 3:21–24).³⁴ God redeems the sinners through the crucifixion of his Son, so Christians will pass Judgment Day. Secondly, this term denotes the right behavior of Christians, their righteousness that was imputed to them (as already to Abraham) through their faith (Rom. 4:20–25).³⁵ And thirdly, it includes, in the Hebrew Bible as well, a just

32 Cf. Gerhard K. Schäfer/ Volker Herrmann, *Geschichtliche Entwicklungen der Diakonie von der Alten Kirche bis zur Gegenwart im Überblick*; in: Volker Herrmann/ Martin Horstmann (eds), *Studienbuch Diakonie Band 1: biblische, historische und theologische Zugänge zur Diakonie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006, 137–165; Gottfried Hammann, *Die Geschichte der christlichen Diakonie. Praktizierte Nächstenliebe von der Antike bis zur Reformationszeit*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.

33 1Tim. 6:17–19: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

34 Rom. 3:21–24: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and on all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

35 Rom. 4:20–25: Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be

order with just laws in society (Isa. 1:21–27),³⁶ since the Lord is not a God of confusion but of peace (1Cor. 14:33),³⁷ not a God of twilight and darkness but of light (Isa. 58:8–10).³⁸ Therefore, the aspiration of Psalm 85:10, that righteousness and peace will kiss each other, is the foundation of Christian love, realized through the reconciliation. This is furthermore the reality for Christians participating in the salvation deeds of Christ, and the aim for the social engagement of Christians.

This social commitment of Christians aiming for peace and fair conditions, however, is only one side of the coin. On the other side is the following announcement of Jesus that the Christian faith will split familiar and social ties:

Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, No; but rather division: For from now on there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

(Luke 12:51–53)

Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God; he brings forgiveness of sins and salvation. Presupposing these assertions to be true, Christians refute other religious or philosophical argumentations – and that causes division. If Jesus really is the Messiah, the Christians will not wait for him to come in the future; instead they will await his second coming on the Last Day. Moreover, the Christians trust in Jesus Christ and his proclaiming of the gospel

imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

36 Isa. 1:21–27: “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water: Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loves gifts, and follows after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come to them. Therefore said the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: And I will turn my hand on you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin: And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning: afterward you shall be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

37 1Cor. 14:33: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

38 Isa. 58:8–10: “Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then shall you call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the middle of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity, and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon day.”

(εὐαγγέλιον / *evangelion*). They build their life on repentance and faith and deny that good deeds are necessary for salvation and therefore to pass Judgement Day. Consequently, the division does not only touch cognitive claims of truth but also emotional settings of fidelity and obedience. To confess Jesus as the Christ has two meanings. It implies questioning the political and religious rulers (Luke 1:51f),³⁹ which will breed discord. Christians spread the gospel and missionized it in their surroundings according to their cognitive and emotional convictions. From the beginning, they experienced that their confessions were not shared by everyone, rather they lead to quarrels, and even ruptures in families, between friends, and in communities.

Hence the question arises, of how to live together in a society peacefully with these divergent convictions and how to tolerate them. In the beginning of Christianity these questions were not urgent, since the first congregations were waiting intensively for the Last Day to come very soon. Governed by this eschatological expectation, the first Christians were not in need to develop a constructive conflict culture; they lived a quiet and secluded life (Luke 21:25–36),⁴⁰ although there were conflicts, for example, between Paul and Peter (Gal. 2). However, since the Last Day was delayed, the necessity to accept living on this earth in one's lifetime grew. In the theological perspective, the experience not to find affirmation but repudiation was now interpreted by referring to the Holy Spirit. It is God himself who convinces humans or does not. Trusting in Jesus Christ is a spiritual gift, and not the efficacy of humans (1Cor. 12:1–3).⁴¹ In society, this problem

39 Luke 1:51–52: God “has showed strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.”

40 Luke 21:25–36: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near. And he spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is now near at hand. So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is near at hand. Truly I say to you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come on you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

41 1Cor. 12:1–3: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I would not have you ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led. Why I

is not yet solved, although Christendom has developed a compromise that time and again has mitigated it – as I will explain further in the second section.

1.4 From the Political Perspective

The apostle Matthew gave another wording of Jesus' announcement in his gospel: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). The division caused by Jesus and his claim to announce the truth about God and to establish faith as the one way to God is labelled here with the term sword. On the one hand, sword is a metaphor for the resoluteness of faith, it cuts between things that belong to the Christian faith and others, that do not. On the other hand, albeit, this metaphorical way of speaking exacerbates the social conflict to a political struggle; the sword represents the state's use of violent force. Soldiers and warriors as the executive power of the government wear a sword and are authorized and trained to use it. Did Jesus announce himself as and his message in order to achieve political changes? We know that one of his disciples was a Zealot (Luke 6:15: "Simon called Zelotes"), who wanted to defeat the Romans with violent means, including plots and assaults.⁴² However, his order to a disciple in Gethsemane, who wanted to attack with a sword, clearly speaks against the assumption that Jesus wanted radical political changes using violent means:

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus to him, Put up again your sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (Matt. 26:50–52)

Jesus did neither take up the sword nor allowed his disciples to fight with weapons. The Kingdom of God he proclaimed has religious and spiritual, but not political aims (John 18:36).⁴³ For that reason his disciples must not fight for it with military means. The peace with God cannot be achieved with the sword,

give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

⁴² Cf. Hengel, Martin, *Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr.*, Leiden/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1976, 72–76, 400.

⁴³ **John 18:36:** "Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

but rather with repentance and faith. It does not matter why Matthew has picked up the term sword in this context (Matt. 10:34); Christians should be cautious to pick up his wording in any case. They should rather refer to Luke's version of this announcement (Luke 12:51).

Nevertheless, Matthew's wording points to a challenge for the Christians to meet: How shall Christians relate to the political leaders? The relationship between politics and religion was always a central concern for religion. Both terms denote powers that rule over humans and intervene in their life gravely: kings and priests. We are dealing with two alpha leaders, so to speak. The basic question is how to relate faith and political obedience. Is it possible to balance the religious and the political call for loyalty and devotion? The New Testament gives three answers to this question.

The first answer is the concept of coexistence: According to Matthew, Jesus has already been confronted with this question, and he answered to the Pharisees: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). More precisely he was talking about taxes, which are secular affairs, and thus irrelevant for God's Kingdom. In heaven no one will have to pay taxes. Finally, God's Kingdom is not from this world (John 18:36); it is not about eating and drinking, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The secular forces are just there as many other things in the world are, but nothing more. Thus, Christians should not deny to obey those rulers, they should fulfill their secular duties, but with a clear and distinct prioritization. As long as these duties do not affect the faith or God's Kingdom, the Christians are allowed to fulfill them alongside their obedience of faith. However, whenever there is an ambiguity or, even worse, an abuse of secular powers, Peter's *Clausula* sets the agenda: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

The second answer is the concept of contradiction: In the Old and also in the New Testament one will find apocalyptic writings that refer to an eschatological battle between God and the forces of evil. These forces will attack not only the Church but the whole of creation. In the background the experienced persecution and bullying of the pious are reflected theologically: Even the worst events will be overruled by the biblical God. In this conception the secular forces do not coexist with God, but contradict and combat him and his congregations. The prophet Daniel portrayed the evil forces as monsters in the Hebrew Bible, which symbolizes the most vicious powers, and their violence would accumulate up to the bloody end (Deut. 7). The persecuted Christians have only one opportunity: to wait for God's intervention without losing their

faith (James 1:12).⁴⁴ There will be a happy ending! God will surely step in and end the bad actions. On Doomsday he will punish the evildoers, redeem and reward the faithful, and hereafter the age of eternal happiness will begin (Luke 21:28). Consequently, the Christians shall draw back from this world (Luke 21:21); they shall not combat the evil forces, because only God can defeat the devil. Instead, they shall follow Jesus in suffering the pain and furthermore use their apocalyptic knowledge to strengthen their resilience.⁴⁵

The third answer is the concept of cooperation: When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to introduce himself and his planned mission in Spain, he elucidated his concept of relationship between faith and secular powers to the politically aware citizens in the center of the empire:

Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will you then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that does evil. Why you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Rom. 13:1–7)

These remarks frame the coexistence Jesus had taught the Pharisees with theological arguments. The secular rulers in Matthew's quotation have been modified in Paul's diction, he now names them a state, which furthermore has authority and not only power, and of course this authority arises from God. Consequently, the Christians shall not only accept the coexistence with this state but may cooperate, since the political authorities are assigned by God. To obey the secular authorities now implies to accept their divine commission (Titus 3:1–2)⁴⁶

44 James 1:12: "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

45 Cf. Scherer, Hildegard, "Gewalt bewältigen. Neutestamentliche Stimmen," in: Jochen Flebbe/Görge K. Hasselhoff (eds), *Ich bin nicht gekommen, Frieden zu bringen, sondern das Schwert. Aspekte des Verhältnisses von Religion und Gewalt*, 69–90, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.

46 Titus 3:1–2: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men."

and even to include them into the Christians prayers (1Tim. 2:1–2).⁴⁷— Whether this obedience also includes the willingness of Christians to engage in politics cannot be decided on the basis of the biblical sources. Regardless it would be consistent with the progression of this concept of cooperation and a clear distinction from the concept of contradiction.

In summary, the relationship between faith and secular powers depends on one’s perspective of the world. It depends on whether the world is thought of as a secular and temporary fact coexisting with God, or as a threatening opponent to God that will be defeated in the end, or as an institution that is authorized to cooperate with God. Nevertheless, in all three cases, the biblical God defines the relationship. So the first commandment doubtlessly has the priority. Consequently, the peace with God is still the primary aim. God will destroy the evildoers, personally as well as politically (Ps. 92:8–10⁴⁸). In the end he will even destroy death, his last enemy (1Cor. 15:26). Yet for now the political authorities are also accepted as a force that supports God’s aim by fighting and limiting the evil on earth and by this making their contribution to establish at least a negative peace.

2 Modifications and Developments of Peace in Church History

Christianity has expanded from the first congregations departing from the Jewish context to a world-wide religion. Obviously this development cannot be represented in this essay. Instead I will highlight a few positions and arguments that have greatly influenced the Christian understanding of peace. Following the systematic approach, I will not represent them chronologically, I will focus on the four perspectives instead.

⁴⁷ **1Tim. 2:1–2:** “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

⁴⁸ **Ps. 92:8–10:** “But you, LORD, are most high for ever more. For, see, your enemies, O LORD, for, see, your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shall you exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

2.1 From the Political Perspective

In the Early Church the three concepts of relationship between religion and politics coexisted. Some parishes, experiencing a persecution of Christians, tended to the apocalyptic concept of contradiction, whereas other parishes could co-exist with the Romans and their religious and philosophical mindset. Despite the sparse sources of these times we know of some Christians working as soldiers (Luke 3:14;⁴⁹ Acts 10: the centurion Cornelius becomes a Christian),⁵⁰ furthermore, there are the diaconal deeds of the Christians; therefore we can also speak of cooperation. To classify these notions, one must nevertheless keep in mind that the parishes were a minority in the beginning.

In the fourth century AD, radical changes took place. Whilst at the beginning of Christianity there were official and wide-spread persecutions of Christians, the political atmosphere suddenly changed: the Constantinian Shift. The Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and from that time he supported the Churches.⁵¹ First he legalized Christianity in the year 313 (Edict of Milan). Then he supported the council of Nicaea (325), an attempt to end the debates about the understanding of the trinity and to formulate a binding creed for all Christians. After his conversion, Constantine avoided participation in pagan rituals, and towards the end of his life, he was baptized. Yet paganism and Christianity coexisted until the Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire in the year 381 – now prohibiting the “heathen” (pagan) rituals.

Focusing on the understanding of peace in the political perspective, the ongoing debates about the character of the Emperor’s faith and the complex consequences for Christianity cannot be considered here. It is important, however, that Constantine’s conversion was combined with his military efforts. According to the Church historian Eusebius (263–339), Constantine had a vision of a cross of light combined with the words “*in hoc signo vinces*” (in this sign you will conquer)

49 Luke 3:14: “And the soldiers likewise demanded of him [= John the Baptist], saying, And what shall we do? And he said to them: Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”

50 Cf. Marksches, Christoph, *Das antike Christentum. Frömmigkeit, Lebensformen, Institutionen*, München: C.H. Beck, 2016.

51 Cf. van Dam, Raymond, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Girardet, Klaus Martin, *Die konstantinische Wende. Voraussetzungen und geistige Grundlagen der Religionspolitik Konstantins des Großen*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006.

before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312).⁵² So he added the symbol of the cross to the vexillum (the flag of the army), convinced that he would win the battle under this sign. And he did indeed win. Through this act the biblical God was identified with the “*Sol invictus*,” the Roman sun-god and the patron of the soldiers. Furthermore, war as a political means was now combined with the cross of Jesus Christ. Admittedly in the Hebrew Bible there are some passages that also combine God with war. God supports his chosen people against their enemies using natural forces (Josh. 10:5–11)⁵³ and trembling in the host (1Sam. 14:15).⁵⁴ In the Hebrew Bible, however, these narratives are mainly found in the ancient history of Israel. In contrast, later passages such as Psalm 85 stress the combination of God with righteousness and peace – as previously discussed presented. Especially Jesus’ repudiation of the sword and his blessing of the peacemakers do not fit with Constantine’s interpretation of the cross as a symbol for military victory. Has war by now become an accepted means for Christianity? Or further, was war now a divine instrument used by the emperor to defeat God’s enemies?

The Church Father Augustine (354–430) was the first to answer these questions with his so called doctrine of the two kingdoms and with his just war theory.⁵⁵ He was theologically challenged by the Sack of Rome by the Visigoths (410). On one hand, the pagan Romans interpreted this event as revenge from the

52 Cf. Amerise, Marilena, “Monotheism and the Monarchy. The Christian Emperor and the Cult of the Sun in Eusebius of Caesarea,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 50 (2007), 72–84.

53 **Josh. 10:5–11**: “Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not your hand from your servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the LORD said to Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into your hand; there shall not a man of them stand before you. Joshua therefore came to them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goes up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and to Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven on them to Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

54 **1Sam. 14:15**: “And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.”

55 Cf. for the following Flasch, Kurt, *Augustin. Einführung in sein Denken*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994, and Weissenberg, Timo J., *Die Friedenslehre des Augustinus. Theologische Grundlagen und ethische Entfaltung*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005.

ancient gods for the Romans' perfidy of converting to Christianity and ignoring the traditional rituals. Accordingly, Augustine had to demonstrate that this pillage was not connected with the Christian faith. On the other hand, it seemed necessary to defend the Church and the Christendom with military means against the attack from the North. Thus, he had to resolve the acceptance of military means from the Christian point of view.

To solve these queries, Augustine distinguishes in his 22 books "De Civitate Dei" (426) God's kingdom as the City of God from the earthly kingdoms as the City of Man. The City of God is not from this world (John 18:36). Consequently, eternal peace will be realized in heaven, not on earth. A person believing in Jesus Christ is counted to the chosen ones, and will come to heaven after his death. Thus, the wars on earth as all mundane events have nothing to do with the City of God, but only with the City of Man. Therefore, neither the Church nor the Christian faith is responsible for the current military failure. Augustine refutes by this an apocalyptic interpretation of history; the Roman Empire is not the end of history. On earth, in the City of Man there is an ongoing struggle between God and the devil since the Fall of Man and Cain's fratricide (Gen. 3–4). The Church and the political government shall support God and compete against the devil and his forces with all means. Violent means and military power may also be used to limit sins, oppose the heretics and defeat the offenders from the North. The aim is to establish or preserve the public order and tranquility so that the Church can preach the gospel and call the people up to the transcendent City of God. With this doctrine, Augustine combines the biblical concepts of contradiction and coexistence of Church and state. The City of God is a contradiction to the City of Man; it is not from this world. Nevertheless, during this aeon the government will coexist with the Church and can furthermore subserve the Church by ensuring good conditions for preaching the gospel.

In Mediaeval Times this doctrine faded into the background, because Church and government were widely interconnected – more about this in the next subsection. The reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546), however, a monk from the Augustinian Hermits fraternity, took this doctrine up again and modified it to his doctrine of the two governments.⁵⁶ He wrote:

For this reason God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which

⁵⁶ Cf. for the following Stümke, Volker, *Das Friedensverständnis Martin Luthers. Grundlagen und Anwendungsbereiche seiner politischen Ethik*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007.

restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that – no thanks to them – they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace.⁵⁷

Church and state have the duty to look after the people on earth. One is responsible for human salvation, the other for peace on earth. As Augustine, Luther is also convinced that God's Kingdom is transcendent and must not be admixed with political empires. Furthermore, both conform that on earth there is a struggle for the souls of humans between God and the evil forces. For Luther, though, Church and government do not only coexist, but cooperate. Both are ordained by God, both shall serve him with their specific instruments and perform their respective duties. The Church is geared to spiritual means; it shall preach the gospel and by this lead humans to become Christians and to gain the City of God. The government is, according to Rom. 13, also ordained by God. The temporal regiment governs the people and is governed by God. God does not directly interfere in political affairs but assigns the ruler with authority, endows him or her with a distinct function and equips the ruler with helpful instruments as the sword and the laws. Moreover, the aims for the government are also modified by Luther. Not order and tranquility, but peace and justice are the divine terms of reference.⁵⁸ The government has the duty to maintain negative peace on earth and it can use even military means (the sword) to achieve this goal.

To sum up: In the Christian tradition it was widely accepted that the government is ordained by God with the aim to preserve the negative peace on earth. This peace is, following Augustine, a condition to preach the gospel. Whereas the evil forces favor chaos and confusion, the Church needs order and tranquility, only under these circumstances can the Christians proclaim the gospel and the humans listen to it. According to Luther, negative peace is an end in itself. It is God's will that people shall live together without war and combat. Both agree that in order to establish negative peace the government can use the sword. Whereas the Church, according to Matt. 26:52 is not allowed to use violent means, the state has the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and that even includes the allowance of military action.

⁵⁷ Luther, Martin, *Temporal Authority. To What Extend it Should be Obeyed* (1523), LW 45, 91 = WA 11, 251. Further: Leonhardt, Rochus /von Scheliha, Arnulf (eds), *Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders! Zu Martin Luthers Staatsverständnis*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015.

⁵⁸ Cf. Luther, Martin, *Whether Soldiers, too, Can be Saved* (1526), LW 46, 96 = WA 19, 625: "For the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace [Rom. 13:1–4; 1Pet 2:13–14] is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing along with all the things that accompany wartime and martial law have been instituted by God."

This acceptance of forceful means is, however, ambivalent, or even unacceptable, for Christians, if the violence is not limited. The biblical experiences that led to the concept of contradiction must not be overruled by this comprehensive allowance of violence and even war. At this point, Augustine picked up the theory of just wars from the Roman philosopher Cicero to limit the acceptance of armed encounters. According to Augustine, war is primarily a state of disorder and therefore strengthens the evil forces. The combatants are driven by greed and vengeance; these inferior internal forces dominate the virtues as love and righteousness and so the soul of the soldier is in disorder. This disorder must be conquered, however, in order to regain order and tranquility, and this may only be available through military violence. Consequently, these wars are simply an aim to end the disorder and to establish negative peace on earth; and they are named “just wars.” Albeit, this legitimate aim is not sufficient for a just war yet; in addition, there must be a good reason to start a war, for example a state of disorder that was caused by the enemy. Furthermore, the process of declaring war must be correct. Not just anyone, but rather only God or the legal political leader is allowed to use violent means, otherwise disorder will arise in the government as well. Finally, all these conditions must not contradict God’s commandments.

Augustine’s intention to limit wars by developing ethical criteria for a just war was continued in the mediaeval scholasticism.⁵⁹ Very important was the conception from Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).⁶⁰ According to Thomas, only those acts of violence that correspond to the criteria of just war are reconcilable with Christian faith. And of course, these were the only acts of violence that were justified to be exercised through the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. More precisely the Doctor of Christianity postulated three criteria:

- legitimate authority (*legitima potestas*⁶¹),
- just cause (*causa iusta*),
- right intention (*recta intentio*).

⁵⁹ Cf. for the following the anthology edited by Justenhoven, Heinz-Gerhard/Barbieri Jr. William A., *From Just War to Modern Peace Ethics*, Berlin/ Boston: de Gruyter, 2012.

⁶⁰ Cf. Beestermöller, Gerhard, *Thomas von Aquin und der gerechte Krieg. Friedensethik im theologischen Kontext der Summa Theologiae*, Köln: J.P. Bachem, 1990.

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas did not speak of the legitimate authority but more specific of the authority of the prince resp. the ruler (*auctoritas principis*). Since the Spanish Late Scholasticism the criterion was modified so that not the person (e.g. the Pope or the Prince) but the government was foregrounded. Besides, this allowed including different forms of regimes and so better fits to the Modern Ages.

By this, civil wars, relish wars and depredations were forbidden, whereas defensive wars and punitive actions (as an aggressive war) were allowed. In the late Middle Ages more criteria for the legitimation of wars (*ius ad bellum*) were added, notably the condition of the last resort (*ultima ratio*). Furthermore, not only the war, but the conduct in battle was analyzed as well. The most important criteria of this “*ius in bello*” were the discrimination between combatants and non-combatants, the proportionality of means (*debitus modus*) and the limitation of collateral damages (doctrine of double effect).

These just war theory criteria, with only slight modifications, are largely uncontested and still applicable today. They are still an effective instrument to evaluate wars and military use of violence.⁶² It is for this reason that, especially in the English-speaking world, many theologians still adhere to the just war theory.⁶³ There is also an ongoing discourse on the just war theory in philosophy and in the political sciences.⁶⁴ The intention to establish ethical criteria for just wars and thereby limit wars also remains uncontested.⁶⁵ All philosophers and theologians in the current debates are taking up this doctrine in order to restrict wars according to an ethical benchmark.

The implicit acceptance of war as a political tool is, however, contested. In the just war tradition, even aggressive wars could be legitimized, if there was a just cause (preceding wrongs), a right intention (punishment) and a correct declaration (through the emperor). Luther whereas reduced his acceptance to defensive wars. Yet, in both cases, does political realism not overrule the Christian hope for peace? Is Christian faith not limited to the personal wish for eternal life anyway? It is one thing accepting the government as one of the two regiments God has ordained, and accepting the divine aims, including the government’s

⁶² The memorandum of the EKD from 2007 (*Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen. Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007) for example makes recourse in paragraph 102 to the following criteria, now renamed criteria of right-preserving force (Kriterien rechtserhaltender Gewalt): the right cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportionality of consequences and means and the discrimination principle. Albeit, these criteria do not legitimate a war, but they label measures to preserve or to rebuild a legal system or a state law.

⁶³ Cf. Biggar, Nigel, *In Defence of War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; McMahan, Jeff, *Killing in War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁶⁴ Cf. Frowe, Helen, *The Ethics of War and Peace. An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2016; Rodin, David/ Shue, Henry (eds), *Just and Unjust Warriors. The Moral and Legal Status of Soldiers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bartolomé de Las Casas, who stated, that there was not even one just war in the combats of Spain against the Indians; in: Gillner, Matthias, “Bartolomé de Las Casas und die Menschenrechte,” *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 39 (1998), 143–60, 152.

monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Accepting war as a natural component of this use of force is another. Such acceptance does not take adequately into account that Jesus, as the Christ, is our peace (Eph. 2:14) and that his salvation will also reach and change the society. It is necessary therefore, to complement the political point of view with the social perspective on the rule of law.

2.2 From the Social Perspective

After Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman state in the year 381 the relationship between Church and state changed. The political implications were just discussed; the government had become part of Christendom, and political means up to the use of military force were accepted by the Church. This concept of cooperation, however, also modified the social position of the Church. As the official representative of the Christian faith the Church, and especially the Pope, became more important and influential. This development was bolstered with another saying of Jesus. In the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was captured, his disciples said: “Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said to them, It is enough” (Luke 22:38). These two swords became the symbol for the two powers in the Roman and later the Christian society.

During history of the Church different terms were used to denote the two forces in society: *civitates* (cities), *potestates* (powers), *gladii* (swords), and *regimina* (governments).⁶⁶ Each of these terms grammatically denotes that there was exactly two of each of them. Albeit it is disputed who has the final word, meaning who has supremacy in society, Church or state. On one hand there were the Franconian emperors with their proprietary Church system, implying that the Churches belong to the particular rulers. According to this concept, the state would have the final say and the Church would become the department for religion in each principedom. The Church protested against this concept, because freedom of speech, or more precisely the freedom to proclaim the Word of God, would be restricted. So on the other hand the Church established a counterproposal. It argues that the secular emperor is ordained by the Pope and receives orders on ruling the people. In this concept, however, the political actions are too limited. In summary, the distribution of power between Church and state seemed to be impossible; both wanted to dominate over the other.

⁶⁶ Cf. Stümke, Volker, *Das Friedensverständnis Martin Luthers*, 196–199. „Regimina“ is the latin translation from Luthers „Regimente“.

In the Medieval Ages, a compromise was established. The Concordat of Worms (1122 AD) laid down that Church and state, Pope and Emperor, have to manage different tasks and duties and by this shall respect each other. This compromise was helpful to solve the problem concretely with the investiture of the bishops. The Concordat distinguished between the *temporalia* and the *spiritualia* and by this found a solution. Since the Church is responsible for the spiritual powers of the bishop, such as administration of the sacraments, and since these are the primary tasks for a bishop, he is invested by the Church. However, since there are also secular warrants of the bishop, such as to administer the Church properties (i.e. to lease and release land), this authorization is developed by the Emperor. This compromise leads to an accepted coexistence of Church and state with no one dominating the other. A department of religion and a religious state were excluded.

In the Orthodox Churches, the relationship between Church and state was and is thought of similarly as “symphonia” (*συμφωνία*), a harmonic cooperation between religious (Aaron) and political (Moses) leaders or between the body and the soul.⁶⁷ Whereas the Roman (Catholic and Protestant) Churches tended to divide the two forces, the Orthodox Churches were and are more closely linked with the government; most of them are national Churches, for example the Russian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. Consequently, up to now they do not agree with the concept of just peace; instead understand peace service as an assignment for the local Churches.

In Western Christianity, the influence of the Church and the Pope was manifested in the Concordat of Worms. Nevertheless, the term “sword” still implies two challenges for Christendom. On the one hand, the Church was combined with military means. Obviously it was metaphorical speech; the spiritual sword shall not kill people, but defeat sins. However, the crusades demonstrate that a combination was not out of sight: to kill the infidels with both swords. On the other hand, the Christians are still bound to Matthew 26:52 and are consequently prohibited from using the sword. Certainly, the Church could delegate the use of force to the state, nevertheless, the politicians and soldiers are Christians as well. Therefore, this solution tends to a grading of Christians, to a step range between perfect (pure) and imperfect (impure) Christians, the first avoid taking up a sword, the second use violent means. This grading, however, tends to contradict Paul’s doctrine of justification: “For you are all the children of

⁶⁷ Cf. Oeldemann, Johannes, *Die Kirchen des christlichen Ostens. Orthodoxe, orientalische und mit Rom unierte Kirchen*, Düsseldorf: Topos, 2016; McGuckin, John Anthony, *The Orthodox Church. An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*, Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2010.

God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bound nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26–28).

It was again Martin Luther who developed a line of thought to solve these challenges. In his doctrine of the two governments, he renamed the spiritual means replacing “sword” by “word”. Only the government, not the Church, must handle the sword. The Church has to convince mankind “*sine vi humana, sed verbo*”⁶⁸ (without violence, with words instead). The Church has to proclaim the divine word with human words, meaning that it has to preach the gospel, to call for repentance and faith, and to make use solely of the means of oration and its possibilities. A crusade is in any case not an option for Christians. Neither is the Church allowed to use the sword herself, nor is it permitted to call on the state to combat for religious reasons, for *spiritualia*. In the first case the Church would use a mean without authorization. In the second case it would urge the government to intervene in *spiritualia* with earthly, temporal means.

With his wording Luther does not only define more precisely the duties of the Church, he also stresses the state’s monopoly on the use of force. Church and state have different duties in society and can draw on different means to fulfill them. One is responsible for human salvation, the other for earthly peace. This distinction picks up the biblical concept of coexistence and enhances it with the argument that both institutions are installed by God and because of this shall cooperate to look after the temporary and spiritual health of humans in society. Furthermore, since both governments are directly ordained by God, the hierarchical struggles between these two alpha leaders come down to nothing. Both are ordained by God and are therefore responsible to God. Accordingly, they are thus not allowed to shape their own targets arbitrarily. Hence, neither a totalitarian regime nor an absolute government is permitted, since both regimes restrict each other and, furthermore, are both limited through God.

Thus, Luther’s doctrine of the two governments is still relevant today to solve the first challenge. In society, the Christian Church does not have the duty of handling the sword. It is not responsible for politics, but for religion instead, including e.g. preaching, pastoring, teaching, and deaconship. With these means it may lead humans to the Christian faith and by this to a content

68 “Confessio Augustana Art. 28,” in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* [BSELK], Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ⁸1979, 124, 21 – for Luther cf. WA 11, 268f (Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed, 1523) and WA 32, 150ff (Sermon on Eph. 6,10ff from 11. November 1530).

life of peace with God. Accordingly, peace on earth, more precisely the negative peace is the temporal aim for the secular government. The state is ordained by God to stop wars and combat and to establish a legal order with violent means. More than this negative peace cannot be achieved by politics, since it cannot rule the conscience of humans. Thoughts are free, and the conscience can only be convinced by words, as I will explain further in the next subsection.

The second challenge, however, is not yet solved. On the one hand, the state has the duty to use violent means through its officers. On the other hand, Christians shall not pick up the sword. Thus, can a Christian become a soldier or a police officer? Or is it better for him or her to keep distance from politics and to lead a calm and tranquil life, for example in a monastery? Luther protested against such a grading. Referring to Paul, and according to his doctrine of justification, being a Christian depends solely on God's grace and Christian faith, but never on deeds. And to live in a monastery is for Luther a human deed. So it is not the profession but the confession that marks a Christian. Nevertheless, there are evil deeds and professions that should be avoided by Christians, murder for example. At this point, Luther picks up the doctrine of the two governments. Since the state is ordained by God and equipped with his specific means, Christians are not only allowed but told to support the secular government with their professions. Following Luther, a Christian may become a soldier or even an executioner, since he or she supports the temporary inputs of God with this profession – like a teacher or a priest does. Moreover, Luther even combines these professions with the neighborly love of Christians. If one takes into account that there can be more than one other person to deal with, it becomes evident, that not the offender but the potential victim is the neighbor that must be protected by the Christian bystander. Protecting the victims is an expression of Christian love, although it might hurt the perpetrator. This harmonizes with Luther's limitation on defensive wars: The sword may be used exclusively to protect humans in society and this aim can also be supported by Christians.

Nevertheless, Christian faith is still combined with violent means. Thus, not all Christians have accepted this line of argumentation.⁶⁹ In the Middle Ages, the Cathari and the Waldensian refused any kind of military service.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁹ Cf. Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline, "Kirchliche Diskurse um die Anwendung militärischer Gewalt. Eine empirische Perspektive," in: Sarah Jäger/Ines-Jacqueline Werkner (eds), *Gewalt in der Bibel und in kirchlichen Traditionen. Fragen zur Gewalt Band 1*, 87–116, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018.

⁷⁰ Cf. Lambert, Malcolm, *Geschichte der Katharer*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001; Audisio, Gabriel, *Die Waldenser*, Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 2004.

the Anabaptist movement during the Reformation period the Hutterites and the Mennonites likewise developed a stringent peace-ethic with an abolition of the use of force by Christians.⁷¹ Since then, the Quakers and the Adventists also belong to these Peace Churches.⁷² All these Christians have in common that they take the appeal of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:38–42) very seriously and therefore reject any form of force, including service in military and police forces. According to these groups, Christians should symbolize peace with God in their daily life and also in their professions.⁷³ They should not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of their mind; by this, they may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God is (Rom. 12:2).

Regarding the necessity of social engagement these Peace Churches differ though. Some withdraw from society into their communities to lead a tranquil and calm life. They pay their taxes and obey the laws according to Rom: 13, as long as they do not contradict the *Clausula Petri* (Acts 5:29), but they are not involved in political or social activities outside of their Church communities. However, by this they risk being questioned and criticized in that instead of supporting others they shirk their responsibility for protecting the weak. Luther put it plainly: It is demanded of a Christian to respond peacefully to an assault, as far as he is concerned only for himself or herself; but for the other's welfare, to protect them from harm, he must defend them. This is to be extended on society; Christians should therefore promote the authority of the state instead of withdrawing from social responsibility.

Other Christians in Peace Churches are, in contrast, fully committed to social welfare. They are involved in feeding the poor, engage in peace missions and promote peaceful means.⁷⁴ At the same time they criticize very convincingly the quite natural recourse to force as a legitimate political instrument: Peace on earth can only be established by peaceful means and Christians are called to follow Jesus, who convinced humans with his words and with his neighborly love and not with the sword. Does the vital pacifism of these Churches not demonstrate how to

71 Packull, Werner O., *Hutterite Beginnings. Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation*, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; Lichdi, Diether G., *Die Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Von der Täuferbewegung zur weltweiten Freikirche*, Weisenheim: Agape, 2004.

72 Cf. Henke, Manfred, *Wir haben nicht einen Bettler unter uns. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der frühen Quäkerbewegung*, Berlin: be.bra wissenschaft verlag, 2015; Knight, George R., *Anticipating the Advent. A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Nampa: Pacific Pr Pub Assn, 1993.

73 Cf. Enns, Fernando, *Friedenskirche in der Ökumene. Mennonitische Wurzeln einer Ethik der Gewaltfreiheit*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.

74 Cf. Hofheinz, Marco/van Oorschot, Frederike (eds), *Christlich-theologischer Pazifismus im 20. Jahrhundert*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016, esp. 141f and 203.

overcome violence without shirking social responsibility? Consequently, the Catholic Church and the large Protestant Churches currently tend to incorporate these valid objections and suggestions in their conception of just peace – yet that will lead us to the next section.

In summary, it is currently controversial how Christians shall behave in society. Whereas it is evident that the Church is not allowed to use forceful means as the state, which is regulated by laws and has the monopoly on military force, the involvement of Christians in this political use of armed force is moot. On the one hand it is convincing that perpetrators must be hindered from hurting humans, and consequently, the state must be allowed to use violent means (Rom. 13). Should Christians not protect their neighbors as well? On the other hand, it is likewise plausible that Christians shall promulgate the peace with God and its consequences for society with their words and deeds (Matt. 5). Is it not more convincing for Christians following Jesus to react peacefully on an assault than to combat it and continue in the cycle of violence? Furthermore, we have to take into account that apart from the state and the Church there are currently additional global players in society, for example, the economy, sports, sciences, culture, and media. Two “swords” are today definitely not enough to paraphrase the influential forces in society. This opens more opportunities to react to violence using, for example, economic boycotts, diplomatic approaches, public naming and shaming, and social defiance. The instruments of armed force are the most destructive ones. Consequently, the state needs responsible and circumspect officers to limit the use of force as far as possible. Can Christians reject this need of cooperation? Perhaps the best answer to be given is to refer back to the Christians themselves. Is it not part of the freedom of a Christian to decide how to promote neighborly love and by this peace?

2.3 From the Personal Perspective

The functionally differentiated coexistence of Church and state that was established in Christianity (Concordat of Worms, Luther) contributes to the negative peace, because on one hand, it bans any kind of religious war. Solely the state has the monopoly on the use of force, never the Church. On the other hand, this right of the state is restricted to secular affairs. This implies that the state has to accept the freedom of conscience and the freedom of faith. The freedom of religion as a human right is an implication of Christian faith, although it was, regrettably, a long road to establish these rights and, moreover, the Churches stood

often in the way and deferred this development.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there are strong and vivid connections between Christian faith and the freedom of conscience, faith, and religion.

As early as the apostle Paul, the Christian faith was combined with the term freedom. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). Jesus Christ has freed the Christians from religious bondage. Through the Son of God the Christians received adoption as sons and daughters; they have by this attained full age and are neither servants nor (little) children any more that need a prescription by the law on how to behave and to live (Gal. 3:23–26).⁷⁶ This liberty of the religious adults implies that they need not observe religious or cosmic rituals (Gal. 4:1–11).⁷⁷ Through this, the peace with God modifies the standing of the Christians; their freedom as adults from religious paternalism (negative freedom from) implies the freedom to pray to God without intercession of the Church or religious leaders (positive freedom to).⁷⁸

This freedom to pray to God unmediated became important for Martin Luther. In his essay “The Freedom of a Christian” (1520) he took up Paul’s line of thought and spoke of the Christians metaphorically as kings and priests. They are as kings, because nobody has the power to harm their salvation, and they are as priests, because they are allowed to stand before God as saints do.⁷⁹ Even more important became Luther’s creed on the Diet (Reichstag) in Worms

75 Cf. Blicke, Peter, *Von der Leibeigenschaft zu den Menschenrechten. Eine Geschichte der Freiheit in Deutschland*, München: C.H. Beck, 2003; Tönnies, Sibylle, *Die Menschenrechtsidee. Ein abendländisches Exportgut*, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011.

76 Gal. 3:23–26: “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Why the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

77 Gal. 4:1–11: “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Why you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. However, then, when you knew not God, you did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain.”

78 Cf. Berlin, Isaiah, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

79 Cf. Luther, Martin, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), ch. 14–16, LW 31, 353–356 = WA 7, 26–28.

in 1521, where he was asked to denounce his writings. Luther refused to do so referring to his conscience that is bound to the Holy Scriptures.⁸⁰ By this he calls for the freedom of conscience as a right that is above political and religious claims. It was not peace but quarrel, a schism between the catholic and the Protestant Churches, and later on even wars were evoked by Luther's insistence.

Nevertheless, the appeal on the freedom of conscience became at the same time an argument in the late scholastics in Spain dealing with the mission of the "Indians" in the new territories (America). One important biblical reference was Luke 14:23: "*compelle intrare*" (compel them to come in). Augustine legitimated with this verse the combatting of heretics to return to the Catholic Church, and in the 16th century theologians took up this account to legitimate the forced Christianization and baptism of the native people in America. In contrast, Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566) and Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546) argued for a mission with spiritual and not violent means. Following Jesus, the Church should convince not with violence but with persuasion.⁸¹ Since the Indians could understand the preaching and are able to believe in Jesus Christ, they have from nature (as a gift of the creator) human dignity and rights.⁸² Consequently, they must not be compelled to Christianity, but can become Christians as a question of their own conscience.

If one's conscience is bound and can be convinced only with spiritual means, neither religion nor politics will have the right to urge the conscience. Therefore, the freedom of conscience and of faith must be accepted by both regiments as an individual human right. Additionally this freedom must not be bound to one religion or one belief-system. Regretfully it took decades and

80 Luther's creed as it was traded in my free translation: "I cannot revoke all my writings, because they are too different. The first part of them is interpretations of the Bible that are widely accepted in the church. Should I cancel them, I would drag the Word of God through the mire. The second part comprises critique of the church and the Pope that is well founded. It is not the task of the political leaders to ban an inner-church position; with that the emperor would only support the Tyranny of the Pope. So I will not cancel these scripts as well. Finally, there are books, in which I have criticized other Christians. It could probably be that I have adopted the wrong tone, but this had to be demonstrated concretely. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen."

81 Cf. Gillner, Matthias, *Bartolomé de Las Casas und die Eroberung des indianischen Kontinents. Das friedensethische Profil eines weltgeschichtlichen Umbruchs aus der Perspektive eines Anwalts der Unterdrückten*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997, 240–243.

82 Cf. Justenhoven, Heinz-Gerhard, *Francisco de Vitoria zu Krieg und Frieden*, Köln: J.P. Bachem, 1991, 57–61.

awful wars of religion in Europe to gain this insight.⁸³ Furthermore, considering that faith includes not only a system of convictions, but also religious practices and assemblies of the believers, we ought to speak about the freedom of religion. This term comprises the human location of this freedom (conscience), its content (faith) and its social manifestation (religion). Whereas freedom of religion forbids neither the religions nor the believers to preach the gospel and to proselytize, yet, it limits these efforts to peaceful means – according to the insight that only the state is allowed to use violent force, and that the state at the same time is limited to the *temporalia*. From the personal perspective, the freedom of religion is now added as another limitation for the government and the Church.

With reference to this human right of religious freedom the previous controversy on the acceptance of violent means by Christians can be mitigated. A Christian can decide by him- or herself and for him- or herself whether he or she may become a soldier or a police-officer. The Churches and other Christians can, of course, explain their conviction in this quarrel and try to persuade or convince him or her. Yet, his or her conscience and his or her decision must not be overridden. The same applies to other institutions in society; nobody must be coerced to become a butcher or to work in an abortion clinic against his conscience. Within a government it is, in fact, allowed to ask all civilians for a military conscription or even to install a general conscription. If some people, however, have a moral objection to military service, the state must accept this decision, but may order a substitute service instead. Even the rulers are limited by rules, more precisely by the rule to accept the freedom of conscience. This limitation opens the opportunity for humans, to lead their life as they want to, just following their convictions. In this way, the freedom of religion promotes peace. Furthermore, tolerance is required from the government, the Churches and all citizens as well. They must tolerate the religious convictions of other citizens that they do not share.

However, the combination of tolerance and freedom of religion evokes another challenge for Christianity: Are there any restrictions for tolerance? The classical answer concerning the government is that the freedom of every civilian is limited by the freedom of the others (Immanuel Kant).⁸⁴ Thus, religious convictions must be tolerated as long as they do not bother fellow citizens. Whereas thoughts are free, religious speeches and rituals may be limited, since

83 Cf. Leonhardt, Rochus, *Religion und Politik im Christentum. Vergangenheit und Gegenwart eines spannungsreichen Verhältnisses*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017, 209–44.

84 Cf. Kant, Immanuel, *Metaphysik der Sitten. Erster Teil. Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*, [Königsberg 1797], Einleitung § B: „Das Recht ist also der Inbegriff der Bedingungen, unter denen die Willkür des einen mit der Willkür des anderen nach einem allgemeinen Gesetze der Freiheit zusammen vereinigt werden kann“, Bernd Ludwig (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1986, 38.

they can damage other human rights, and in this case a compromise is needed. Such an occasion was the dispute about circumcision in Germany in 2012, in which the religious duty of the Jews and the Muslims as well as healthcare (as a human right) had to be balanced and written into law. Today the circumcision of male children is allowed in Germany but the circumciser must be medically educated. Living together peacefully requires every religious citizen to accept compromises not only concerning his or her faith, but also in dealing with the social impacts of any religion.

Social compatibility, then, becomes the benchmark to limit religious speeches and rituals. However, how should Christians and the Churches deal with incompatible beliefs? Since citizens are free to form their religious beliefs, the government is originally not involved in answering this question; it has to treat all confessions of faith equally. Christians and Churches by contrast are challenged when the required tolerance contradicts their beliefs. For example it is moot whether children or only adults should be baptized. Both creeds cannot be true at the same time, but both refer to the conscience of believers. Can a conscience make a mistake? If so, how should the Church or the state deal with an erring conscience? These questions were scrutinized by Thomas Aquinas.⁸⁵ To answer them, he distinguishes two perspectives. In the theoretical perspective he insists that decisions can be objectively right but also wrong. Humans have by nature moral insights, so they can conceive in their conscience (*συντήρησις* / *synthesis*) principally what is right or wrong; for example anybody can recognize that it is wrong to kill an innocent. The individual conscience (*συνειδησις* / *syneidesis*) however is not infallible. Thomas stresses, contrary to the scholastic tradition, that the individual conscience is not the immediate voice of God, but a natural ability of humans to understand, to pick up or to repudiate God's guidelines. To pick up the example: It is possible that one errs and is convinced it is just to kill a completely innocent person; maybe because he finds him guilty, or maybe he has not accessed the objective insight. The individual conscience is, so to speak, the judicial power of humans that refers to natural insights (common to all humans) and transforms them individually into moral decisions. For this reason, the question of conscience must be accepted in a practical perspective; therefore it would be a sin not to follow one's conscience.⁸⁶ The conscience's decision is obligatory for any human, because it is part of his or her identity. Thus,

⁸⁵ Cf. for the following Schockenhoff, Eberhard, *Wie gewiss ist das Gewissen? Eine ethische Orientierung*, Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder 2003.

⁸⁶ Cf. Aquinas, Thomas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales III*, questio 12, articulus 2c: "Et ideo dicendum est quod omnis conscientia, sive recta, sive erronea, (. . .) est obligatoria; ita quod qui contra conscientiam facit, peccat."

humans must follow their consciences, but they must also carry the social and personal consequences. This argumentation is convincing. Thomas states that the conscience is the individual authority but not the theological benchmark for religious beliefs. The conscience can err and follow a wrong advisor, but it is nevertheless the interior court of every human and part of his or her identity. Thus, the freedom of religion, conscience and faith has to be a human right, as it belongs to his self-determination. Its acceptance will support peace, because it allows humans to follow their deepest convictions.

The challenge for Christians and Churches, however, is still pending. To accept the freedom of religion as limitation for social arrangements and legal regulations does not imply to agree to contradictory beliefs. Given the possibility that these can be wrong, as Thomas has argued, the query even increases: One cannot tolerate what is not true. The term truth implies intolerance. If an assertion is true, contradictory statements are excluded from truth (principle of excluded contradiction). Moreover, every assertion claims uncircumventably to be true. This statement does not imply that every belief-system is true, albeit it implies that every creed affirms itself to be true. Unfortunately, this inevitability of truth leads to an ongoing struggle of religions, since they proclaim assertions. Alternatively, tolerating all of them would imply sidelining their aspirations, as well. Yet, both attitudes do not foster peace but enmity. On the one hand, a struggle between religious claims can easily extend and refer not only to their assertions but also to the believers, who are convinced of their truth. Alas, Church history contains many examples showing that the repudiation of heretic insights was accompanied by the condemnation and punishment of the heretics who were simply bound to their consciences. On the other hand, the toleration of contradictions will only be possible, if none of them matter – and that would be an imposition for the faithful, because it does not take their conscience seriously. Yet to declare a creed to be an *adiaphora* (incidental), will evoke enmity as well. Since both attitudes can turn perilous, the role of the secular government became more and more important: The state's monopoly on the use of force can guarantee the validity and enforceability of human rights, including the freedom of religion and its limitations – more about this in the next section.

In philosophy, assertions must be verified or falsified to validate their truth-claims. How can one verify or falsify theological assertions that are grounded in a conviction and are anchored in the conscience? This challenge leads us to the theological benchmark and thereby to the religious perspective.

2.4 From the Religious Perspective

Being justified by faith, Christians have peace with God through Jesus the Christ (Rom. 5:1). Peace with God is a consequence of salvation and thereby of the forgiveness of sins. In order to interpret this keynote of the New Testament, an accurate understanding of sin is important. Sin is not fixed to the perpetrator (as guilt) but describes the connection between God and humans. More precisely, it labels this relationship as disturbed or even destroyed because of the human's attitude and behavior. Today many Christians agree with Martin Luther that the sin of mankind lies in the tendency to make oneself a god. Humans do not accept God being God; they prefer themselves to be God.⁸⁷ They want to rule the world; they want to judge other people. Luther has unfolded this insight in his protest against the letters of indulgence in 1517. Whoever buys or sells a letter of indulgence makes God a broker and thereby does not accept God being God. In 1520, Luther widens this argument:⁸⁸ Whoever insists on his own achievements before God, be they financial (indulgence) or moral (good deeds), wants to make a deal with God and by this does not trust in God's promise that all sins will be forgiven. However faith is simply this: trust in God. Following Luther, a Christian will not insure him- or herself with good deeds, because in this case he or she would not trust in God but rely on him- or herself. Precisely this self-centered disposition is what Luther calls the basic sin. This sinner does not accept God's promise but declares the standards of the Final Judgement on his own. By this he downgrades God to a broker and now wants to make a deal with God according to his own benchmarks.

Luther's understanding of sin has an important implication for the freedom of religion and its challenge for Christianity: To live in peace with God means not to insist on being the judge. Whoever trusts in God and his salvation must neither try to deal with him nor replace God's final judgements with his or her own assessments. Repentance implies climbing down from the judgement seat and faith implies trusting God sitting on the judgement seat.⁸⁹ Paul has already expressed a similar line of thought in his letter to the Romans:

87 Cf. Luther, Martin, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, 1517: "Man is by nature unable to want God to be God. Indeed, he himself wants to be God, and does not want God to be God." (LW 31, 10 = WA 1, 225, 1–2: „Der Mensch kann von Natur aus nicht wollen, dass Gott Gott ist; er möchte vielmehr, dass er Gott und Gott nicht Gott ist“).

88 Cf. Luther, Martin, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), ch. 11, LW 31, 350 = WA 7, 25.

89 Cf. Ricoeur, Paul, *Geschichte und Wahrheit*, München: Paul List, 1974, 35.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, said the Lord.
(Rom. 12:17–19)

Christians should behave as humans and not as if they were God. To accept God being God and oneself being human implies an undisturbed relationship between God and man, in which both have their own profile and none is overruled by the other. This attitude is accompanied by a self-relativization of Christian faith that has two facets. Firstly, God is the judge, neither the Christians nor the Church are. Final judgements are therefore not due to either of them. They shall proclaim the gospel including its warnings of false deities, but they must not make final decisions nor condemn humans because of their religion. Secondly, God is the merciful father who forgives sins. So Christians are depending on the grace of God as well, since they are also sinners. This insight rejects religious hubris and evokes humility instead.

Thus, the freedom of religion as a human right can be supported by Christians not only because they benefit from it (as a religion), but furthermore because all humans are created by God and depend on his grace. The Last Judgement will verify or falsify the Christian faith as well as all other religious beliefs. God will judge all humans and thereby reveal the right and wrong religions. This eschatological caveat does not revoke the truth-claims of Christian creeds, yet it insists to differ between a religious assertion and a human believer. Passing eternal judgement on humans is solely up to God; to accept, to criticize, or to oppose religious assertions falls into the responsibility of Churches and is limited to nonviolent means (*sine vi humana, sed verbo*). Finally, all of these measures promote peace, because they involve religions into the public discourses and prevent by this that a religion absolutizes her own insights.

3 Current Tasks Regarding Peace

For Christian faith peace with God as a consequence of our justification is the foundation for peace on earth. This peace with God was realized by Jesus the Christ, in whom God reconciled the world with himself, not imputing their trespasses to them (2Cor. 5:19). From now on, God and Christians will cooperate to realize peace on earth. This earthly peace is two-fold; negative peace denotes the absence of war and violence, positive peace comprises justice and righteousness among the people. In order to support the process of peace, Christian faith accepts the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force and does not

allow the religions to acquire this position. Likewise, the Christian tradition limits this use of force, for example with the just war theory. Furthermore, the Church is called to promote this peace process by proselytizing through peaceful means and engaging in society diaconally. Finally, all must accept freedom of religion as a human right.

It is not sufficient, however, solely to declare human rights; they must also be instilled and guaranteed. Since human rights belong to the *temporalia*, the secular government became more and more important as the authority to enforce these rights. During the religious wars in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, the state became the principal guarantor for negative peace. Especially Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) put all his hope in the absolute ruler as a mortal God (Leviathan). This ruler shall not only have the monopoly on the use of force, he shall furthermore also decide about the religious membership of his state and its citizens, because only this plenitude of power can, following Hobbes, prevent a “*bellum omnia contra omnes*” (a civil war all against all).⁹⁰ In order to limit or, if possible, to avoid religious wars, Hobbes strengthened the secular government and rejected religion. Other political philosophers followed him and declared that the *temporalia* should be treated as if there were no God (“*etsi Deus non daretur*”),⁹¹ instead referring to the rights and the laws of the state. Many Christians, therefore, emigrated from Europe to America, because their religious freedom was not guaranteed by the state’s laws.

Thus, the rule of law was a central means to achieve negative peace on earth, and it was bound to the state and his monopoly on the use of force. With this modification the cogency of the just war theory was affected, because it was now the state deciding whether to wage a war or not. The states developed into national states and their sovereignty was neither limited by nor bound to the Church or the religion. Each national state as a sovereign entity then has the right to conduct warfare. The strong points of this development were the containment of religious violence and the guarantee of the rule of law. The weak point was the absolute sovereignty of the national state that was neither bound to international institutions (as it will become in the 20th century through the United Nations) nor restricted by responsibility to the citizens (as it will become in the 21th century: the Responsibility to Protect). In summary, the state’s sovereignty

⁹⁰ Cf. Schotte, Dietrich, *Die Entmachtung Gottes durch den Leviathan. Thomas Hobbes über Religion*, Stuttgart: frommann-holzboog, 2013; Münkler, Herfried, *Thomas Hobbes. Eine Einführung*, Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2014.

⁹¹ Cf. Grotius, Hugo, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis. Libri tres* (1625), ed. By Walter Schätzel, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1950, 33; Luther, Martin, *Der 127. Psalm ausgelegt an die Christen zu Riga von 1524* (= WA 15, 373, 3).

ensures the rule of law and fosters negative peace, but it is also dangerous because of the plenitude of power.

Accordingly, peace on earth is still long in coming. Although Steven Pinker has suggested that violence was steadily declining during human history,⁹² it does not feel as if we are living in peaceful times. The Second World War and the constant threat of atomic warfare especially challenge Christian peace-ethics: Are atomic weapons, including the ability to destroy the entire planet, still to be categorized as a “sword,” and by this justified as just military means? Is the policy of deterrence aiming at negative peace? How should the so called new wars, mostly civil-wars, riots, and acts of terrorism be classified? Neither Christians nor the Churches are able to answer these questions extensively by themselves. Albeit, they should provide a framework or suggestions, based on peace with God and oriented towards contemporary challenges. Consequently, this chapter will deal with proposals of the Christian faith concerning peace on earth in the 21st century.

3.1 From the Political Perspective

“War is contrary to the will of God”⁹³ – with this ethical imperative the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 phrased an insight that the Peace Churches had already expressed, and that had become evident facing the world wars and their atrocities. Meanwhile, both of the major Churches in Germany followed this concept and have performed a paradigm shift, replacing the traditional term “just war” by the concept of “just peace.”⁹⁴ The Catholic German Bishops Conference as well as the Protestant Council of EKD have recently each published

92 Cf. Pinker, Steven, *The Better Angels of Our Nature. Why Violence Has Declined*, New York: The Viking Press, 2011.

93 Cf. World Council of Churches, *Just Peace Companion*, 2nd edition 2012, 15; in German: Bericht der Vierten Sektion der Gründungs-Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Amsterdam 1948; in: Kirche und Frieden. EKD Texte 3, Hannover (Kirchenkanzlei der EKD) 1982 155–162, 156: „Kriege sollen nach Gottes Willen nicht sein“. Cf. Garstecki, Joachim, “Ist noch drin, was draufsteht? Ökumenische Friedensethik und kirchliche Friedensarbeit im Spannungsfeld zwischen ziviler Konfliktbearbeitung, militärischem Interventionismus und öffentlicher Kriegsgewöhnung. Eine Problemanzeige,” in: Friedemann Stengel/ Jörg Ulrich (eds), *Kirche und Krieg. Ambivalenzen in der Theologie*, 213–231, Leipzig: EVA, 2015.

94 Cf. Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline, *Gerechter Friede. Das fortwährende Dilemma militärischer Gewalt*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2018.

a memorandum with “just peace” in the title.⁹⁵ This current conception of just peace lies in the line of sight of the assertion from 1948.⁹⁶ In further publications, the WCC has unfolded this assertion and has also taken up the term “just peace.”⁹⁷ The notion of just peace rejects the traditional nexus in Christianity between war and justice as is found in the just war theory. Conflicts and quarrels are from biblical viewpoint indeed a fact that can be described and should be evaluated ethically afterwards. Thus, not the conflicts but the means to solve them should be moral and can be criticized from an ethical point of view as well. However, this applies to conflicts, and not to wars, following the WCC. War is not an occasionally arising incident like any other conflict that can be evaluated ethically as just or unjust. Correspondingly, war is not merely the continuation of policy by other means.⁹⁸ War rather indicates a failure of politics, as the main assignment of politics is to take responsibility for peace, justice, order, and law.

Whereas the just war tradition accepted war as a political means and limited it with ethical criteria, the just peace conception repudiates the idea that war can be a legitimate act.⁹⁹ Only peace can be referred to as just, never war. At best, a war might be the lesser evil and therefore risked – but it is still an evil. At first this could sound like a mere controversy on words. Yet there is an underlying shift of paradigm: Political considerations shall be designed to start not from war but from peace. To achieve peace means to prepare peace – and

95 Cf. Die deutschen Bischöfe, *Gerechter Friede*, Bonn 2000; *Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen. Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007.

96 For the Catholic peace-ethics the papal encyclical “*pacem in terris*,” published in 1963 during Vaticanum II was a milestone; cf. Justenhoven, Heinz-Gerhard/O’Connell, Mary Ellen (eds), *Peace Through Law. Reflections on Pacem in Terris from Philosophy, Law, Theology, and Political Science*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016. For the Protestant traditions Dietrich Bonhoeffer was quite influential; cf. von Lüpke, Johannes, “Frieden im Kampf um Gerechtigkeit und Wahrheit. Dietrich Bonhoeffers Friedensethik,” in: Volker Stümke/ Matthias Gillner (eds), *Friedensethik im 20. Jahrhundert*, 13–28, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011.

97 Cf. World Council of Churches, *Just Peace Companion*, 2nd edition 2012. Cf. Raiser, Konrad, “Eine Ethik rechtserhaltender Gewalt im ökumenischen Diskurs. Zwischen gerechtem Krieg und Pazifismus,” in: Ines-Jacqueline Werkner/ Torsten Meireis (eds), *Rechtserhaltende Gewalt – eine ethische Verortung. Fragen zur Gewalt Band 2*, 95–115, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018.

98 Cf. von Clausewitz, Carl, *Vom Kriege* [1832], Neuausgabe, München: Ullstein, 2002, Erstes Buch, 1. Kapitel, Abschnitt 24, 44: „Krieg ist die bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln“.

99 Cf. Haspel, Michael, “Die „Theorie des gerechten Friedens“ als normative Theorie internationaler Beziehungen? Möglichkeiten und Grenzen,” in: Jean-Daniel Strub/Stefan Grotefeld (eds), *Der gerechte Friede zwischen Pazifismus und rechtem Krieg. Paradigmen der Friedensethik im Diskurs*, 209–225, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007.

not war: *si vis pacem, para pacem* – and not, as the old saying goes: *para bellum* (prepare the war).¹⁰⁰ In this context of “*para pacem*” (prepare peace), the international law, just policing, good governance, and international networking become very important. Hence, just peace corresponds to legal pacifism. Both refer the prohibition of force according to Art. 2 Par. 3f of the United Nation Charter:¹⁰¹ conflicts and disputes ought to be solved with peaceful means; an international legal framework is a very important means.

Para pacem – this imperative already implies the two main insights from the just peace paradigm: Firstly peace is a process of preparing peace and rejecting violence; it is neither a constant factor nor an unchangeable ideal. Secondly this peace process is complex and therefore depends on networking (in politics: comprehensive approach). This multifacetedness can be illustrated with the aims that the WCC has stated in 2012:

- for peace in the community – so that all may live free from fear (Mic. 4:4),
- for peace with the earth – so that life is sustained,
- for peace in the marketplace – so that all may live with dignity,
- for peace among the people – so that human life is protected.¹⁰²

These aims are linked to a peace-process in two perspectives. On the one hand the concept itself is evolving; analyzing “*para pacem*” implies discovering connections and achievements that can hamper or foster peace. Violence and force have likewise many facets that are partially interconnected; thus, new challenges can be detected. On the other hand these aims are signposts that will lead a certain way to promote peace. Yet, since people as well as communities live and change, these aims will never be realized in full. Thus, promoting, preserving, and renewing peace is a perpetual endeavor.¹⁰³

100 Cf. Senghaas, Dieter, “Frieden als Zivilisierungsprojekt,” 14. An earlier form of this concise formulation can be found in the 19th century liberalism: „si vis pacem, para libertatem et iustitiam“ – cf. Czempiel, Ernst-Otto, *Friedensstrategien. Eine systematische Darstellung außenpolitischer Theorien von Machiavelli bis Madariaga*, Opladen: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, ²1998, 165f.

101 Cf. UNC (1945) art. 2 par. 3f: “All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

102 Cf. World Council of Churches, *Just Peace Companion*, 2nd edition 2012, 9–13.

103 Cf. *Aus Gottes Frieden*, 2007, 11. – In the following passages I will outline the main insights from the current church papers dealing with just peace. As there are many consonances I will not refer to certain papers nor quote them directly.

The peace process is therefore connected with the conflict process. In both cases one can differ between prevention, intervention, and post-conflict peace building. Prevention does not imply prohibiting conflicts; quite the opposite, they can be helpful for individuals and for society to define their way of life or to set their priorities for themselves. Conflict should be prevented from turning violent. Education for peace, just conditions in society, equivalent opportunities in the market, and healthy environment will help reaching this goal. The Churches currently stress prevention as most important and they list many measures to foster prevention of conflict such as supporting the rule of law. A constitutional state with the separation of powers might be the best protection against new wars, especially in failing states. Yet the implications for the international system are debated:¹⁰⁴ When peace can be supported through law, do we need a world-state to establish and foster this law, although it might become tyrannical? Or is it better to merely install an international court, although it will be basically powerless, since the national states will not accept to be overruled by an alien organization? In any case, international organizations should be strengthened and human rights must be accepted worldwide. From the military perspective, the delivery of arms must be controlled, disarmament (not only of nuclear weapons) must make progress, and the privatization of violence must be stopped.

Before we turn to the issue of intervention into a violent conflict, some post-conflict remedies must be discussed. Since the rule of law is one of the most important aims, the stability of the state must be promoted to build up peace. At the same time, atrocities and injustice must be dredged up, and this is a painful and stressful process, because there are two aims that are both important but cannot be reached together. On the one hand, people want to know the truth, for example they want to know who violated the rights of their relatives. On the other hand, they want justice and atonement. Thus, the perpetrators are afraid to reveal the truth because of the legal consequences. Accordingly, the jurisdiction decrees that no one can be forced to incriminate oneself. A truth commission and the possibility of forgiveness should therefore be combined.¹⁰⁵ And it should be placed in the local governments so that victims and perpetrators can narrate their experiences and together find a solution to reconciliation. However, this procedure must be limited; otherwise the state's monopoly on legislation and jurisdiction will be weakened.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Justenhoven/O'Connell, *Peace Through Law*, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla, *A Human Being Died That Night. A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid*, London: Granta Books, 2006.

The most defying point in the conflict process is reached when conflicts turn violent. In this case the peace process shall concentrate on protection and mediation. Whereas Churches and faith-based actors have been especially helpful in mediating (see below in the following subsection), politics is mainly responsible for the protection of the people. More precisely, two aspects are debated in the current Church papers. On the one hand the concept of “responsibility to protect” (R2P), developed by an international commission sponsored by the Canadian Government (ICISS) in 2001, caused a shift in international law: Not the interests of the (national) state, but the concerns of the people are crucial for the legacy of the government.¹⁰⁶ The government must protect its people. “Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”¹⁰⁷ If it cannot or will not fulfill this duty, the international community may intervene with civil and military means up to a humanitarian intervention as the last resort (*ultima ratio*). This political commitment picks up the vote of the Church to protect the vulnerable, especially women and children, albeit with the possibility to use military means and thereby stuck in the cycle of violence.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Christians are split in their attitude towards R2P.

On the other hand, the debates carry on between the two major peace traditions relating to the use of military force – as can be seen in the reactions to R2P. With the concept of just peace, the two major Churches in Germany have taken up the insights from the Peace Churches that war cannot be a just means. The Churches, following Jesus Christ, are bound to peace and shall therefore foster civil activities. However, in an armed conflict the vulnerable must be protected, if necessary with police and military means. At this point, the queries start with two questions: Is the state justified in using armed force? And are Christians allowed to support the state, for example as soldiers? These topics are still highly controversial among Christians and in the Churches.¹⁰⁹ The concept of just peace in the major Churches results in a legal pacifism, which implies that the use of force cannot be ruled out in any case, but must be restricted rigorously; whereas

106 Cf. Evans, Gareth, *The Responsibility to Protect. Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2009; Verlage, Christopher, *Responsibility to Protect. Ein neuer Ansatz im Völkerrecht zur Verhinderung von Völkermord, Kriegsverbrechen und Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009.

107 Cf. The United Nations General Assembly, *World Summit Outcome Document* 2005, 138.

108 Cf. Busche, Hubertus/Schubbe, Daniel (eds), *Die Humanitäre Intervention in der ethischen Beurteilung*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2013.

109 Cf. Enns, Fernando/Weiße, Wolfram (eds), *Gewaltfreiheit und Gewalt in den Religionen. Politische und theologische Herausforderungen*, Münster: Waxmann, 2016.

the Peace Churches cling to an absolute pacifism including the possibility for Christians to suffer as Jesus did. In order to settle this quarrel, the Churches stress again the processual character of peace, implying that they are all on their way to peace, but starting from different points and taking varying routes.

With this reference to the process of peace, the divergences can be explained and tolerated whereas the commonalities are stressed. For example, in 2007 the EKD has modified its position regarding nuclear weapons.¹¹⁰ Having experienced the atrocities of the atom bombs in the Second World War (Hiroshima, Nagasaki), the Protestant Churches have since condemned the use of nuclear weapons. However, in the “Heidelberger Thesen” (1959), the tolerance of ownership of these weapons, including the threat to use them (deterrence) was accepted as a Christian behavior at that instant (“noch”).¹¹¹ Nearly fifty years later (2007), the EKD stated that threatening with nuclear weapons can no longer be seen as a means of legitimate self-defense. This enlarged commonality with the Peace Churches created albeit another controversy: How should the government deal with those nuclear weapons that are already there? Is a nuclear disarmament required, certainly step by step, or must they be kept to hinder a new rat-race to earn these weapons, since the knowledge to build such bombs can never be extinguished?

This example illustrates the strong points of speaking of a peace-process: it allows modifications and facilitates tolerance. Nevertheless, there is also a weak point: A process may have different starting points, but it has one end. From this point of view, the different positions can be measured and compared. Such a ranking is dangerous though, because it upgrades the one and downgrades the other. In order to avoid this danger the second insight from “*para pacem*,” the complexity, should be spelled out as a practice in discourse.

110 Cf. Stümke, Volker, “Der Streit um die Atombewaffnung im deutschen Protestantismus,” in: Volker Stümke/Matthias Gillner (eds), *Friedensethik im 20. Jahrhundert*, 49–69, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011; Möller, Ulrich, *Im Prozeß des Bekennens. Brennpunkte der kirchlichen Atomwaffendiskussion im deutschen Protestantismus 195–1962*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999.

111 Schockenhoff, Eberhard, *Kein Ende der Gewalt? Friedensethik für eine globalisierte Welt*, Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 2018, 379f explains that and how this „noch“ modified it’s meaning. In the 1950th three interpretations were at hand; firstly a factual reading (as a political compromise), secondly a psychological reading (as a personal acceptance of fear) and thirdly a temporal reading (as a time limit). Forty years later, this temporal meaning dominated and demanded the politics to start with disarmament talks.

3.2 From the Social Perspective

What should be done? The list of necessary or at least useful measures to achieve and preserve peace is long. In the state, a good government is needed, whereas corruption and nepotism are dangerous. The rule of law must be established and furthermore the laws should be just. In the market allocation should be performed in a fair way so that no one will have to starve. Children should be educated and should go to school. Man and woman must be treated equally. People must have the ability to participate in the political decision-making process and their human rights must be accepted and protected. Furthermore, they must be enabled and have the chance to lead a good and self-determined life. The environment must not be overcharged so that future generations can also live peacefully and without fear or need on this earth.

The main problems of this list are at hand. For a start, it is very abstract and does not entail concrete steps. Yet it is the process of developing concrete steps, and not the principles, where controversies begin. Furthermore, not all aims can be pursued at the same time with the same emphasis. Thus the problem of how to rank these aims arises. Finally, some of these aims do not suit each other well. Nevertheless, the aims themselves sound convincing. Consequently, the implementation process is decisive. The Churches could declare these aims in a know-it-all manner, by this mixing up their regiment in *spiritualia* and its duties with God and forgetting about the self-relativization they should have learned (as explained in the preceding section). Besides, it is of course not a peaceful behavior to act as guardian for the fellow citizens.

The better decision for the Churches would be to practice discourse. No less a figure than Pope Benedict XVI has advised the Church to engage in discourse, mainly with philosophy.¹¹² A critical dialogue of the Christian faith with philosophy is supportive for both sides.¹¹³ On the one hand, the philosophy may learn that metaphysics is still a topic area for reason when it is confronted with Christians who can explain what and why they believe. On the other hand, Christians and the Churches may become more wary of turning

112 Vgl. Benedikt XVI., „Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen,” in: Christoph Dohmen (ed.), *Die „Regensburger Vorlesung“ Papst Benedikts XVI. im Dialog der Wissenschaften*, Regensburg: 15–26, Pustet, 2007, and id., „Ansprache seiner Heiligkeit Papst Benedikt XVI. im Deutschen Bundestag,” in: Georg Essen (ed.), *Verfassung ohne Grund? Die Rede des Papstes im Bundestag*, 17–26, Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 2012.

113 Ratzinger, Joseph, „Was die Welt zusammenhält. Vorphilosophische moralische Grundlagen eines freiheitlichen Staates,” in: Jürgen Habermas/Joseph Ratzinger (eds), *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion*, 39–60, Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 2005.

into fundamentalists. Fundamentalists tend to lock themselves into their belief-system and regard all others as outsiders and enemies. Yet challenged through the critical questions of philosophy, they cannot hide in their pious shells but must justify themselves and their confessions – or modify them when the philosophical annotations are compelling. This papal approach to connect faith and reason promotes the social engagement of the Churches to achieve and preserve peace as well. Instead of “knowing it all” from a pretended transcendent point of view, Churches can connect with other social institutions. And this connection is not a silent coexistence, but cooperation founded on discourse.

In supporting the peace process the Churches have a particular task not above, but beside the other contributors: According to Jesus Christ, the Church itself shall be a sign of peace and reconciliation or, as the German Bishops more precisely and provocative stated: a sacrament of peace.¹¹⁴ The Churches shall point with their existence beyond themselves to the reconciliation with and through God. In their preaching and in the liturgy, in their own repentance and in the willingness to forgive, in their engagement for the poor and needy (as advocates for justice) and in political counselling, and last, but not least in their own dependence on God’s forgiveness, the Churches proclaim and express peace with God becoming reality on earth. For this reason, the Churches must not use violent means themselves. Hence, Christians shall engage in social ministry for the good of humanity: By doing so they begin to implement the required justice in society; for example, they commit themselves globally to fair trade and locally to emergency relief. Whilst Christians and Churches shall take further steps towards peace, neither may undertake God’s task: salvation. Christians and Churches are thereby protected against the risks to overburden their options for action, and from self-deification. This protective limitation will increase their placidity and their peace-ability, because it refers them to their place and tasks.

3.3 From the Personal Perspective

Not only the Churches, but also the Christians are called to support the peace process. A brief look to the role of faith-based actors in armed conflict shall illustrate this specific challenge. The political scientist Markus A. Weingardt, mostly engaged in peace and conflict studies, has examined how religions, and especially their followers (he speaks of faith-based actors), have been catalysts to

¹¹⁴ Cf. Die deutschen Bischöfe, *Gerechter Friede*, Bonn, 2000, 89.

the peace-progress in various conflicts worldwide.¹¹⁵ According to Weingardt, these local actors are very successful for three reasons: Firstly, they are emotionally involved in the conflict, since they love the country and its people. Secondly, they are trustworthy, because their aim to achieve peace is not tarnished by their own economic or political interests; it is rather based on their faith and concentrated on ending the conflict. Thirdly, they are thought to be capable of achieving peace, since they do not belong to one of the parties of the dispute. Altogether, the faith-based actors have a credit of trust. This applies to Christians and Church representatives as well. They must use this credit by engaging in the peace-process.

Furthermore, peace education is an important means, and education is primarily located within the family. The WCC publication from 2012 defines education as “a profoundly spiritual formation of character that happens over a long period of time.” This is, according to the WCC, a “holistic process of character formation,” and the “everyday life practise” that shall be influenced “from the very beginning” – by parents, Christian teachers as well as the Churches. “That involves introspection of all members of the Church, into how their choices, their actions and their lifestyles do or do not make them servants of peace.”¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, this goes too far. Christian educators tend to completely engulf the child and thereby damage the freedom of religion. Furthermore, this holistic approach tries to do the work of the Holy Spirit. Peace education is indeed important and should be practiced not only in word but also in deed and cogent behavior. Yet it must know its own limitations, otherwise peace education would spread itself too thin and would tend to a self-deification.

3.4 From the Religious Perspective

Christianity as a religion can foster peace but it can also become evil and support religious wars. Charles Kimball listed five features that indicate “when

¹¹⁵ Cf. Weingardt, Markus, *Religion Macht Frieden. Das Friedenspotential von Religionen in politischen Gewaltkonflikten*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007; id., *Was Frieden schafft. Religiöse Friedensarbeit. Akteure, Beispiele, Methoden*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014.

¹¹⁶ World Council of Churches, *Just Peace Companion*, 2nd edition 2012, 113–115.

religion becomes evil.”¹¹⁷ Though Kimball has scrutinized the three monotheistic religions, I will concentrate now on Christianity:

1. The first danger of religion is its aspiration to claim absolute truth, since this aspiration may easily lead to intolerance, and intolerance becomes dangerous when not only arguments and truth-claiming statements are attacked, but humans are affected as well. Letting this argument play out, to be intolerant against the content of an argument is not half as dangerous as the intolerance against humans. Christian faith guard against this danger and should be clear in its mind time and time again, that God is the judge and that God will vouch for the eternal truth. Christians proclaim the Triune God, but he alone can and will prove that he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The second danger lies in faith itself. Faith bound to God excessively can lead to blind obedience. Such Christians isolate themselves and condemn others, first inside the group, then expand to others in other constellations. To prevent this danger, debates with other religions, with philosophy, humanities, and sciences are vital for Christianity.
3. Kimball calls the third danger the “establishing of the ideal time.” Those who are convinced that the end is near will not deal with the secular world and its daily challenges. In this case, Luther’s legitimization of the secular government and his call for Christians to support the state’s work with their professions can help to cool down religiously overheated minds.
4. The fourth danger is the hubris of the Church and the faith. He or she who is determined to have the right and last word wants to dominate others and is not willing to look for balance and compromise. Hopefully, such a Christian will remember that he or she is not God, but a sinner depending on God’s forgiveness just like any other.
5. Finally, the fifth danger in Kimball’s list is the identification of religion and nation. One who adores the government and its politicians and who swears absolute loyalty to the temporal rulers is as dangerous as those who want to build a religious state where everyone has to obey the religious leader. Both should consider that, according to Luther, God has ordained two regiments.

Christianity must be aware that biblical and religious sources, and furthermore even the confessions and convictions of the Christian faith, carry peaceful messages, but also some precarious contents that are open to violence. The Christian

¹¹⁷ Cf. Kimball, Charles, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, New York, Harper, 2002; id., *When Religion becomes lethal The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

faith is not simply exploited by bellicose politicians or war-lords, it has perilous resources.¹¹⁸ There are two ways to handle this danger. On the one hand, one can limit the political influence of religion.¹¹⁹ For Christianity, this implies accepting the self-relativizations (the Church is neither God's proxy nor the temporal regime) and the duties (to proclaim the gospel with words and without violence). On the other hand, one can start a relecture of the precarious texts and analyze the perilous interpretations.¹²⁰ By this one can come into dialogue with radical, (i.e. fundamentalist) Christians, because both parties refer to the same sources.

Furthermore, facing these possible perils, all religions should be interested in initiating a world-wide cooperation concerning peace ethic. Especially, in our times of pluralism and globalization, such attempts of understanding among the religions have become urgent. Hence, Hans Küng started the "Projekt Weltethos" in 1990 with three premises:

- No peace among the nations is possible without peace among the religions.
- No peace among the religions is possible without dialogue between the religions.
- No dialogue between the religions is possible without basic research in one's own religion.¹²¹

In 1993, a Parliament of the World's Religions signed a declaration based on the Golden Rule: "What you wish done to yourself, do to others" (Matt. 7:12).¹²² Thus, the religions have found moral values and principles that all can share, although the derivation and the concrete wording might differ. As a result, these shared moral insights are open for divergent reasonings. This interreligious dialogue can foster understanding, tolerance and acceptance between the religions. Its focus is acquiring peace on earth through ethics and puts the definition of God and the associated truth-claims in the rear. The eschatological caveat that God will be the judge and will bring eternal peace is therefore

118 Cf. Assmann, Jan, *Totale Religion. Ursprünge und Formen puritanischer Verschärfung*, Wien: Picus, 2016.

119 Cf. Svensson, Isak, *Ending Holy Wars. Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars*, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2012.

120 Cf. Kippenberg, Hans G., *Gewalt als Gottesdienst. Religionskriege im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*, München: C.H. Beck, 2008.

121 Cf. Küng, Hans, *Projekt Weltethos*, München: Piper, 1990; id., *Handbuch Weltethos. Eine Vision und ihre Umsetzung*, München: Piper, 2012; Frühbauer, Johannes F., "Das Projekt Weltethos," in: Ines-Jacqueline Werkner/Klaus Ebeling (eds), *Handbuch Friedensethik*, 915–924, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017.

122 **Matt. 7:12**: "Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them."

steadily valid. And correspondingly, humility is still indispensable in achieving peace on earth.

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