

Johannes Lähnemann

Interreligious Learning and Peace Education.

A History of Religions for Peace



Miguel Angel Moratinos, UN High Commissioner of the Alliance of Civilizations, addresses delegates in front of the Ring for Peace at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, 2019.

“All faith traditions are interconnected, complementary and support the same values, which can be considered universal values and which unite one humanity, many cultures and many religions.”

Pre-Print Oxford, 10 February 2024
on the occasion of the Peace and Interfaith Education -
Annual Johannes Lähnemann Lecture 2024



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK



The Official UN Observance in the 1st Week of February

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Preface

The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) movement has existed since 1970, since the 1990s under the name *Religions for Peace (RfP)*. It is the world's largest and most representative coalition of religions on peace issues. What has this movement been able to contribute to interreligious understanding and peace-building in more than 50 years? Fundamental is the conviction that people, despite the diversity of their religious traditions, are united in the search for peace. In the beginning, the focus was on concrete conflicts, especially the Cold War and the nuclear threat. Soon, however, the spectrum was broadened: How can we succeed in arriving at a positive concept of peace that involves more than the absence of war? How are peace and justice connected? How are peace and the preservation of the foundations of life interdependent? What can religions contribute to respect for human rights? What values should guide cooperation? And what role do learning, upbringing and education play in this? Only if young people have respect for their fellow human beings and feel responsibility for everything that lives and exists, if they are sensitive to hatred, violence and developments that are hostile to life and the community, will they be equipped to live together in a way that opens up a future for our planet.

Accordingly, the task of interreligious education and peace education has become increasingly important for the work of *Religions for Peace*: at the World Assemblies of Religions for Peace, in individual projects in many countries such as the Nuremberg Forums on Cultural Encounters and especially through the Peace Education Standing Commission, of which I was Chairman. Since the 1990s, this commission has documented inter-religious peace education projects and encouraged exchange between them. Since the RfP World Assembly in Lindau in 2019, it has been continued by the Standing Commission Interreligious Education.

The impetus for this publication was an online lecture I gave for the Oxford Interfaith Forum in January 2023 - entitled "No Peace among Nations and Religions without Interreligious Learning and Peace Education". It had a wide international and inter-faith audience. The book that grew out of it is intended to make the history of interreligious learning and peace education at *Religions for Peace* visible and provide impetus for future work in this field. It is the second publication of the Standing Commission on Interreligious Learning. The first publication "Faithful Peace. Why the journey to resilience is multi-religious" was published in 2022 and met with a broad response. In it, the members of the Commission developed their religious and spiritual motivations for their interreligious engagement.

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Norbert Klaes (Würzburg) and Dr. Günther Gebhardt (Tübingen), who are among the pioneers of interreligious peace work, for their portrayal of the first decades of WCRP. This work is then closely linked to the Chair of

Religious Education and Didactics of Protestant Religious Education at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, which I held from 1981-2007. Dr. Werner Haußmann supported the work there from the very beginning. My successor in the chair, Prof. Dr. Manfred Pirner, has continued the Nuremberg Forums on Cultural Encounter with me since 2010 and strengthened their international appeal.

I am especially grateful to Prof. Dr. Azza Karam, UN Advisor on Religion and Development and former Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, as well as to Deepika Singh as Deputy General Secretary of *RfP* and Dr. Karen Hernandez as Program Director and Executive Director of the Standing Commission Interreligious Education, for encouraging me to write this book.

Dr. Thea Gomelaury, Director of the Oxford Interfaith Forum, and Dr. Reinhard Krauss, Executive Director of the Academy for Jewish, Christian and Islamic Studies, Los Angeles, have been particularly committed to this project. Reinhard Krauss also supervised the development of the manuscript and proofread it together with Dr. Vanessa R. de Obaldía (Oxford Interfaith Forum) and Mr. Timothy Powell (Oxford). My daughter Prof. Henrike Lähnemann (Oxford) offered advice on the work at all stages and prepared its publication.

My sincere thanks go to all of them!

Oxford, 10 February 2024
Johannes Lähnemann

1. A Provocative Thesis - A Fundamental Insight of Interreligious Work for Peace

“No peace among nations and religions without interreligious learning and peace education!” Is this thesis not exaggerated? Can interreligious learning and peace education be trusted to contribute decisively to peace among nations and religions? Could other areas of learning not make an identical claim? “No peace without political, ecological, economic, social and cultural learning!”

It must be conceded that all these areas of learning do have their own justification. However, what is to be asserted and justified here is the thesis that the way in which religions and cultures encounter each other, and what can happen in terms of learning during the process, both form an important building block for a society which not only needs visions of peace, but also actually to embark on and practice pathways that contribute to their realization. Interreligious encounters take place in political, ecological, social and cultural contexts that are mutually interdependent. In this context, interreligious learning and peace education has a unique and indispensable contribution to make.

What practical experiences already exist in this area? Which learning pathways, but also which problems and obstacles, have emerged? The author would like to trace these pathways which, by now, have taken shape over several decades, and intends to describe what has been designed, ventured, and discovered in the process, what forms of resistance have been encountered and which tasks for the future have crystallized. The international movement *Religions for Peace* (formerly called *World Conference on Religion and Peace*) is an example in which developments and problems are reflected as in a burning glass. Its history, which now spans more than 50 years, is intended to serve as a guideline that provides an illustrative example to open up this field of work. It becomes clear that religious communities have the potential to prevent conflicts, to mediate in conflicts and to work for reconciliation after conflicts. However, examples of the opposite also unfortunately exist: namely, that religious communities themselves can be a factor in conflicts, that they add fuel to the fire when they religiously reinforce the ideology of the driving forces behind conflicts.

A few highlights from developments since 1970 - the year in which the first World Conference on Religion and Peace was held in Kyoto - can illustrate this.

The Cold War, the sharp confrontation between the Eastern bloc and the West, and the nuclear threat were all initially dominant. The immigration of guest workers dominated the domestic political debate in Germany, but also increasingly international debate. The Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) was greeted with astonishment, but its global political impact was clearly underestimated. In the economy, global

structures developed ever more strongly. The digital revolution was on the horizon. The political “turnaround” in the GDR and the Warsaw Pact states in 1989 came unexpectedly; the stark antagonism between the Eastern and Western blocs seemed to have ended. However, the war in the former Yugoslavia soon showed that the variables of nation and religion had by no means been overcome. The U.S. political scientist Samuel Huntington introduced the thesis of the “Clash of Civilizations” into the political debate, postulating that the conflicts of the 21st century would be unleashed in clashes between cultural regions. Hans Küng’s project *Global Ethic* (1990/93) represented a counter-proposal to this. The new millennium quickly showed a double face: The year 2001 had been proclaimed as the year of “Dialogue among Civilizations” by the United Nations - and exactly that year, the devastating attacks on September 11 on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington occurred. This double face has continued in the first two decades of the 21st century, with extremism and terrorism emerging as challenges for the international community in different parts of the world. Economic decline and climate change have caused large-scale movements, along with regional conflicts. Leading politicians in a number of countries are trying to secure their power base. Even in democratically “functioning” countries, nationalist-populist movements - often with a religious component as well - have been successful in stirring up public opinion and stoking fears, which promote national egotism and demarcations against everything “foreign”. On the other hand, civic forces have strengthened and often work together globally. There has been an increase in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in conflict prevention, conflict de-escalation and post-conflict reconciliation. In particular, society’s struggle to find appropriate ways forward in the face of climate change has given rise, in various regions of the world, to grassroots movements in opposition to economic lobbying that can no longer be ignored throughout the political field. Since 2018, the “Fridays for Future” movement has made visible the full drama of eco-systems on the brink. In 2020, the Corona pandemic challenged all seemingly familiar certainties. Then, with Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the specter of war returned to the center of Europe, with all its horrors, deaths, hatred, and economic decline, with global consequences. The ideology of the “Russian world”, which has been supported by the Russian Orthodox Church and has almost been elevated to an eschatological mission of struggle, shows a distorted picture of the Christian message. The public has only marginally noticed that Orthodox theologians around the world radically condemn this ideology on the basis of the Christian faith, as did the Barmen Theological Declaration of the German Protestant churches against Nazi ideology in 1934.¹

¹ English version published on 13 March 2022 at <https://publicorthodoxy.org/> as ‘A Declaration on the “Russian World” Teaching,’ also known as the ‘Volos Declaration.’

However, the fact that such declarations do exist at all is an example of a learning process that transcends traditional denominational boundaries. And in contrast to all the stagnation and relapse into disconnected world views - with all its disastrous consequences for life and survival - a history of the development of consciousness can also be written, which, always related to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has manifested itself in humanist movements and also especially in inter-religious cooperation. Examples of this are the overtures towards other denominations and religions at the Second Vatican Council, the dialogue program of the World Council of Churches, the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, the Global Ethic Project, *Religions for Peace* and, parallel to them, the Parliament of the World's Religions (since 1993). The fact that the global and the local are intertwined becomes visible again and again in the work on the ground: Each of the faith communities working in our Nuremberg Group of *Religions for Peace* knows of sisters and brothers in faith who are in distress in other countries because of their religious convictions, and interreligious aid projects are based on interreligious cooperation "on the ground."

The introductory theses of Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project - "No peace among nations without peace among religions" - "No peace among religions without dialogue among religions" - "No dialogue among religions without basic work in religions" - have their relevance locally as well as nationally, internationally, and globally. Moreover, it is clear that learning, that education and training are a basic condition for coming closer to the goals contained in these theses. Therefore: "No peace, no dialogue, and no foundational work without interfaith education and peace education!"

The path that has enabled the author to do this work is itself a multifaceted learning path: from socialization in a Protestant Lutheran pastorate, through theological studies in four places in Germany and Austria, a doctorate in biblical theology, a habilitation on the topic of "Non-Christian Religions in the Classroom," to scholarly and practical work in the field of encounters and dialogue among religions and the corresponding educational work.

Locally, this has resulted in the foundation and leadership of the Nuremberg Group of Religions for Peace; academically, in the work at the Nuremberg Forums on an Education for Cultural Encounter; nationally, in the cooperation of the German groups of *Religions for Peace* and the deputy chairmanship of the Round Table of Religions in Germany; internationally, in the participation in the World Assemblies and European Assemblies of *Religions for Peace (RfP)*, and above all, in the establishment and leadership of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of *RfP*.



Ill. 1 Representatives of the Round Table of Religions in Germany at the “Day of Religions” in the City of Kassel 2012: Bishop Martin Hein of Kassel, Chairman Franz Brendle, Mayor of Kassel Bertram Hilgen, Rabbi Henry Brandt, Deputy Bishop Hans-Jochen Jaschke, Nicola Towfigh of the Baha’i-Community Germany (f.l.t.r)

This path was only possible through a constantly expanding circle of “co-learners,” of friends from the various religions and cultures on every continent. They are largely figures who are pioneers in their respective communities, who want to discover, think through and put into practice that which is new and unifying.

As a basis and as sources for his description of the development of interreligious learning and peace education in the work of WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace), and later RfP (*Religions for Peace*), the author uses the accounts of Homer A. Jack, the first Secretary General of WCRP: *WCRP: A History of the World Conference on Religion and Peace*,² and Günther Gebhardt, the then Secretary General of WCRP Europe: *Zum Frieden bewegen. Friedenserziehung in religiösen Friedensbewegungen. (Moving to Peace. Peace Education in religious Peace*

² H.A. Jack: *WCRP: A History of the World Conference on Religion and Peace*. New York 1993. Martin Affolderbach provides a comprehensive overview of the developments of WCRP/RfP in Europe and globally up to the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 in his book: *The Benefit of Inter-religious Co-operation. Examples of European and global transformation processes*. Bamberg 2020.

Movements)³ For the period that followed, the series of theses and declarations on peace education at the subsequent World Assemblies offer a guide. Similarly, the publications of the Peace Education Standing Commission of RfP and the work of the “Nuremberg Forums of an Education for Cultural Encounter” whose 12 volumes from 1983-2019 are summarized in the author’s book *Interreligiöse Verständigung und Bildung 1980-2020* (Interreligious Understanding and Education 1980-2020).⁴

³ G. Gebhardt: Zum Frieden bewegen. Friedenserziehung in religiösen Friedensbewegungen. Hamburg 1994. = Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 11.

⁴ J. Lähnemann: *Interreligiöse Verständigung und Bildung 1980-2020. Eine Bilanz im Spiegel der Nürnberger Foren zur Kulturbegegnung*. Berlin 2021.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 34.

2. From Kyoto (1970) to Nairobi (1984). Interreligious Peacebuilding in the Face of Cold War and Nuclear Threats

Homer Jack's History of the World Conference on Religion and Peace is dedicated to seven individuals: Dana McLean Greeley and Maurice Eisendraht from the United States, Nikkyo Niwano and Toshio Miyake from Japan, Angelo Fernandez and R.R. Diwakar from India, and Maria A. Lücker from the Federal Republic of Germany. They built and led WCRP together with Homer Jack. They represent the beginnings of this interreligious movement - as representative figures from their religious communities, as citizens of their respective countries, and against the backdrop of the experiences that shaped them: Homer Jack and Dana McLean Greeley as Unitarian ministers, Maurice Eisendraht as a Jewish rabbi, Nikkyo Niwano as founder and leader of the lay Buddhist movement Rissho Kosei Kai, Toshio Miyake as president of a Shinto reform congregation, Angelo Fernandez as Roman Catholic Archbishop of New Delhi, RR. Diwakar as a student and former associate of Mahatma Gandhi, and Maria Lücker as President of the Roman Catholic Academic Foreign Service of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany and head of the Secretariat of Lay Auditors during Vatican II. What turned them into peace activists were their experiences of World War II, the war of extermination waged by Nazi Germany, especially in Eastern Europe, the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor, and, finally, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The message of peace in their respective religious traditions brought them together, even in the face of the lingering nuclear threat and the Vietnam War taking place at the time. They met, held their first conferences, and pursued the idea of enlisting religious leaders to work together for peace. At a meeting of the "Interim Advisory Committee" formed in Istanbul in 1968, the decision was made in February 1969 to extend an invitation to a world conference in Kyoto in 1970.

There, 300 representatives of religions from many parts of the world met for the first time. From the beginning, the principles included respect for diversity of religions, which, they stated, should not be artificially united. However, the conviction that religious communities can be united in their diversity and in the search for peace was, and still is, formative. The guiding principle of the movement was based on what had been formulated in an interreligious declaration at this world assembly:

"We found that we share:

- A conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family, and the equality and dignity of all human beings;
- A sense of the sacredness of the individual person and his conscience;
- A realization that might is not right; that human power is not self-sufficient and absolute;

- A belief that love, compassion, selflessness, and the force of inner truthfulness and of the spirit have ultimately greater power than hate, enmity, and self-interest;
- A sense of obligation to stand on the side of the poor and the oppressed as against the rich and the oppressors; and
- A profound hope that good will finally prevail.”⁵

The participants of the World Assembly see it as “men and women of religion to be servants of peace with heart and mind. They confess “in humility and penitence that we have very often betrayed our religious ideals and our commitment to peace.”⁶ The commitment to disarmament is named as a particularly pressing and necessary task, but development and human rights are also addressed.

Peace education as a separate topic formed only a 1½-hour panel. Günther Gebhardt states: “The report of this panel reflects the uncertainty of the first common steps. Should peace education lead primarily to the adoption of certain moral values; should it be subdivided into individual aspects according to location and addressees and proceed from different approaches; should it mean lifelong education; and what kind of infrastructure (educational institutions) would be necessary for this?” However, he can at least name some core ideas and suggestions that emerge. These include the search for universally accepted ethical values, the task of helping to ensure that prejudice and hatred toward other peoples, cultures, and religions disappear from curricula and textbooks, and the recognition that individual peacefulness and social commitment to peace must go hand in hand. Cooperation with UNESCO on these issues is encouraged.⁷ In the Kyoto Final Declaration, however, peace education still appears heavily limited to an understanding of peace education as disarmament education.

While it was not initially certain that this first World Assembly would result in continued cooperation among religious communities, in the years that followed, momentum developed which led to WCRP’s accreditation as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the United Nations in New York in 1973. A small office for the General Secretariat was set up directly across the street from the UN headquarters. This was only possible through the tireless idealistic efforts of WCRP’s founding figures who promoted the importance of interfaith cooperation in the various countries and among their respective religious communities. Except in Japan, where WCRP was constituted as an institution dedicated to “ecumenism of religions,” and the fact that the respective religious communities soon also began to make considerable

⁵ Jack, *History* (1993) 438.

⁶ Jack, *History* (1993) 438.

⁷ Gebhardt, *Friedenserziehung* (1994) 104.

financial contributions on an ongoing basis, with corresponding full-time staff, it has always required great effort to develop the financial basis for international work. The predominantly voluntary work at WCRP/RfP is, on the one hand, admirable in that it is voluntary and has no large power base. However, it also frequently makes professional work difficult. Nevertheless: “national chapters” were formed on the different continents and in more and more countries. In Germany, a number of figures had already joined WCRP, mostly recruited by Maria A. Lücker, among them Norbert Klaes, Professor of Religious Studies in Würzburg, and - as already mentioned - Günther Gebhardt, who acted as long-time General Secretary of the movement in Europe.

For the 2nd World Assembly in Leuven/Belgium in 1974, Maria Lücker had published a preparatory volume “Religions - Peace - Human Rights” in which all important contributions of the first World Assembly in Kyoto were gathered.⁸ During the Cold War, it was difficult to name concrete human rights violations directly in the declarations, especially for the participants from the socialist states who had to fear reprisals in their home countries if the accusations were too concrete.

At each world assembly, new areas have come into view to which work for peace by religions is relevant. In Leuven, one year after the 1973 oil crisis, the new issue was the environment. Religious communities are called to embrace a mindset of world citizenship and solidarity with fellow human beings.

One of the six panel discussion groups in Leuven dealt with the topic of “The Roles of Religion in Educating for Peace”. Here, the role and possibilities of religions-for-peace education were considered in a more differentiated and systematic way than in Kyoto.⁹ The report of this group focuses on the responsibilities and tasks of educators. Richard Friedli, professor of religious studies at the University of Fribourg/Switzerland, had introduced the three pedagogical steps of teaching, education, and upbringing. This involves talking about the causes of discord (peace teaching), the values underlying education (peace education), and methods of active peace education. In looking at the causes of strife, educators should draw attention to major causes and areas of strife in the world. Emphasized as a basic value is the acknowledgement of the “unique mystery in each individual.” What is important is a holistic education. It includes responsibility for humanity as a whole and emphasis on commonalities, respect for the otherness of others, pluralism as mutual

⁸ M.A. Lücker (ed.): *Religionen - Frieden - Menschenrechte*. Wuppertal 1971.

⁹ Here presented according to Gebhardt, *Friedenserziehung* (1994) 105f. Cf. also G. Gebhardt: *Die Weltkonferenz der Religionen für den Frieden (WCRP) - Struktur und Wirkungsmöglichkeiten im pädagogischen Feld*. In J. Lähnemann: *Weltreligionen und Friedenserziehung. Wege zur Toleranz. Referate und Ergebnisse des Nürnberger Forums 1988*. Hamburg 1989. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 7, 360-372, 362ff.

enrichment, harmony with the natural environment, and the development of mechanisms for conflict resolution based on a positive understanding of conflict resolution. Educators should - in the sense of a model pedagogy - themselves be exemplary in their willingness to reconcile. Among methods of active peace education, the area of education for interreligious understanding is especially emphasized and a “Copernican revolution” is called for. It consists in recognizing the unconditional intrinsic value of each religion and educating accordingly, especially in religious institutions. This includes, among other things, a revision of teaching materials to correct false and inaccurate statements about other religions.

In the final declaration of the World Assembly, the mandate for peace education appears only in one sentence addressed to the religious communities: “In their own internal life, we urge that religious communities encourage all those who bear educational responsibilities to include in the spiritual and moral education of youth an important place for the imperative of peace and the means to attain it.” The problem that the area of education is only marginally included in the final declarations also occurs several times in the later world assemblies. Usually, nobody in the committees responsible for drafting the declarations had direct experience of educational work both practically and theoretically.

The 3rd World Assembly was held in 1979 in Princeton in the USA, close to the United Nations where WCRP was accredited as an NGO. Participants were invited to the White House, where they were received by President Jimmy Carter. There was a special focus on nuclear disarmament and, for the first time, a delegation from China was able to participate.

A working group entitled “Religion, Education and Peace Commitment” met at length.¹⁰ It was able to draw on a comprehensive foundational paper by Lankaputra Hewage, a Buddhist professor of education from Sri Lanka, “The Critical Role of Religions in the Formation and Transmission of Values of a Society.” The group’s report emphasizes that while religions generally do not have direct political power, they do have a nonviolent form of power in education. Peace education, it says, must be guided by the value of nonviolence and promote human qualities such as simplicity, contentment, consideration and spiritual attitudes. The goal is constructive behavior in conflict settings.

The specific recommendations are assigned to four different educational institutions:

¹⁰ Gebhardt, *Friedenserziehung* (1994) 107f.

- In religious training centers, peace-related topics should be increasingly addressed, but corresponding attitudes should also be taught. The moral authority of religious teachers must also be brought to bear vis-à-vis governments.
- Educational institutions run by religious communities should provide more space for dealing with issues surrounding peace. Alternatives to military armament should be discussed. Prayers for peace as well as artistic expression should find their place in peace education.
- State educational institutions are also directly addressed. They could receive impulses from religious peace organizations. The ethical foundation of their curricula should be the values of truth, nonviolence and justice which also form the basis of the world religions. Peace education should be included in their curricula. The responsible government agencies should be induced to establish peace research institutions and centers for peace education.
- For the first time, the mass media is addressed here in detail, focusing particularly on the removal of depictions of violence. In contrast, more contributions should be offered in which peace-promoting values are conveyed.

In the final declaration of Princeton, a separate section on peace education was included for the first time: “The world’s religious bodies must undertake more educational programs to increase mutual appreciation of all peoples and cultures, and foster a commitment to the values of peace. Our efforts so far have not been sufficient. We therefore rededicate ourselves to the education of children, youth, and adults, to the training of our religious leaders, and to the promotion of values of peace and understanding in our conduct in personal and public life.”¹¹ The generality and the appellative character of these sentences are still striking. But from then on, peace education receives its own status at WCRP.

The 4th World Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in 1984 took delegates for the first time to Africa. Archbishop Desmond Tutu confronted delegates with the reality of apartheid in South Africa and the need to oppose it through interfaith cooperation. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a few months after the World Assembly. The plans for the future developed at this assembly were shaped by John Taylor (a Methodist from England) who succeeded Homer Jack as Secretary-General.

With regard to peace education, much of the content of the earlier declarations and appeals is repeated.¹² The worldwide increase in religious and ideological diversity and, as a consequence, the problem of ethnic and religious prejudice are made particularly clear.

¹¹ Gebhardt, *Friedenserziehung* (1994) 108.

¹² Gebhardt, *WCRP* (1989) 364f; *Friedenserziehung* (1994) 108ff.

In Nairobi, the scope was broadened by the fact that, for the first time, the younger generation organized its own meeting at a global conference. The topics addressed were the connection between militarism, the need for disarmament and poverty worldwide and the necessity of consistently including peace education in the curricula. Structurally, the assembly came to the important realization that WCRP should not build its own institutions for peace education, but should rely more consistently on the network of many competent peace educators. WCRP is seen as a multiplier.

In a follow-up committee “Beyond Nairobi,” peace education is still strongly seen as disarmament education, but the conflict-preventing role of peace education in our multicultural society is also emphasized. In the recommendations there is a tendency towards decentralization: the initiative is to lie essentially with the national and local WCRP structures. WCRP International is seen more as a center for sharing information. In the final declaration of Nairobi, knowledge and knowledge transfer is emphasized as essential factor: “In many cases, the opposite of conflict and violence is knowledge, and so educational efforts must be made that fear may begin to give way to trust.”¹³

A subsequent important initiative was the founding of an International Council of WCRP as a body that should meet once or twice between the world conferences. It had 75 members from all continents and religions. At its 1986 meeting in Beijing, peace education played an important role. The Council drew attention to the interdependencies of disarmament, development, and human rights and emphasized the need for environmental education. WCRP, it said, should contribute to transforming the culture of violence into a culture of peace. This includes providing the experience of inter-religious prayer and reminding the media of their role in peace education.

The relationship between spirituality as a basic characteristic and experiential component in the religious traditions and peace education is a nexus that has played, and continues to play, a role in all interreligious efforts at the time as well as in the subsequent years and decades. It is no coincidence that the Beijing conference was already held under the motto: “Peace through Work and Prayer”. The linkage of both areas is a very specific contribution that the religious communities can make.

This became especially visible at the 5th World Assembly of WCRP, which - after Asia, Europe, America and Africa - took place on the Fifth Continent - in Melbourne, Australia.

¹³ Gebhardt, Friedenserziehung (1994) 110.

3. New Initiatives of Interreligious Peace Education since the 1980s

The preparation of the 5th World Assembly in Melbourne, Australia at the beginning of 1989 included several steps in which the author was involved for peace between religions. After the habilitation on “Non-Christian Religions in Education” in 1977 and the appointment to the chair of religious education and didactics of Protestant religious education at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in 1981, the author worked on a two-volume theological didactics of world religions. The two volumes were very widely received as a complete work and as foundational work for theorists and practitioners alike.¹⁴ In their wake, the author was discovered, as it were, for the pedagogical work of the World Conference on Religions and Peace (WCRP), above all by its European General Secretary, Günther Gebhardt, whom he had met at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey near Geneva and who was doing his doctorate on peace education in religious peace movements. He had invited the author and his colleagues to the European meeting of WCRP in Rovereto in Italy in 1966. At that time, the first and second “Nuremberg Forum on an Education for Cultural Encounters” had already taken place and preparations were underway for the third Nuremberg Forum under the title: “World Religions and Peace Education”. This gave a new breadth to the author’s work, both theoretically and practically. This becomes clear when he describes how the idea of the Nuremberg Forum came about and was realized, how the World Assembly in Melbourne became a step for WCRP to advance its work and learning, and how this in turn fertilized the grassroots work by religions for peace especially in Germany.

3.1 The Nuremberg Forums. Education for Religious and Cultural Encounter

The idea was born in the context of the author’s appointment to the Nuremberg chair. Together with Werner Haußmann, at that time an assistant at the chair, he thought about bringing together representatives of religions who were experienced in dialogue with pedagogues and experts from other human sciences, but also practicing teachers and educators. In this context, political, cultural and social, economic, and ecological perspectives should also be represented.

The structure of this first symposium emerged from a survey of the academic as well as pedagogical-practical literature in the field of cultural encounters. In October

¹⁴ J. Lähnemann: Weltreligionen im Unterricht. Eine theologische Didaktik für Schule, Hochschule und Gemeinde. Teil I: Fernöstliche Religionen. Teil II: Islam Göttingen 1986, 2nd ed. 1994/1996.

1982, 23 speakers - most of them still from Germany - and more than 100 participants came together.

Long before Samuel Huntington's influential thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations," the question was asked in Nuremberg of where and how religiously co-conditioned problems develop, what the relevant contexts look like, and how they can be addressed constructively.

The first conference, which we still modestly called symposium, focused entirely on Christians and Muslims, Turkish and German children, but also took the school as a whole and teacher training into consideration.¹⁵ In addition, foundational principles emerged that should be applied to sustainable interreligious education in the present and for the future:

This education requires:

- a corresponding theological dialogue: How do I explain my faith so that it is understandable to people in other religions and cultures? Can any similarities be discovered? How can differences and incompatibilities be dealt with? How do I reconcile the claim to truth on the one hand and the willingness to communicate on the other? It requires...
- the understanding of the role of religions in the socio-political field. Here, the East-West confrontation and the secularization debate left a blind spot for a long time. This was overcome only gradually and sometimes very hesitantly. It requires...
- convincing concepts in pedagogy. The fact that empirical work is also necessary for this has only been gradually accepted. It requires...
- the school as a concrete field of experience and development. It requires...
- reference to the many fields of extracurricular education.

Even if the focus of the symposium was primarily on the confrontation or coexistence of Turks and Germans, Muslims and Christians, and the Muslim children were still classified as children of foreigners, basic insights were nevertheless brought to bear that should prove important for further developments in the field of cultural encounters. This is especially true for the field of teacher training. The author devoted to this a separate article under the heading "Kulturbegegnung und Ausländerpädagogik - Zielvorstellungen und Konsequenzen" (Cultural Encounters and Pedagogy for Foreigners - Objectives and Consequences).¹⁶

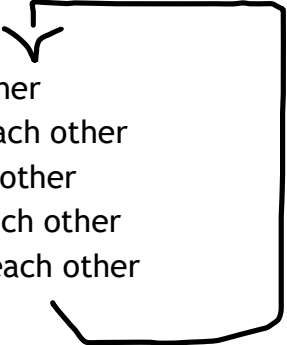
¹⁵ Papers and results are published as the first volume of the academic series "Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung". J. Lähnemann (ed.): Kulturbegegnung in Schule und Studium. Türken - Deutsche, Muslime - Christen. Ein Symposium. Hamburg 1983.

¹⁶ Lähnemann, Kulturbegegnung und Ausländerpädagogik. Zielvorstellungen und Konsequenzen. In: Lähnemann, Kulturbegegnung (1983) 254ff.

The basic considerations formulated for “Cultural Encounters” are

1. Language is the gateway to understanding - cultural encounter is a long journey that must be undertaken by all who do not wish to remain strangers to one another.
2. Cultural encounter is a holistic process. Intellectual effort is just as necessary as existential concern, commitment and readiness for the common path.

The main steps of a cultural encounter are:

- Knowing each other
 - Understanding each other
 - Respecting each other
 - Learning from each other
 - Standing up for each other
 - [start again]
- 

Each step is a preparation for the next. The intellectual effort does not necessarily have to be the first: frequently, it will first be driven by existential concern. Holistic means the participation ‘from head’ (interest, curiosity, learning) - ‘to foot’ (going to the other). It is the latter that is important: the experience of knowing each other personally, the experience of hospitality, the adventure of friendship leads to the necessary wonder, leads to the discovery of new horizons.

Only when educators themselves perceive and attempt to represent this wholeness will they be able to include students in this process of encounter.

For the 2nd Nuremberg Forum in 1985, we chose the programmatic title “Education for Cultural Encounter”.¹⁷ On the one hand, it reflected aggravated problems with children of foreigners and their families: ghetto tendencies, sometimes hasty return to Republic of Türkiye, formation of side-lined “foreigner classes” in schools. On the other hand, there was increased integration through intercultural education which however, for a long time almost completely ignored the religious component.

But perspectives from other countries had already played a role: Jørgen S. Nielsen from the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Birmingham in England described experiences of the coexistence of different cultures in Europe. Herbert Schultze, director of the Comenius Institute in Münster, presented examples of cultural encounters from the curricula and textbooks of various European countries. The contributions about England in particular were very informative because

¹⁷ Papers and results are again published in J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Erziehung zur Kulturbegegnung. Modelle für das Zusammenleben von Menschen verschiedenen Glaubens. Schwerpunkt Christentum - Islam.* Hamburg-Rissen 1986. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 3.

the development of cultural and religious pluralism had been developing for much longer than in Germany. Of additional value was the fact that in England, immigration had taken place from very different regions of the world - especially the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies.

The more comprehensive character of the overall topic was reflected both in the increase in the numbers of experts involved compared to the 1982 symposium (from 25 to 40 speakers, from 100 to over 160 participants), and in the range of disciplines and areas of expertise represented. In addition to Muslim and Christian theologians, Islamic scholars, Turkologists, legal scholars, social scientists, school pedagogues and didactics experts in various disciplines (religious education, history didactics, geography didactics, vocational studies, local history and folklore, and so forth) participated, as well as representatives of the cultural authorities of various federal states, the Turkish Consulate General of Nuremberg, and the school authorities. The encounter and cooperation between primarily academic scholars and experts directly confronted with the challenges of practice, together with the mediating work of the pedagogues and didactics experts from various disciplines made for the special attraction of the forum. It also formed the basis of the results achieved at the conference.

Another focus of future relevance at this forum is the in-depth theological dialogue in the context of educational issues.¹⁸ Mehdi Razvi, Imam at the Islamic Center in Hamburg, and the author addressed this issue together with regard to the question of God in Christianity and Islam. They made it clear that the widespread assertion that in ethical questions the religions correspond with each other, in theological questions there is dissent, falls far short. On the contrary, it is evident that there are correspondences between Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Baha'ism, especially in the area of belief in God, the doctrine of creation and anthropology, which should make it possible for the religions to jointly provide answers to people searching for fundamental meaning. Christianity and Islam are based on the belief in the one God who graciously turns to us human beings. In both religions, God is revered as the Creator, the Sustainer, the Judge. Signs of this are the creation, the sending of God's messengers, the commandments, and so forth. This leads to the commission given to all human beings: gratitude for creation and responsibility for it, solidarity with all creatures, meaning of a life that does not fall into egotism, security through faith in God, criticism of the idolization of worldly goals, commitment to the weak and the disadvantaged.

¹⁸ The following according to J. Lähnemann, *Lernen in der Begegnung. Ein Leben auf dem Weg zur Interreligiosität*. Göttingen 2017, 78f.

However, differences also remain which partly complement each other and partly exclude each other: especially with regard to the Christian confession centrally related to Jesus Christ on the one hand, and the Qur'anic understanding of revelation in Islam on the other. In view of the radical demarcations that we have often experienced for a long time, especially in the Protestant churches, and sometimes also in Islam, we must have more confidence in the fruitfulness of theological dialogue, a dialogue that overcomes false labeling and that can inspire a common path in the engagement of religions with global challenges.

Through the work done after the 2nd Nuremberg Forum, cross-cultural educational work has become more differentiated and expansive.

In 1987, at a multiplier and further training conference of the Comenius Institute Münster and the Braunschweig Office for Religious Education in Goslar under the topic "World Religions in the Classroom. Fundamentals and Alternative Perspectives" Johannes-Henning Achilles, Christina Siedschlag, and the author formulated a series of theses summarizing the state of the discussion at that time:¹⁹

Essentials of teaching about world religions

I. Reasons/needs for teaching about world religions

- World religions are no longer just an academic topic, they are variously present in living ways: Muslim neighbors, the fascination of spiritual offerings from Hinduism and Buddhism such as Yoga and Zen, as historical heritage (for example, Jews in Germany), explicitly and implicitly in the media and their presentation of world events, in our language, "new age", and so forth.
- Teaching about world religions is necessary as an aid to navigate modern life: in response to the manifold "synchronizations" in our culture ("Dallas in 65 countries"), in response to the varied and diffuse search for meaning, in response to the lack of familiarity with one's own religious and cultural origins, in response to the danger of "pied pipers" who lure with one-sided or even fanatical doctrines of salvation, and so forth.

II. Principles of teaching about world religions

- Teaching about world religions means: Differentiated awareness of one's own religious tradition for a plural, non-"homogeneous", reality.
- Teaching about world religions means: turning away from Eurocentrism, the perception of worldwide dependencies, interdependencies, and possibilities for cross-fertilization.

¹⁹ See J.-H. Achilles; J. Lähnemann; C. Siedschlag: Essentials des Unterrichts über Weltreligionen. In: M. Kwiran/H. Schultze (ed.): Bildungsinhalt: Weltreligionen. Münster 1988, 169-170.

- Teaching about world religions is to be constituted as a teaching principle, not just as part of the content of a particular school subject.
- Teaching about world religions requires asking about the “core meaning” (“Sinnmitte”) of the respective religion, so that it does not become stereotyped through views foreign to it.
- Teaching about world religions cannot be mastered without having the Other as an explicit or implicit interlocutor: Can they recognize themselves in my presentation of their faith?
- Teaching about world religions strives beyond intellectual engagement to existential encounter.
- Lessons on world religions help the student to orientate themselves and make decisions by visualizing alternative, responsible systems of meaning (if necessary, even by criticizing problematic doctrines of salvation) and by a better understanding of one’s own tradition and culture in the light of this encounter.

III. Open problems and tasks

- In view of widespread religious desocialization, how do I bring familiarization with my own tradition or denomination into a responsible relationship with encounters with other religions?
- Can I teach a religion without belonging to it myself?
- Can existential encounters happen without personal encounters? Can this happen without insights into social life?
- Can I simplify the system of meaning of a religion (which has often shaped people in many ways over millennia and across entire continents) for teaching in a way that does not lead to irresponsible abridgements or distortions?
- How do I choose responsibly? Does the question of the “core meaning” help me here? Is something like “progressive learning” possible when world religions are only occasionally addressed?
- How do I respond in the face of competing truth claims of religions and their different “sense of mission” (mission in Christianity, non-mission in Judaism, da’wa or witness in Islam, non-exclusive understanding of religion in Far Eastern religions)?
- How do I deal with incompatibilities between religions? (e.g.: Is salvation to be found in Jesus or in the “revelation” presented in the Qur’an? Are human beings in need of salvation or not? Is there reincarnation or not?)
- How can the “randomness” of the topic of world religions in the German educational landscape be overcome? How can teachers be sufficiently qualified for this subject area?

In the years that followed, work was carried out on all the above-mentioned questions - in theology as well as in religious studies and religious education.

A milestone was the 3rd Nuremberg Forum “World Religions and Peace Education. Ways to Tolerance”,²⁰ which took place in the fall of 1988 and was followed in January 1989 by the 5th World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Melbourne, Australia.

The topic of “World Religions and Peace Education” that the organizers set themselves had not really been dealt with coherently up to that point. Neither in the classical theological disciplines nor in pedagogy did this topic (especially in its combination) really feature.²¹ The organizers asked the question: Who can be recruited to address it theologically, religiously, and pedagogically, in addition to authentic contributions from the different religions? They quickly agreed on Hans Küng. He had achieved worldwide resonance with his theological works, which did not diminish even when his church teaching license was revoked in 1979. He now held a faculty-independent chair of ecumenical theology at the University of Tübingen - and understood “ecumenism” from the outset in the broad sense of the “inhabited earth,” that is, beyond the ecumenism of the Christian churches. On the Protestant side, Hans-Werner Gensichen, professor of mission studies, had published on “World Religions and World Peace”.²² He, too, agreed to participate in the forum. As a Roman Catholic scholar of mission and religious studies, Richard Friedli of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland had also already done empirical research.²³ Günther Gebhardt, European Secretary General of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, worked on the question of what religious peace movements do in terms of peace education.²⁴

Since Hans Küng’s opening lecture gained special significance - not only for this forum, but also as a background for further interreligious peace work - central passages from the summary that appeared in the forum volume will be reproduced here:²⁵

²⁰ J. Lähnemann (ed.): Weltreligionen und Friedenserziehung. Wege zur Toleranz. Referate und Ergebnisse des Nürnberger Forums 1988. Hamburg 1989.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 7.

²¹ This is impressively documented in the contribution by Werner Haußmann at the Forum: ‘Religionsbegegnung als curriculares Problem der Friedenserziehung.’. In Lähnemann, Friedenserziehung (1989) 285-297.

²² H.-W. Gensichen: Weltreligionen und Weltfriede. Göttingen 1985.

²³ R. Friedli: Frieden wagen. Ein Beitrag der Religionen zur Gewaltanalyse und Friedensarbeit. Fribourg/CH 1981.

²⁴ His doctoral dissertation was later published as volume 11 in the series “Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung”: Gebhardt, Friedenserziehung (1994).

²⁵ H. Küng: Kein Weltfriede ohne Religionsfriede. Ökumene zwischen Wahrheitsfanatismus und Wahrheitsvergessenheit. In: Lähnemann, Friedenserziehung (1989) 146-152.

NO WORLD PEACE WITHOUT RELIGIOUS PEACE

[...] At present, it is necessary to perceive anew that religions play an essential role in the question of war or peace in history and in the present. This is shown by negative as well as positive examples:

On the negative side, the invocation of God or a religious mandate often gave - and still gives - wars between nations and civil wars their relentless cruelty and inflexibility, and gives the belligerents a sense of mission that makes all scruples against the enemy recede. Conflict hotspots such as in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, on the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere still show this today.

On the other hand, it is positive to note that religiously motivated people and groups have become pioneers for paths to peace, e.g., in the reconciliation between France and Germany (especially through Roman Catholic politicians), in the first steps of an understanding between Germany and the peoples of Eastern Europe (through the Eastern Memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany), in the civil rights movement of the United States (Martin Luther King), as well as in the peace movement of the 1980s (in which Buddhists and Christians are particularly involved).

Against this background, a look into the future should be taken: What would it mean for the world of tomorrow if the leaders of all religions, great and small, were to decisively acknowledge their responsibility for love of neighbor, peace, non-violence, reconciliation and forgiveness today? If, instead of fomenting conflicts, they helped to resolve them at all the flashpoints of conflict?

The thesis holds true: No peace among the nations without peace among the religions! The way towards a new "ecumenism" (according to the literal sense of "oikumenē", referring to the whole world) of the world religions is necessary for survival, especially in view of the threat to the foundations of life on the "spaceship earth", which requires the cooperation of all human forces.

Religions are becoming increasingly aware of this obligation - the prayer for peace in Assisi is a sign of this - without it already being perceived satisfactorily across the breadth of the religious communities: the evangelical criticism of dialogue among religions (to which there are also parallels in the other world religions) is only one example of this. There is here still a far-reaching "unevenness of consciousness" in the various strata of churches and religions, a product of various historical paradigms that have persisted in the individual religions.

There remains the question of the general criteria of 'true' and 'good', which are analogously applicable to all religions. This is not least highly relevant for questions of international law and for questions of pedagogy, as well as for questions of international peace in general. In addition to the specific criteria that each religion has from its own foundation, there is a need for general ethical criteria. Here, it is

helpful to realize that a religion has proved to be most convincing wherever it succeeded in effectively asserting humanity against the horizon of the absolute. That is, wherever principles such as those contained in the Decalogue and in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, in the ethical principles of the Qur'an, and in the teachings of the Buddha were realized in favor of a humane community.

Today, every religious message must be reconsidered against the horizon of a changed world. In this context, it must be noted that despite all "non-simultaneity" in all religions since their entry into the modern period, awareness has grown in the direction of a more comprehensive humanity (even if the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 has by no means been realized with all its demands in all religions).

The abolition of the Inquisition, the humanizing of Roman Catholic canon law, the condemnation of widow burning in Hinduism, the reinterpretation of jihad in Islam, the humanizing of criminal law in many countries with an Islamic majority, the path to the emancipation of women (a problem in nearly all religions), the increasing commitment to social justice, the awareness of the immorality of wars, and the growth of interreligious peace initiatives are all examples of this. Thus, the task arises for every religion, in connection with its specific criteria of truth, to recognize the "humanum" as a minimum criterion for what is true in all religions: that which is good for human beings, which helps them to be respected in their unmistakable individual dignity and inviolability as human beings, and to be able to develop freely in a community based on solidarity.

It is clear, then: Where a religion represents something inhuman, it cannot invoke the divine.

What, then, is the specific contribution of religions to the human community that sets them apart from other worldviews? Their specific contribution is that they offer a justification for human dignity from their experience of the unconditional: The renunciation of one's own claims for the sake of the rights of others is by no means something immediately plausible, but receives its binding force only from a justification by the Absolute itself. With it, the way of truth of each individual religion is by no means relativized.

In conclusion, what can be done concretely will be outlined in a series of ecumenical imperatives:

1. We need people in all continents who are better informed and oriented with regard to people in other countries and cultures, who take up impulses from other religions and at the same time deepen the understanding and practice of their own religion.

In particular, we need men and women in politics who take seriously the challenges for developing a “domestic policy for the world” by striving to realize an international concept of peace in which people’s religiously fed longings for reconciliation and peace, nourished by religion, are incorporated.

We also need men and women in business who do not view others solely in terms of economic expediency, who instead try to see their business partners holistically as human beings and try to empathize with the different histories, cultures and religions of the people with whom they are dealing.

We need men and women with comprehensive historical, ethical and religious knowledge.

2. We need churches that, despite all current reactive tendencies, do not respond to new spiritual and religious challenges in a hierarchical-bureaucratic way, but rather act internally and externally in a grassroots and problem-conscious way: not centralistically but pluralistically organized, not dogmatically but dialogically minded, not complacently circling around themselves, but rather, with all the doubts of faith, self-critically and innovatively approaching the questions of the future.

We need a theology and theological literature that spiritually and intellectually advances interreligious conversation in the interests of peace.

We need religious education, religious educators and religious books that are in the service of interreligious knowledge transfer and who understand this educational work as practical peace education.

We need church communities and groups that seek to deepen interreligious dialogue spiritually and connect their prayers for peace with action for peace.

3. We need religions which, after all the wars to which religions have contributed, practice constructively living together and peacemaking cooperation in local and regional conflicts. A tightly woven network of interreligious information, communication and cooperation is necessary.

We need - as a result of this - more all-round transformation in the mutual search for the “greater truth”, for the mystery of the one and true God, whose revelation is not complete until the end, when God will reveal God’s own self. Until then, we are merely on the way. Christianity also sees completion only “as in a mirror,” fragmentarily, as Paul says.

4. We need not only religious conferences and assemblies, as important as they are, but above all, we also need regional and local grassroots groups and working communities to discuss and sort out the difficulties on the ground, and to explore and realize the possibilities of practical cooperation.

5. We need a more intensive philosophical-theological dialogue among theologians as well as religious scholars, which takes religious plurality theologically seriously, accepts the challenge of other religions, and explores their meaning for one's own religion, as can be seen in an exemplary way, for instance, in the Christian-Buddhist dialogue in the United States and Japan.
6. However, with this philosophical-theological dialogue, we also need spiritual dialogue among monks, nuns and laypeople, of women and men who practice silence with each other, meditating, reflecting and struggling to deepen the spiritual life and the questions of spirituality for our time.

We need the everyday dialogue of people of different religions who meet and talk: In religiously diverse marriages, in joint social projects, on the occasion of religious holidays, in political initiatives, in all current issues in which religions are always involved.

We also need the inner dialogue that takes place in our minds and hearts whenever we encounter a stranger: a person, a book - whenever we pick up something that can change us.

If we practice ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical cooperation in this way, we will no longer go our own way stubbornly dogmatically and uninformed, without understanding, tolerance and love for others. But then, we will also, not disappointed by our own pathway, take the leap over to others out of fascination with the novelty of another. Then we will also not simply add up what we have learned from others with our own faith only outwardly. Then we will instead transform ourselves again and again out of a genuine religious commitment in constant readiness to learn on our own way.

Just as Roman Catholics became better Catholics by learning about the Protestant Church (and vice versa), I can become a better Christian by learning about Judaism, Islam, and religions of Indian and Chinese origin. The old faith is not destroyed, it is enriched. It is the path of creative transformation that can lead not only to peace among religions, but also to peace among nations.

Küng's thesis, his cross-religious view, and the way he articulated identity and understanding as the basis for working on peace issues in and with the religions, quickly found a large echo. It became widely known when he published his book *Project Global Ethic* two years later. It was, at the same time, the beginning of his continuous contact and collaboration with WCRP/RfP: through the Declaration on Global Ethic, adopted by the "Parliament of the World's Religions" in Chicago in 1993, which RfP also later adopted (at the 8th World Assembly in Kyoto in 2006), and at the Peace Education Standing Commission of RfP, founded in 1998 - and for several years as a member of the Presidium of RfP as well.

At the 1988 Forum, Küng's lecture found a counterpart in a paper by Hans-Werner Gensichen, who questioned the individual religions under the heading "Weltfrieden im atomaren Zeitalter als Herausforderung an die Religionen" (World Peace in the nuclear age as challenge for religions)²⁶ He emphasized that none of the main religions - not even Buddhism - can be called the superior religion of peace. On the other hand, none of the main religions can be described as unconditionally militant, aggressive, or hostile to peace. However, each demonstrates that it is at least potentially able to show a way from personal inner peace of the heart to actively overcoming aggression. Concrete examples of this were outlined, of which Mahatma Gandhi's Sarvodaya ("Welfare for All") movement was probably the best known.

Richard Friedli offered a complement to the views presented by Küng and Gensichen with his call for religious studies to be included in peace research. Under the heading "Der Einfluss spiritueller-religiöser Erfahrungen auf Konfliktsituationen" (The impact of spiritual-religious experiences in situations of conflict)²⁷ he presented, together with Christian Jäggi, the fundamentals of a first empirical study in this field, which in its continuation was to become of particular importance for peace education. One of the first results - corresponding to the question of the actual effectiveness of the peace formula always repeated in worship liturgies - states that people who tend to classify themselves as very orthodox (here not referring to the orthodox church, but understood as a dogmatist attitude) tend to intervene in socio-political problem areas (nationalistic thinking, armament, death penalty, censorship) in a strictly judging and punishing way more than people who classify themselves as "non-orthodox". In the continuation of the research project, in which Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious communities took part, as well as groups classified as "new religiosity", the question was then posed the other way around: Does religious-spiritual training change attitudes and motivations for peace-promoting conflict resolution and for creative ways of dealing with aggression?

With regard to the overall topic of "World Religions and Peace Education," it can be said that the forum was characterized by explorations in a wide range of fields of content and practice, from which insights, perspectives and tasks arose at various levels: theologically and in terms of religious education, for example, in a reflection on the relationship between mission and dialogue, with regard to the reinterpretation of peace- and conflict-relevant terms (e.g. on "jihad"), with a view to the task of the Church in peace education in the (then still existing) GDR, with case studies from conflict areas, in the examination of curricula, textbooks, and concepts of

²⁶ In Lähnemann, Friedenserziehung (1989) 80-88.

²⁷ In Lähnemann, Friedenserziehung (1989) 178-189.

teacher training in Germany, and, not least, in the possibilities of congregational peace work.

3.2 The Expansion of Interfaith Peace Work and the 5th WCRP World Assembly in Melbourne



Ill. 2 World Conference on Religion and Peace. Fifth Assembly Melbourne 1989

The years 1988-1990 can be seen in several respects as key years not only in political terms but also for religious awakenings and interreligious understanding.

The year 1988 also took on special significance for the institutionalization of inter-religious work in Germany and, likewise, at local level. In the run-up to the 5th World Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), to which the author had been invited in January 1989 to Melbourne, Australia on the basis of his experience in the field of interreligious pedagogical work, a German section of this movement was founded in Mainz in August. A board was elected, of which the author was then a member, with the Roman Catholic priest Franz Brendle as president. At this meeting, the foundation of local or regional WCRP groups was also encouraged. Also in 1988, an Austrian section of WCRP was founded in Vienna under the leadership of Petrus Bsteh, a Roman Catholic theologian with experience in dialogue.

As a result of the meeting in Mainz, the author wrote to the representatives of the various religious communities in Nuremberg in November 1988 - from the Jewish community, the Christian Churches (Evangelical Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox), the mosque associations and the Buddhist center. At a first meeting on December 3, 1988, a group of 17 people interested in

interreligious work gathered. They asked: How do we meet? How can we arrive at ways of understanding? What can we do locally for peace? All participants introduced themselves and their reflections and expectations.

Some guidelines crystallized, which the author subsequently summarized in a letter:

- There should be no combination of religions (“syncretism”). The independent path to faith of each religion should be respected. Nevertheless, every religion can show ways from personal, inner peace to actively overcoming aggression. Here, it is currently necessary to work together, especially in view of the religious factors in many conflicts on earth.
- However, there should also be no proselytism (religious “wooing away by unfair means”), even though every sincere believer will testify for his religion in word and deed.
- Religious minorities, which are always easily overlooked and disadvantaged, deserve special attention. Religious minorities which are committed to the UN Declaration of Human Rights deserve the protection and assistance of believers from the dominant faith communities in particular.

From the very beginning, it seemed important to the participants to integrate their work internationally: to be connected with the worldwide efforts of religious communities to prevent conflicts, to find solutions in conflicts, and to work for reconciliation after conflicts.

Since this first meeting, there has been an average of one meeting under the three guiding principles of “encounter” - “understanding” - “cooperation”. This grassroots work on the ground has subsequently also fertilized the Nuremberg forums and, conversely, also benefited from them - among other things, through hospitality for the international speakers and participants in the forums, through invitations to the religious communities and the organization of prayer meetings of the religions.²⁸

At the second meeting of the newly founded group, the author was already able to report about the 5th World Assembly of WCRP, which had taken place in Melbourne, Australia, in January 1989. There, the author had been able to articulate the task of peace education through the religions in a dedicated commission section.

The overall motto of the conference “Building Peace Through Trust” was also the leitmotif for the theses the author prepared for the commission:

**BUILDING PEACE THROUGH TRUST:
THE TASK OF RELIGIONS IN EDUCATION FOR PEACE**

²⁸ An evaluation and assessment of the 30 years of work is contained in the volume J. Lähnemann: *Begegnung - Verständigung - Kooperation. Interreligiöse Arbeit vor Ort - Erfahrungen und Perspektiven aus Nürnberg*. Göttingen 2020.

1. Each of the main religions can, in principle, show a way from individual, inner peace to actively overcoming aggressions (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King in USA, Dom Helder Camara in Brazil, Mahmut Taha in Sudan, and so forth). This is true in spite of the realities of history where religions often were and still continue to be involved in wars and conflicts, so that no one religion can be considered as the “religion for peace” par excellence.

It is therefore the imperative task of the religions in education for peace to bring to bear the central motivations for peace that are enshrined in the religious communities. This entails each one of the main religions developing a basic awareness of solidarity with all humankind and with the oikumene, i.e. the whole inhabited earth.

As regards adolescents this means that they can experience love, affection, and therefore “peace” (which includes the ability for non-violent solution of conflicts) within education itself. Education which works mainly on the basis of threats and punishment (e.g. “fear of hell”) is counterproductive to this purpose.

2. All education for peace depends on an inner renewal of the religions themselves. Each religion has to ask itself to what extent its appearance and behavior as member of the world-wide community of human beings and all life on earth can contribute to peace and integrity of life. The very driving force for this renewal lies in the central experiences of each religion (the way of Jesus Christ for Christians, Lord Buddha’s way for Buddhists, the Torah for Jews, the peace message of the Qur’an for Muslims, and so forth.). It is therefore essential that religious education assumes the task of familiarizing adolescents with their respective faiths as a “system of responsibility”. Only when people feel at home in their own faith, which is open to others, and when they are familiar with the roots of their own religion and culture, can they provide the basis to begin a serious dialogue.
3. All education for peace in the religions should be accompanied by a new way of encounter which respects people of other faiths and their values and ways of life. Adolescents should be prepared for a way of living together without the burden of barriers caused by prejudices, but rather in listening to and learning from one another, which opens up new horizons of life on all sides. This is an essential contribution to education for peace which can be made uniquely by religions and world-views. Many single steps are needed for this contribution to be realized.

It is important to recognize prejudices towards others as preconceived opinions. Trust will grow in dialogue only when the dialogue partners can perceive that they are not being forced into a dogmatic scenario which does not correspond to one another’s understanding of his or her faith. This means that dialogue partners must try to learn about the various faiths from one another’s perspective and must search sensitively for understanding in the religious traditions and writings of the partners.

At the same time, one must make a clear distinction between the common and the dividing elements so as to avoid syncretism of apparent warding-off.

To achieve this, it is indispensable to promote co-operation in the fields of both theology and religious education at all levels:

- Encourage contact and co-operation between theologians and religious teachers from the different religions;
- Improve the training of religious teachers and ministers in the knowledge of other religions and world-views, and living together;
- Review and revise guidelines, syllabuses, textbooks and other educational material, especially as regards their presentation of other religions and world-views;
- Provide guidelines for religious education in the family;

Learning through encounter will be of major importance. Wherever possible, religious education should be given in contact and co-operation with members of different religious communities. By taking part in services and meditations together one experiences best the force and vital strength of various religions. One gains infinitely more by meeting with people of other faiths than by merely talking about other religions.

On this basis of trust, engendered by encounter, religion can make a credible contribution to world peace. Out of their experience of the Absolute, they can provide (for humanity, for the community of all human beings and for a sense of solidarity with all living things) a binding force which can come only from religious belief.

The commission's report, which grew out of the discussions, describes what trust means: freedom from fear of others, from threats to one's life, openness to others, being able to perceive others as enriching one's life. It outlines the ways in which religions can convey trust and counteract resistance to trust-building. The path of nonviolence is described as a positive, active, dynamic path, and conscious training in the methods of nonviolent action is called for. With regard to education in schools, families and religious communities, the priority of dealing with young people in a loving and caring way is emphasized, from which trust for new forms of encounter can arise in the first place. In concrete terms, it is suggested that international commissions be formed to examine textbooks, curricula and teacher training programs to see what image they convey of the various religions and cultures, and how misunderstandings and prejudices can be counteracted in this way. On the other hand, it was stated that positive experiences and models should be documented and educational practice should be stimulated by passing them on. This also described the guidelines that would determine further interreligious-international educational work at the Nuremberg Forums.

In very concrete terms, the report from the youth meeting, which was attended by 90 young people from nine religions and 19 countries at the World Assembly,

addresses interreligious contributions to peace education, where overcoming the lack of fundamental knowledge is of particular importance. Exchanges between schools and educational institutions of different religions, between religious youth groups, and also at the level of the family, are encouraged.

The Melbourne Final Declaration, in answering the question “How then do we build peace through trust?”, specifically addresses overcoming false prejudices and stereotypes in education as a prerequisite for building trust:

“We need to challenge patterns of education which perpetuate prejudice and stereotypes, those in our textbooks, our religious teachings, our political rhetoric, wherever we focus on violence as power, prestige, and solution. Since ‘history’ is often shaped by the powerful, we should recognize that the difficulty of oppressed peoples to escape from ‘unjust histories’ destroys their ability to trust.

Religious communities and religious leaders can assist in global education, promoting positive learning experiences related to peoples of other cultures and other religions, in shaping their own religious curricula, and in monitoring those resources that are used in their respective communities. They can also model patterns of behavior that strengthen strong and loving family relationships, which provide the context for transformative social behavior.”²⁹

What do such fundamental declarations mean? Are they more than mere appeals? Are they received, spelled out, concretized and implemented in the various religious communities? First of all, they are signals of a change in thinking, away from a view that is one-sidedly related to one’s own community and towards an opening for encounter, dialogue and the possibility of cross-religious cooperation in international dimensions. They are, as it were, putting down stakes for a new consciousness, from which initiatives for concrete action, cooperation, and even research are to grow. This could not yet have been achieved on a larger scale at the end of the 1980s. Nevertheless, parallel to and in connection with the *Wende* in the GDR and the new democratization processes in the countries of the Eastern Bloc, visions developed that increasingly affected projects, programs and cross-cultural actions.

3.3 Awakenings Related to the Political “Turning Point” 1989/90, the Global Ethic Project and the Conciliar Process

In several respects, the years 1989-1990 can be regarded as key years, not only in political terms, but also for religious awakenings and interreligious understanding.

²⁹ H. Jack, *History* (1993) 462; 465.

The *Wende* in the Eastern Bloc and in the GDR was also reflected in the Nuremberg Forums. When Dieter Reiher came to the 3rd Nuremberg Forum, he was head of the Berlin-Brandenburg Church Educational Chamber and editor of the magazine *Die Christenlehre*. His advocacy (then still “smuggled” out of the GDR) had helped in 1986 to obtain a doctoral scholarship for the author’s doctoral student and later assistant Heiner Aldebert to write a dissertation on *Christenlehre* (Christian religious instruction) in the GDR. When Reiher came to Nuremberg for the 4th Forum in 1991, he had been State Secretary for Education in the Ministry of Education and Science of the last GDR government and had been intensively involved in questions of a development of school-based religious education in the eastern states. Heiner Aldebert’s doctoral thesis was subtitled “Protestant Work with Children in a Secular Society.” It documented and reflected on experiences after twenty years of “church under socialism” and forty years of the GDR. When it was published in 1990, directly after the *Wende*, it was intended not only to be a historical work, but also to make fruitful the perspectives that had opened up for Christian pedagogy in a minority situation and in an increasingly non-religious environment.³⁰

1990 was then the year in which Hans Küng’s book *Das Projekt Weltethos* (The Global Ethic Project) was published, and in which the ecumenical world assembly of the Conciliar Process took place in Seoul, South Korea.

Küng’s thesis, “No world peace without religious peace”, which he had presented at the 3rd Nuremberg Forum, was followed up by the theses “No religious peace without dialogue between the religions”, “No dialogue between the religions without basic work in the religions” - and finally: “No survival without a global ethic”. This seemed like a prophetic statement. The whole book has the character of a great prophetic speech. The thesis “No survival without a global ethic” had global challenges in mind even before talk of globalization became commonplace. At that time, it had already long been clear that there are world problems that challenge all nations: the ecological crisis with probably unstoppable global warming and climate change, the crisis of impoverishment in many parts of the world, the crisis through new world conflicts, often enough ideologically fueled, the crisis through neglect in the younger generation, especially in the industrialized countries, the crisis through migration, through crime, through lack of perspective.

For a long time now, global thinking and action have taken place in the field of business corporations, and a global consumer market has become established. Time and again, there have been, and still are, individual political leaders who have

³⁰ H. Aldebert: *Christenlehre in der DDR. Evangelische Arbeit mit Kindern in einer säkularen Gesellschaft. Eine Standortbestimmung nach zwanzig Jahren „Kirche im Sozialismus“ und vierzig Jahren DDR.* Hamburg-Rissen 1990.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 8.

responsibly faced up to global perspectives - often in conflict with the national interests they have to represent.

But what about the global perspective in the field of values and ethics?

After all, the churches had initiated the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Hans Küng's book, however, focused from the outset on a cross-religious and cross-cultural perspective. His thesis, which then also found its way into the Declaration on Global Ethics prepared in the wake of the book, was:

“This one world needs the one ethos; this one global society does not need a single religion and single ideology, but it needs some unifying and binding norms, values, ideals and goals.”³¹

Of course, there was immediate criticism of this thesis: Is this not much too global, much too undifferentiated? Can there be an understanding about a global ethos - beyond the borders of religions and worldviews?

Educators, and especially religious educators, soon found themselves directly addressed by this thesis: All education today can no longer avoid taking seriously global interconnections as well as global challenges.

As a consequence of this development, the Evangelische Akademie Hofgeismar organized a conference in 1991 on the topic “From World Assembly to Council? Assessment and Perspectives of the Conciliar Process after Seoul”, at which Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker and the author gave the keynote speeches, the author speaking on “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation as Topics of Dialogue with the World Religions”. For von Weizsäcker, this was an opportunity to open up the conciliar process to the idea of an ecumenical peace council, which he had favored from the beginning. The author took up the three guiding concepts of the conciliar process in such a way that he was able to demonstrate for each of them a profound understanding anchored in the individual religions, but that this understanding had not been consistently realized, and indeed not infrequently violated, in any of the religions in their history. But finally, in each of the religions, positive examples have also emerged with which concrete work for justice, peace and the conservation of creation has been, and is being, carried out from the sources of the religious traditions.

The discussion with Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker led, among other things, to the realization that the factors of “nation” and “religion” were in no way obsolete after the end of the Cold War, but instead proved to be newly relevant after the *Wende*. Hence the topic of the 4th Nuremberg Forum.

³¹ H. Küng: Projekt Weltethos. München 1990. New edition 1992. back cover.

3.4 The Reawakening of Religions as an Educational Challenge. Insights of the Nuremberg Forum 1991³²

With this topic, we zeroed in on the special situation at the beginning of the 1990s: The Berlin Wall had fallen, the East-West divide had shrunk. But after the initial euphoria, disillusionment had set in: the former Eastern bloc countries did not simply turn into flourishing gardens, new regional conflicts erupted, and the Yugoslav war was just around the corner. The situations in the Middle East, in Nigeria, in India became the topic. The examples of religious-ethnic fanaticism were particularly troubling. At the same time, the phenomenon of a pluralistic religiosity in the highly industrialized states became more and more visible. For his introductory overview of the Forum volume, the author chose as title “Learning for the Human Family. Growing Necessities - Limited Conditions and Capabilities - Forward-Looking Approaches.”³³ He highlighted the dangers of falling back into nationalisms and fundamentalisms as well as the worldwide effort to develop global cooperation. Smail Balic came to the Forum with the justified fear that his family’s Bosnian homeland would be engulfed in a new war.

Karl Ernst Nipkow made it clear at the time that we must engage pedagogically in a “hard pluralism” that is not glossed over, and that we must focus on the “world horizon” as a necessary prerequisite of Christian education and upbringing with regard to non-Christian religions.³⁴

The contributions on the participation of religions in democratization and liberation processes showed, on the one hand, a thoroughly impressive line, especially among Christian groups that supported the oppressed and dissidents: in South America and South Africa (liberation theology) and in the GDR during the long years of socialist rule and in the *Wende* process. The effectiveness of basic theological approaches - and this is especially true of the conciliar process on justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the GDR - became impressively visible, but, on the other hand, so did their limited depth and broad impact.

Examples of critical self-reflection in religions were presented and discussed, which correspond to the plurality of the situation in the modern world in contrast to slapdash, inflexible, overly simplistic solutions.

³² J. Lähnemann (ed.): Das Wiedererwachen der Religionen als pädagogische Herausforderung. Interreligiöse Erziehung im Spannungsfeld von Fundamentalismus und Säkularismus. Hamburg-Rissen 1992.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 10.

³³ In J. Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 4-14

³⁴ In J. Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 166-189.

The Muslim contributions received special attention with regard to their confrontation with modernity and plurality.

Abdoldjavad Falaturi held that modernization in the sense of unbridled freedom would probably not exist in the Islamic world, but that the initial history of Islam made possible for life to social necessity, which would have to release a dynamic unfolding of the foundations of Islamic doctrine and legislation in view of the requirements of modernity: The principle of Rahma (mercy of God) would correspond to the principles of the welfare of the human community, freedom for scientific decisions and tolerance, which would have to be developed anew in view of the entire human family.³⁵

The contributions on Islamic religious education in a plural society were characterized by the same basic impulse, whereby it became visible how difficult it still is in the context of postcolonial situations in Islamic-influenced countries to overcome a unifying, positivistic way of thinking that conceals difficulties. Those Muslim groups that do not see secularism as a kind of apostasy that should also be condemned by the state represented a minority at that time (and, to some extent, still do).

What united them - despite all the differences in contexts and conditions - was the conviction that orientation in questions of religion is, in any case, also a task of a school that requires treatment in a dedicated subject.

The presentation and discussion of pedagogical perspectives, paths and models for schools and congregations, which were then also inspire the interreligious educational work at *Religions for Peace*, was characterized by the fact that it was possible to show how, on the one hand - especially in Central and Western Europe - intercultural learning has been stimulated in great diversity in these years, and how, on the other hand, exchanges about it and cross-pollination were still characterized by isolation. Werner Haußmann was able to illustrate this most directly. In 1989, as a prelude to his doctoral dissertation on a comparison of religious education in England and Germany, the author went with him on a trip to the most important institutes of religious education in England and Scotland and to the colleagues there. They learned how pedagogical paths had been developed for the “non confessional approach” of “Religious Education” in the training and further education of religious education teachers, and took with them in the car boot a variety of teaching books and materials that illustrated the subject of religion down to the primary and elementary level. Haußmann’s presentation had the telling theme “... walking in someone else’s shoes”³⁶ He explored the opportunities and problems of the

³⁵ A. Falaturi: ‘Islam und Moderne - eine Religion in der Defensive oder im dynamischen Aufbruch?’ In J. Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachsen* (1992) 38-45.

³⁶ In Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 287-302.

different approaches to religious education and made it clear how even denominational religious education can no longer do without opening up to encounters with other religions. In view of the fact that direct personal encounter with members of another religion is not possible everywhere, he introduced the principle of “personalization”, in which people of other faiths become implicit or explicit interlocutors in whose “shoes” one learns to “walk”. “Personalization means: a making clear of the self-understanding of the other religion by means of ‘ideal-typical’ figures, thus creating fields of encounter that facilitate the students’ access to the subject matter.”³⁷ These can be people - peers, their parents, friends ... - who live their religion in everyday life. Distance and proximity should be in balance. “Specifically, the example figure should not be drawn harmonizingly ‘close’ that complete identification with it can take place. Conversely, however, it should not be so ‘foreign’ that it blocks access to the real thing.”³⁸

The 4th Nuremberg Forum assumed international resonance when John Hull, as editor of the British Journal for Religious Education (BJRE), suggested that eight important contributions be published in a special issue of the journal under the overall title: Education in Europe: “The Challenge of Pluralism”.³⁹

³⁷ In Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 295.

³⁸ The doctoral dissertation of Werner Haußmann was published in 1993: *Dialog mit pädagogischen Konsequenzen? Perspektiven der Begegnung von Christentum und Islam für die schulische Arbeit*. Hamburg-Rissen 1993. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 13.

³⁹ BJRE Volume 14 No. 2. Spring 1993.

4. Global Ethic. A Vision for Religions and Worldviews with Political Dimension and Pedagogical Consequences

An initial summary of the discussion which Küng's book *Das Projekt Weltethos* (The Global Ethic Project) triggered with regard to the understanding of a global ethic appeared as an appeal by representatives of various religions in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on November 16, 1991. It reads more or less like a "passing of the baton" from the 4th to the 5th Nuremberg Forum:

- “1. Each major religion should commission its experts and scholars to direct their research and reflection toward the development of a global ethic from the perspective of their particular religion - in dialogue with all other religions.
2. Every academic institution which has experts on religious and ethical questions should urge them to put their creative energies at the service of the development of this global ethic, among themselves and together with experts from other religious and ethical institutions.
3. Academic, interreligious and ethical 'working groups' should be formed to focus on these issues; existing working groups may also be oriented towards this.
4. In addition, a large permanent research center for global ethics should be established, in which some of the most capable experts from the world's religions and ethical groups should work continuously, possibly for many years in succession, to pursue this goal in its many ramifications.”⁴⁰

The educational task implied by this appeal must be understood as a specific part of the comprehensive task outlined here. It begins with recruiting people who will embrace the goals of this "long-term vision" and who will commit their energies to these necessary tasks.

4.1 The Preparation of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic - International, Interreligious

After Hans Küng had presented the main features of his reflections on the Global Ethic project internationally on a number of occasions, the appeal actually provided the initial spark for preparing a "Declaration on a Global Ethic". The theologian Leonard Swidler of Temple University in Philadelphia who had written this appeal had already recruited many supporters from Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also from the religions based in East Asia. Hans Küng himself described in detail the

⁴⁰ Reproduced in Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 13f.

process that was thus set in motion.⁴¹ Of course, it did not proceed straightforwardly - along a path of various drafts, with manifold constructive contributions, but also, again and again, partly fundamental criticism: For is it really possible to win over all major religions - with their very different cultural and historical backgrounds, with their often so different ideas of the divine, the otherworldly, the spiritual, the ethical, the ritual? What about the non-theistic religions as in parts of Buddhism, in contrast to the monotheistic and polytheistic religions? Can a basic ethical consensus be drawn from such divergent religious traditions? How can a text take shape that contains essential ethical convictions and obligations without remaining too general? On the one hand, it should not interfere too much in short-term political day-to-day business, but it should nevertheless have clear guidelines for tasks that religions as well as politics and civil society have to undertake. Can it succeed in expressing the special nature of a religious justification and yet also gain plausibility for non-religiously oriented people?

The “2nd World Parliament of Religions”, prepared for the late summer of 1993 in Chicago by the religious communities active there, 100 years after a first such parliament in 1893, was envisaged as the target point for the official public presentation of the Declaration. William Vendley was also involved in this event as Secretary-General of WCRP.

A variety of consultations, drafts, and improvements were necessary. But finally, a text emerged that was systematically stringent, clear in its structure, elementary in a linguistic form that then revealed the guiding hand of Hans Küng himself.

The focus of the Declaration becomes clear in the description of the problem in the introductory explanation of the principles of a global ethic:

“Our world is experiencing a fundamental crisis: A crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics. The lack of a grand vision, the tangle of unresolved problems, political paralysis, mediocre political leadership with little insight or foresight, and in general too little sense for the commonweal are seen everywhere. Too many old answers to new challenges.

Hundreds of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger, and the destruction of their families. Hope for a lasting peace among nations slips away from us. There are tensions between the sexes and generations. Children die, kill, and are killed. More and more countries are shaken by corruption in politics and business. It is increasingly difficult to live together peacefully in our cities because of the social, racial, and ethnic conflicts, the abuse of drugs, organized crime, and even anarchy. Even neighbors often live in fear of

⁴¹ H. Küng, K.-J. Kuschel (ed.): Erklärung zum Weltethos. Die Deklaration des Parlamentes der Weltreligionen. Munich 1993, 49ff.

one another. Our planet continues to be ruthlessly plundered. A collapse of the ecosystem threatens us.

Time and again we see leaders and members of religions incite aggressions, fanaticism, hate, and xenophobia - even inspire and legitimize violent and bloody conflicts. Religion often is misused for purely power political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust.

We condemn these blights and declare that they need not be”.⁴²

The emphasis of the declaration was on uniting people of different religions in their efforts to find common convictions, values, commandments and forms of action, without forming a “club of the religious against the non-religious”: “The principles expressed in this Global Ethic can be affirmed by all persons with ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not. - As religious and spiritual persons, we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in words or in silence. We have a special responsibility for the welfare of all humanity and to care for the planet Earth. We do not consider ourselves better than other women and men, but we trust that the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way to the future.”⁴³

One of the principles was that the Declaration should be supported by followers of both “Western” and “Eastern” religions, but should also be open and acceptable for people without religious affiliation.

The Global Ethic Declaration is intended to support and supplement the UN Declaration of Human Rights from the perspective of fundamental ethical obligations: “We recall the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. What it formally proclaimed on the level of rights we wish to confirm and deepen here from the perspective of an ethic: The full realization of the intrinsic dignity of the human person, the inalienable freedom and equality in principle of all humans, and the necessary solidarity and interdependence of all humans with each other.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is clarified: “By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethic we mean a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes. Without

⁴² Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration. Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago 1993/2016, 3.

⁴³ Global Ethic (1993) 3f.

⁴⁴ Global Ethic (1993) 6.

such a fundamental consensus on an ethic, sooner or later every community will be threatened by chaos or dictatorship, and individuals will despair.”⁴⁵

The declaration itself begins with a brief description of the situation and the challenge that the religions and worldview communities must face. It admits: “We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However, they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: A change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the ‘hearts’ of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life.”⁴⁶

It follows the basic demand: Every Human Being Must Be Treated Humanely, developed in the *Golden Rule*: “What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others” - or positively formulated, as by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: “What you wish done to yourself, do to others!”

The core of the declaration consists of the “Irrevocable Directives”,⁴⁷ which are based on the 2nd tablet of the Decalogue and the lay commandments of Buddhism. The commandments are understood positively, not as regulations, but as (self-)obligation. There is no talk of laws, but of a culture to be developed; and: Each of the irrevocable directives extends beyond the individual context into the social and - in the first directive - deliberately also into the ecological realm:

- I. Commitment to a Culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life (not only: “You shall not kill!”).
- II. Commitment to a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order (not only: “You shall not steal!”).
- III. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness (not only: “You shall not lie!”).
- IV. Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women (not only: “You shall not commit sexual immorality!”)

These irrevocable directives are structured in such a way that they begin with a description of the situation, the directive itself (negative - positive) is outlined (A), then a description of the basic constellation and the basic task for this directive follows (B), the pedagogical task is named (C), the structural task is unfolded and the required basic ethical attitude corresponding to the respective directive is characterized (D-F). How this is outlined in concrete terms will be illustrated here with just one example, namely the pedagogical task with regard to the commitment to a

⁴⁵ Global Ethic (1993) 6.

⁴⁶ Global Ethic (1993) 5.

⁴⁷ Global Ethic (1993) 6ff.

culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness. It says: “Young people must learn at home and in school to think, speak, and act truthfully. They have a right to information and education to be able to distinguish the important from the unimportant. In the daily flood of information, ethical standards will help them discern when opinions are portrayed as facts, interests veiled, tendencies exaggerated, and facts twisted.”⁴⁸

From August 28 to September 4, 1993, the “World Parliament of Religions” met. At the beginning of that week, the sensational news had broken that Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had agreed on a peace plan, even if the fragility of it soon became evident. In the same week, however, peace negotiations between the Orthodox Serbs, the Roman Catholic Croats and the Muslim Bosnians had once again collapsed. Thus, there was no lack of occasions for topical discussion of the Declaration on Global Ethics. With the participation of 6,500 people from a wide variety of religions, the Parliament discussed and adopted the Declaration on September 4, 1993, thus declaring its support for a global ethic. A total of 200 leading representatives from all the world’s religions, including the Dalai Lama, signed the declaration.

This, of course, was not an end point, but actually the starting point for working towards a global ethic. Two basic questions continued to guide its further development:

1. What is the relationship of the basic beliefs in the various religions to a global ethic? Can it be justified from the very specific forms of the teachings and spirituality of the faith communities?
2. What about the unfolding of the Irrevocable Directives into the various areas of action and the necessary concretizations?

In addition to politics, economics, ecology and culture, specific challenges thus also arose for the broad field of education. - This was the starting point for the 5th Nuremberg Forum. Hans Küng was enthusiastic about it. He understood the author’s thesis to extend the three imperatives (“No world peace (*Weltfriede*) without religious peace (*Religionsfriede*). No religious peace without religious dialogue (*Religionendialog*). No religious dialogue without foundational work within the religions (*Grundlagenarbeit in den Religionen*)) by an educational dimension. It thus became: “No peace, no dialogue, no inner-religious work without educational efforts, without the necessary educational work (*notige Bildungsarbeit*), without learning together (*gemeinsames Lernen*).

⁴⁸ Global Ethic (1993) 10.

4.2 The Global Ethic in Education Project. A Compass for Interreligious Educational Work. The 5th Nuremberg Forum 1994

The 5th Nuremberg Forum in 1994 was a particularly diverse and lively congress with broad international participation including representatives from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Baha'i religion, but also adherents of secular ethics. In contrast to the critical accusation that the Global Ethic Project propagates a generalized minimal ethic that ultimately remains largely inconsequential in practice, it became apparent in a highly differentiated manner that there are very specific models from the traditions of the various religions for the justification of a unifying ethic; that possibilities for context-related interreligious cooperation can be demonstrated for concrete conflict scenarios; that perspectives for religious, interreligious and philosophical learning can be opened up; and that the foundations of a school ethic can also be acquired in the process.

In his opening address,⁴⁹ Hans Küng highlighted the problems and tasks - beginning with an analysis of the violence and widespread disorientation present among adolescents: violence in the media, a lack of awareness of guiding principles among leading politicians and businesspeople, a society geared towards profit and private enjoyment, and finally an inscrutable pluralism and "orientation jungle." He took up important results of the aggression as well as the description of violence and peace offered by the religions. He referred to the pedagogical impulses of the Global Ethic Declaration and named the challenges for a holistic-ethical education, for which a social discourse had to be set in motion in which religions, politicians, the economy and finally, primary pedagogical agents, i.e. congregation and school, had to contribute to an "ecumenical peace education". For them, he brought in "learning goals" formulated by the Association for Peace Education in Tübingen:⁵⁰

- learning to observe a system of values in which respect for human dignity is paramount;
- learning to empathize with others;
- learning to express feelings and to discuss them in dialogue with others;
- learning to resolve conflict constructively and to cope with aggression in a non-violent way;
- creating space to act on their own responsibility;
- taking reliable role models and following their example.

⁴⁹ H. Küng: Weltethos und Erziehung. In: J. Lähnemann (ed.): „Das Projekt Weltethos“ in der Erziehung. Hamburg-Rissen 1995. = Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 14, 19-34.

⁵⁰ Küng, Weltethos - Erziehung (1995) - after: Verein für Friedenspädagogik (ed.): Gewaltfrei leben. Information for Parents, Educators and Teachers. Tübingen 1993, 9.

For religions, this means educating a new generation to cultivate the religiosity that our time needs:

- a religiousness with foundations, but without fundamentalism;
- a religious identity, but without exclusiveness;
- a certainty of truth, but without fanaticism.” 51

Several WCRP/RfP leaders were actively involved in this forum:

With Muthukumaraswamy Aram and his daughter Vinu, peacemakers from India had come, to whom the pacification of Nagaland was due. With A.T. Ariyaratne, the participants had the “Gandhi of Sri Lanka” among them, whose Sarvodaya movement (according to the Sarvodaya principle - “welfare for all” - Mahatma Gandhi) is present in 15,000 villages on the island - with development work, educational work, women’s work and ecological work. With Mitri Raheb, there came a representative of Palestinian liberation theology. The most painful contribution was made by Smail Balic, an enlightened Muslim with a Bosnian background living in Vienna, when he asked - in the midst of the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia - what could be learned for the ethos of religions from the conflicts and the ethnic cleansings, some of which were dressed up in religious-national terms. His contribution relentlessly described how, in this war, religious slogans and sentiments were still used for campaigns of conquest and to legitimize inhumane behavior. It was an impassioned appeal to religious communities in particular to oppose the new fanaticism. The *Religions for Peace* movement had already made efforts before that time to form a group of leading figures from the former Yugoslavia from Judaism, Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam who worked together for a process of peace and reconciliation, meeting for the first time at a European gathering in 1993 on the Swedish island of Gotland, and subsequently maintained an office in Sarajevo for years. The Reis el Ulama - the highest representative of Islam in Bosnia - Mustafa Cerić has worked tirelessly on this.

In Topic Areas 3-5, which were specifically dedicated to the pedagogical task - first with fundamental considerations, then in view of the school and in view of extra-curricular education - there was also broad international representation: With John Hull from England and Beyza Bilgin from Türkiye, pioneers of internationally oriented interreligious pedagogy, with Reijo Heinonen from Finland, who brought in examples of imaginative learning for practicing responsibility for the world, with the psychologist Sripen Supapitayakul from Thailand, who spoke about the psychological structures in learning for tolerance and non-violence, with Yoshiaki Iisaka, Protestant sociologist, advisor to the Japanese imperial family and champion of interreligious dialogue between East Asia and Europe, Wesley Arjarajah, Deputy General Secretary

⁵¹ Küng, *Weltethos - Erziehung* (1995) 34.

of the World Council of Churches from Geneva, who made the link between the conciliar process and the global ethic project, and Gordon Mitchell, who spoke on principles for rebuilding religious-ethical education in South African schools. But also, Raimund Hoenen brought in the problems and opportunities of a religious-ethical new beginning in East German schools.

The author tried to give the gist of the perspectives of the 5th Nuremberg Forum for a conference on the Global Ethic Project in the following year, 1995, in Tutzing by formulating 10 theses on “Global Ethic and Education”:⁵²

1. To the maxims formulated by Hans Küng are

- No peace among nations without peace among religions
- No peace among religions without dialogue between religions
- No dialogue between the religions without basic research in the religions

To this needs to be added:

- No peace, no dialogue, and no basic research in the religions without educational effort!

Only if young people have respect for their fellow human beings, feel responsibility for all living creatures and for nature, and are sensitive to hatred, violence, and developments that are hostile to life and society, will they be equipped to live together in a way that opens up a future for our planet.

It is about

- learning for a habitable earth (in the face of impending ecological collapse),
- learning for a mature exercise of the individual’s freedoms and obligations in accordance with human rights (in the face of the threat of incapacitation by technocratic systems, by simplistic ideologies, by impoverishment and economic-political enslavement/criminalization),
- learning for a meaningful way of life (in the face of the threat of ‘enforced conformity’ in media culture and prosperity ideology and ‘mental pollution’),
- learning to live together in solidarity in families, communities, regional and international horizons (in the face of the dangers of disintegrating family structures, the absence of an elementary sense of ethical values, and the resurgence of national fanaticisms and particularisms).

2. Educational efforts in the spirit of of the global ethic live from the fact that there are religions and worldviews as “responsible systems of meaning” that are able to convey their value traditions into the present pluralistic reality. They do not need standardization, but specification, in order to give meaning to life and inspire

⁵² These theses can be found with detailed explanations in J. Lähnemann: Das Projekt Weltethos - Herausforderung für die Erziehung. Concilium 37/Oct. 2001, 495-508.

responsible action from their respective traditions - with their spirituality, their foundations of knowledge, and their social and ethical design.

3. Education in the spirit of the global ethic depends on structural conditions: that children experience love, security and protection, - that they are offered opportunities to live, learn and develop under personal guidance:

- free from exploitation in structures of impoverishment
- free from neglect in structures of consumerism

Work on improving structural conditions must be understood as a political priority task to which the religious and ideological communities have their contributions to make.

4. Educational effort in the spirit of the global ethic is a differentiated value education, which requires human rights as a basis for its realization as well as communication with the religious-ideological traditions operating in society.

5. Educational effort in the spirit of the global ethic is an education in non-violent conflict resolution.

6. Educational effort in the spirit of the global ethic is an education in comprehensive respect for life.

7. Educational effort in the spirit of the global ethic is an education in truthfulness, tolerance and mutual respect.

Those who are informed, who have differentiated knowledge, who have learned to inquire and question, cannot simply be lied to or duped.

The aim is to prepare young people for a life together that is not burdened by barriers of prejudice, but in which it is possible to listen to and learn from each other, which leads to the dissolution of boundaries and the enrichment of the horizons of life for all involved.

8. Educational effort in the spirit of the global ethic is an education in living together in solidarity in families, communities, and regional and international horizons.

Successful examples of solidarity lived in practice are educationally effective in the best possible sense, both on a small and large scale: they prevent apathy and can have an inviting and contagious effect. Their systematic documentation and networking can give the Global Ethic Project a foothold on the ground.

9. Educational efforts in the spirit of the global ethic require academic work - especially in the areas of conflict education, environmental education, and religious, interreligious and intercultural education.

The work on guidelines and textbook research in particular needs to be broadened and deepened.

10. Educational endeavors in the spirit of the global ethic require cooperation, international exchange and mutual inspiration through the documentation and evaluation of existing educational projects and the stimulation and development of new ones.

The 5th Nuremberg Forum received a broad international resonance because - as with the 4th Nuremberg Forum - 7 contributions were published in a special issue of the British Journal of Religious Education (BJRE).⁵³

4.3 New Signals in the Mid-1990s

Immediately after the Forum, A.T. Ariyaratne (a Buddhist from Sri Lanka), Vinu Aram (a Hindu from India) and Beyza Bilgin (a Muslim from Türkiye) traveled with the author to Geneva, where UNESCO's 44th International Conference on Education was taking place, attended by education ministers from all continents. The author was asked to prepare a round table on "Education for tolerance and mutual understanding: the role of religions". On the podium, there were statements from representatives of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Baha'i religion - each on the following questions: 1)

1. What motivations for tolerance and mutual understanding exist in my religion? 2)
2. What are the main problems and challenges currently - from my perspective - in this field? 3)
3. How is my religious community involved in initiatives and projects for tolerance and mutual understanding? 4)
4. What are the main needs and tasks to improve education in this field? From a secular perspective, the Secretary of Education of the Philippines, Ricarda T. Gloria, contributed to the round table, and from the UN perspective, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Abdelfattah Amor.

This round table was a sign that the task of interreligious understanding and education was also being taken up anew at the level of international politics. This had already been preceded by discussions at European level.

The recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1.202/1993) concerning religious tolerance in democratic societies called upon the governments of the member states, inter alia, "to ensure that the teaching of religion and ethics is a part of general school instruction and to work toward a

⁵³ British Journal of Religious Education (BJRE), Volume 18:1, Autumn 1995.

differentiated and careful presentation of religions in textbooks (including history textbooks) and in school instruction with a view toward a better and deeper understanding of each other's religions. ... to emphasize that a background knowledge of one's own religion or ethical principles is a prerequisite for real tolerance and can also be a protection against indifference and prejudice ...".⁵⁴

For Germany, the memorandum of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) "Identity and Understanding" formed a landmark, to which Karl Ernst Nipkow contributed significantly.⁵⁵ It expounded a determination of the position and development of perspectives of religious education in view of the newly experienced plurality. For its design, this meant that it is open to the desired participation of non-Protestant students and that denominational and also interreligious cooperation is affirmed. Accordingly, a "subject group" of religion and ethics is envisaged in which, in addition to Protestant and Roman Catholic religious education (and ethics as a substitute or alternative subject), Orthodox, Jewish and Islamic religious education can also have their place. Thus, a clear position of the Protestant Church is taken in a period characterized by a pluralization of teaching offers in the overall field: the establishment of the subject "Lebensgestaltung-Ethik-Religionskunde" (Lifestyle-ethics-religion) in Brandenburg (1996), "Religious Education for All" in Hamburg, and the increasing development of a substitute or alternative offer to strictly religious education in various federal states.

The memorandum benefited from the preliminary work of a working group of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the Arnoldshain Conference, which in the second half of the 1980s had prepared the study "Religions, Religiosity and Christian Faith"⁵⁶ - chaired by Carl Heinz Ratschow and Theo Sundermeier. In this study, the mission of religious encounter (mission in a broad sense), which encompasses the three dimensions of witness (mission in the narrower sense), dialogue and peaceful coexistence, is justified from the center of a Trinitarian understanding of Protestant theology. What is new here is the concept of peaceful coexistence, which is grounded in creation theology. Founded in God's creative will, the church is instructed to live together with people who are socially and religiously foreign to it, which is concretized in readiness to help one another. Thus, encounters are broadened by an essential basic perspective of positively conceived coexistence.

⁵⁴ Taken from: German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Printed Matter 12/4572, 20.

⁵⁵ Identität und Verständigung. Standort und Perspektiven des Religionsunterrichts in der Pluralität. Eine Denkschrift der Ev. Kirche in Deutschland. Gütersloh 1994.

⁵⁶ Religionen, Religiosität und christlicher Glaube. Eine Studie, hg. im Auftrag der Arnoldshainer Konferenz und der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands. Gütersloh 1991.

Conceptually, Stephan Leimgruber's work - "Interreligious Learning"⁵⁷ - has become groundbreaking for the Roman Catholic side, especially in the way in which pedagogical conclusions were drawn from the declarations of Vatican II.

⁵⁷ S. Leimgruber: *Interreligiöses Lernen*. München 1995 (in 2nd edition 2007 revised and considerably expanded).

5. The 6th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace (RfP)*, the Initiative for a Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) and the Nuremberg Forum “Interreligious Education 2000”



Ill. 3 Pope John Paul II. opens the 6th World Assembly 1994 at the Vatican

Shortly after the 5th Nuremberg Forum, the 6th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* was held in November 1994, in Europe for the first time since 1974. The overall theme of the Assembly was “Healing the World: Religions for Peace.” It opened at the Vatican. Pope John Paul II did not invite delegates to the audience hall, but to the hall of the Synod of Bishops. There, the delegates were greeted by the Pope, and he jokingly called the gathering “The other Bishops’ Synod.” Also in attendance were the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople (Istanbul), the General Secretary of the Muslim World League, and representatives of the World Council of Churches and of all the other major religions. The deliberations then continued in *Riva on Lake Garda*, with the special support of the *Fondazione Opera Dei Caduti*, formed around the world’s largest bell, built from cannons used in the world wars, in neighboring Rovereto. Prayers were also held there.

Six Commissions worked on the following topics:

1. Isolation and Indifference: Searching for a Common Ethic;
2. Violence and War: Building Peace and Security;

3. Injustice and Poverty: Struggling for Equitable and Sustainable Development;
4. Oppression and Discrimination: Affirming Rights and Responsibilities;
5. Wasted Life: Caring for the Child;
6. Endangered Earth: Restoring Ecological Harmony. One of the four Sub-Commissions of Commission 5 (the child) was on “Religious and Interreligious Education”, which the author chaired. The Commission Report mentioned problems, needs, spiritual and ethical contributions, and projects.⁵⁸

The problems which religious and inter-religious education need to address include:

- religious fanaticism on the one hand
- radicalization of secularism on the other, especially in Western Europe
- the loss of values among the youth
- the weakness of the family and the educational system in giving religious support
- materialism and over-consumption in society
- lack of economic and educational systems in developing countries

The needs to address these problems include:

- educating our children to have respect for their own faiths and traditions - being “at home” in their own values systems and open to learning about other value systems
- the need for religious communities which support family and educational systems in transmitting religious values
- the need for love and understanding at home
- being guided to responsibility
- being open to others’ needs

Spiritual and ethical contributions

- Spiritual education is fundamental and needs to be considered in relation to ethical education as it puts ethics into a broader context. The ultimate sense of personal identity and of the world is provided by religions. This emphasizes the importance of religious education and the need for religions to impart spiritual understanding in an effective manner.

Several projects were described as being effective examples of how we can be involved in religious and inter-religious education:

- The Shap Working Party (UK) on World Religions in Education works in several areas. They develop teaching materials; encourage encounters in schools and

⁵⁸ The report has been circulated among the assembly participants and the RfP network but is not published otherwise.

congregations; revise text books; teacher training; and a calendar for religious festivals.

- In Germany, state schools have encouraged studies to make children more familiar with their own religious traditions, and to be open to others which are also developed for other religious education.
- Schneller Schools in Amman, Jordan and Khirbet Kanafar, Lebanon work for tolerance and understanding. They are run by Christians for Muslim and Christian children of all denominations, especially orphans and children from poor families. They have learned to live together in the Spirit of Tolerance also during the Civil War in Lebanon.
- The Ramakrishna Mission in India has successfully linked education about Hinduism with the multi-religious social scenario present in most areas of the country.
- The Focolare movement is an example of community education for young people, making them aware of the meaning of unity and giving them a sense of responsibility for the whole world.

The final declaration of the World Assembly, the “Riva del Garda Declaration”, also includes the sub-committee’s concern in a particular passage:

Educating the children about the beliefs and values of both their own religious tradition and that of others is of paramount importance in seeking a peaceful world. Families are the first educators of children, and must be supported, sustained and strengthened by religious communities.

It is striking that education and learning are strongly focused on families and religious communities. Interreligious education as a task of public education is still hardly in view.

An important basic insight that emerged during the consultations was the realization that *Religions for Peace* need not only conferences as well as grassroots work for encounter, understanding and cooperation, but also continuous and systematic work in key areas such as peace education. This was the impetus for the founding of a *Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC)*, of which the author became the chairman. It was established in a pilot phase, supported by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and has since continuously documented interreligious peace education projects and brought them into exchange with one another. The author had observed that, at many conferences and meetings, he kept coming across highly interesting peace education projects in and with the religious communities, but that they hardly ever knew about each other, let alone cooperated with each other in terms of their visions, goals, methods and experiences.

The 5th Nuremberg Forum, organized with Hans Küng, was also the starting signal for a rapidly developing and expanding educational work of the Global Ethic Project. A stroke of luck for this was the establishment of the Global Ethic Foundation in

1995, made possible by a large financial contribution from the couple Karl Konrad and Ria von der Groeben. They had to leave their count's estate in East Prussia in 1945, but had then become successful in business in West Germany. When it came to deciding on the task to which they would donate considerable part of their fortune, reading Hans Küng's book on the global ethic tipped the scales: they wanted to commit themselves permanently to this project and its visions. To this end, the University of Tübingen received the largest donation in its history, amounting to 5 million Deutsche Mark. The establishment of the Foundation made it possible for Hans Küng, even after his retirement, to set up a small staff and a work unit for which pedagogical work became a priority area of responsibility. As early as 1996, a pedagogical competition was organized in which teaching projects on the global ethic could be submitted as prize-winning works. A lot of imagination and concrete learning work came to light. The intellectually demanding impulses of the Global Ethic Declaration have not only been developed in philosophy and religion classes at high school level. Competition works also came from the areas of Hauptschule, Realschule and even elementary school, starting with a unit "Discover - Marvel - Act" in the 2nd grade, and the prize-winning works were published by Werner Haußmann and me in two volumes.⁵⁹

In 1997, the 6th Nuremberg Forum took place. With its overall theme "Interreligious Education 2000. The Future of Religious and Cultural Encounters," the participants not only took note of developments that had taken place in the meantime, but also consciously directed their gaze to the impending transition to the third millennium. It became even more diverse and rich in perspectives than the previous congresses, and benefited especially from the cooperation with WCRP/RfP. Not only had religious-ideological plurality increased in many countries; areas of friction had also increased, new areas of tension had opened up, conflicts had broken out anew. At the same time, cross-border initiatives for encounter, understanding and cooperation had increased - especially in the field of education.

The questions were: How can religious education help the individual to lead a meaningful and responsible life? How can interreligious education help to prevent conflicts, to break down enemy images in conflicts, to carry out reconciliation work after conflicts?

At the forum, the various major religious traditions of the present day were intended to be present through authentic representatives.

⁵⁹ J. Lähnemann, W. Haußmann (ed.): Unterrichtsprojekte Weltethos I. Grundschule - Hauptschule - Sekundarstufe I, Hamburg-Rissen 2000. = Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 17. Unterrichtsprojekte Weltethos 2. Realschule - Gymnasium - Berufsschule Hamburg-Rissen 2000. = Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 18.

Another concern was to draw theologians and educators from hotspot regions of multicultural and multireligious coexistence: for example, from the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, South Africa and India. But speakers also came from Northern Ireland, Russia, Hong Kong and Costa Rica.

The aim was not least to gain important perspectives from international experience for the tasks of interreligious education in Germany.

With 50 speakers from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, the VI Nuremberg Forum offered a great breadth and variety of analyses, conceptual designs, project presentations and academic exchange.

A basic pedagogical insight emerged: The mere coexistence of people from different religions, which seemed to be successful over decades, even over generations, is not sufficient to counteract sudden flares of fanaticism and violence - unless an authentic knowledge and understanding of the other religions is practiced. To this end, it is also necessary to be able to interpret one's own faith in a tolerant manner. This was shown, for example, by the examples of Cyprus, Lebanon and the former Yugoslavia. Of course, the particular political, economic, ethnic and socio-psychological factors of conflict must also be taken into account.⁶⁰

With the opening lecture, the organizers were able to set a highly relevant impulse for religious dialogue. For it, they had won Annemarie Schimmel, the great Islamic mysticism and poetry scholar and bridge-builder between the cultures - in terms of language, content and poetry. In her unfolding of the foundations of Christian and Islamic mysticism, she showed the mutually enriching interreligious lines of connection between the mystics, their insights into the deepest mystery of God's mercy, developed free of any religious narrowness. When the author gave her a brief glimpse of the broad international audience that awaited her just before her lecture, she asked him if she should give her lecture alternately in German and in English. He replied that this would be quite welcome, but could not allow for an extension of her speaking time. "I will keep to my speaking time," she replied. After the greeting, she stood behind the lectern, closed her eyes, began in German, switched to English after a few minutes - clear, understandable, pictorial - and ended her remarks punctually after three-quarters of an hour! With some effort, the organizers transcribed her oral speech in both German and English, sent it to her, and then received permission from her to publish it.

⁶⁰ This and the following in essence after J. Lähnemann: 'Zur Zukunft der Religions- und Kulturbegegnung. Perspektiven des VI. Nürnberger Forums.' In J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Interreligiöse Erziehung 2000. Zur Zukunft der Religions- und Kulturbegegnung*. Hamburg-Rissen 1998. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 16, 15-21.

Karl Ernst Nipkow, on the other hand, devoted his attention to the hard conditions and difficulties of religious encounter in the context of the school by choosing the topic “Truthfulness in faith and care for a habitable earth in justice.” For learning in plurality, he defined the task of developing identity profiles and at the same time thinking and acting in a future-oriented way. At the closing plenary session, in a kind of talk show with the group leaders of the five thematic areas, he gave a masterful summary of how the often-harsh realities of political and religious fields of tension can be worked on constructively in the long term.

Theme I - “Dialogue and Cooperation: Visions, Obstacles, Perspectives” - was guided by the question: Can the religions, as paths to truth, really accept plurality and the task of peaceful and honest understanding, value them positively, and incorporate them into their self-understanding?

It turned out that, in all seven religious traditions that had their say here - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha’i’, indigenous religions - do have motivations for overcoming particularity and exclusivity. However, too few thought structures had been developed so far to enable constructive appreciation of the otherness, strangeness and “competition” of other religions and to do justice to the self-understanding of the others in dialogical encounters. Hans Küng’s maxim - “No dialogue between religions without basic research in the religions” - proved to be justified. For the “homework” pending here for the religious communities, starting points were shown in all presentations. It is part of the ethos of this work to endure incompatibilities, to remain in dialogue with each other in all diversity and strangeness, to reflect on the global diversity of challenges for one’s own self-understanding, and also to engage in dialogue with the “hardliners” in one’s own religion.

Theme II - “Navigating between fundamentalism and relativism: problem analyses and case studies” - offered an open world map of problem areas related to religion: The relationship between religions and politics, religions and the economy, and religions and human rights was reflected on in selected examples, as well as the development of religious plurality and secularity in “Western” contexts of life, new “fundamentalisms” on the soil of former socialist states and inherited structures of prejudice between Christian and Islamic world regions. The thesis of the impending “clash of civilizations” (Samuel Huntington) was discussed and critically questioned, but also taken seriously as an element of a problem-laden future scenario. The interconnectedness of various world problems came to light in the examination of disastrous developments, as did the task of reviving the value traditions present in the religious communities, which would have to counteract a “war of civilizations”. Edy Korthals Altes passionately answered in the affirmative the question posed in the theme of his lecture - “Religions and politics in Europe - a coalition for survival?”: he argued that we need such a coalition without religions and politics taking over each other. In this context, religions stand for a perspective which, from a

transcendental framework of thought and background of experience, is broader and more fundamental than politics, which often thinks in terms of short-term electoral periods. Conversely, religions must learn to appreciate the realism of political work.

The basis for the necessary dialogue and cooperation in these areas is a sober analysis of the problem areas, which does not indulge in buzzwords, but takes as close a look as possible at the respective conditioning factors - historical, psychological, religious-motivational ... - as precisely as possible (Richard Friedli). This applies to the phenomena of religious pluralization in the highly industrialized states of the West and the Far East, the different developments in various Islamic countries and the formation of a European Islam (Udo Steinbach), and to the developments in China (Kwok Nai Wang) as well as in Russia (Vladimir Fedorov). Identifying and dealing with prejudices and stereotypes between religions and cultures, and confronting intolerance within their own ranks, is a particular challenge for religious communities.

The motto of Theme III - "Commitment to a Culture of Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness" - which dealt with principles of interreligious education, is taken from the Global Ethic Declaration (the third of the "Irrevocable Directives"). Karl Ernst Nipkow took up this motto in his fundamental paper - supplemented by the task of "caring for a habitable earth in social justice". The "encounter" as the immediate coming together, perceiving each other authentically in what unites as well as in what is foreign, and the cooperation of teachers and students of different origins in the plurality of school educational offerings (not only in religious education!) is presented as a way to develop identity profiles and, at the same time, to think and act together in a future-oriented way. Hans Glöckel explained from the perspective of schools theory what essential tasks religious education has to fulfill in terms of creating meaning, cultural orientation and social assistance.

Exchange, systematization of gained experiences and transfer were perspectives that proved to be important in this subject area (as well as in the two following subject areas): in reflecting on the relationship between interreligious, denominational and ethical education (Christoph Scheilke), in the mutual development of Islamic and Christian religious education (Beyza Bilgin, Nevzat Aşıkoğlu), and in the networking of intercultural and interreligious education, which have so far developed too little in contact and cooperation (Michael Konrad, Helgard Jamal).

Special emphasis was placed on the presentation of the first results of the work of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP). In the pilot phase of the commission's work (which was supported by the Working Group for Development Education and Journalism of the Protestant Church in Germany), exemplary analyses of projects were developed under the author's leadership by Jutta Müller and Hans van Willenswaard. These are

projects that have turned to a particular problem area from an interreligious perspective and have addressed it through inter-religious and intercultural cooperation. The concepts, learning and training methods developed in these projects, as well as the experience gained, invite the development of possible applications to different, but comparable problem regions (as, for example, in the cooperation of the Peace Village Neue Shalom/Wahad as Salam in Israel with integrative schools in Northern Ireland). The work of this commission aimed at continuing the stimulation and cross-fertilization of corresponding initiatives worldwide.

Topic IV dealt with the concretization of future-oriented encounters in schools and universities. The linking of intercultural and interreligious education, the task of international cooperation, as well as the problems and ways of anchoring interreligious education in curricula, teacher training and school practice, were all illustrated with examples.

The questions that arose for peace education after the long years of oppression, harm and trauma experienced in Palestine were particularly future-oriented, but their treatment was repeatedly accompanied by disappointments in the years that followed.

A basic guideline for all the projects presented was developed by John Hull, who called for a 'de-religionistic religious education' - i.e. a religious education that consciously refrains from creating negative images of other religions in order to make one's own religion stand out all the more brightly and "truly". The positive counter-image is the unifying reference to a global ethic, as formulated in the Global Ethic Declaration. Karl-Josef Kuschel showed how this declaration is increasingly being incorporated into concrete teaching projects not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in schools. Marina Chichowa illustrated its topicality as a key text for opening up a plausible and responsible entry into schools and teacher training for the new religious education to be established in Russia, an approach that, unfortunately, could not gain a broadly effective foothold in the strongly nationalistic politics to which Russia would revert again in later years.

Topic Area V, which focused on extracurricular fields, turned out to be the most diverse overall. Its hallmark was the focus on the problem regions of multiculturalism and multi-religiosity mentioned at the beginning: Israel/Palestine, South Africa, England, but also India and, above all, the former Yugoslavia. From Germany, the project "Bibliodrama with Jews, Christians and Muslims" (Heiner Aldebert) was contributed, as well as the evaluation of several years of experience of interreligious work "on site" (Johannes Lähnemann).

Israel/Palestine, as a region with currently particularly high tensions, proved to be a fruitful field for pedagogical exchange at that time: From the Israeli side, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) was represented by Ron Kronish,

from Bethlehem there came Viola Raheb, and from the peace village Neue Schalom/Wahhat as Salam Hermann Sieben. Interreligious educational experiences from times of civil war were contributed by the example of the Schneller School in Khirbet Kanafar/Lebanon (Susanne Lähnemann). The example of this school shows the value of educating children from different religions and ethnic groups together in mutual knowledge of, and respect for, one another's beliefs: The school was able to sustain its educational and reconciliatory work throughout the 17 years of civil war and has impressive examples of mutual advocacy by Muslim and Christian children for each other. Neue Schalom/Wahhad as Salam does the same for Israeli and Palestinian youth in Israel. The training methods of mutual perception and "change of perspective" can be considered exemplary for comparable conflict regions. Overall, however, there was still too little coordination of peace education exchanges in the region in 1997: Viola Raheb and Ron Kronish learned about each other's work for the first time at this forum!

A similar encounter took place between the representatives from South Africa who, each in their respective context (the University of Stellenbosch/Cornelia Roux, traditionally attended by students of European descent, the teacher training established in the former "homeland" Transkei/Theodula Müller), have done exemplary work in strengthening the identity of young people after the end of apartheid. The new learning and re-learning after the mono-religiously and mono-culturally dominated era turned out to be a challenge especially for teachers; they were often still influenced by the official, and also, in the apartheid school policy, practiced, devaluation of the religious and cultural traditions that exist in South Africa outside of "white" Christianity.

Cross-cultural learning for women in the black African context, presented by Nyaradzai Gumbonzwanda from Zimbabwe, and the task of interreligious learning against religious intolerance and caste egotism, which has proved to be necessary even in the Hindu context of India, which is otherwise very open in religious terms (Vinu Aram), present similar difficulties. In the international exchange, the long previous experiences and projects of religious education research on multiculturalism in England proved to be especially fruitful, as Eleanor Nesbitt was able to show by the example of a curriculum review with young British Hindus.

The contributions to the interreligious reconciliation work in the former Yugoslavia had a weight of their own: Smail Balic as the mouthpiece of the traditionally pro-European Islam in Bosnia, Saba Risaluddin as head of the WCRP reconciliation office in Sarajevo and John Taylor as the representative of the Conference of European Churches for the former Yugoslavia were able to make visible the situation of the people and peoples burdened by the terrible events of the war years. At a time when the wounds still lay bare and there were hardly any forces for reconstruction, the "Declaration of Shared Moral Commitments" of the religious leaders in Bosnia-

Herzegovina (Islamic, Roman Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, Jewish), initiated by WCRP, was perceived as a special signal of hope. The question of how to communicate it to the grassroots in a dialogical and pedagogical way was a central topic of the discussions.

Throughout the forum, the crucial importance of interreligious education in prevention, conflict accompaniment and minimization, and, not least, the necessary post-conflict reconciliation processes, became apparent.

Here, the consequences for religious education work in Germany have become evident again and again: it has to intensify and differentiate interreligious education, especially in a preventative way, and to anchor it both inside and outside of school, in an alert awareness of the international dimension. This task is not the sole responsibility of religious education, even though it has a guiding function here. Rather, it is to be developed in the cooperation of various subjects, in the coordination of curriculum and textbook development, and in teacher training, and it extends into the shaping of school life as well as out-of-school educational processes. In this context, basic theological work in the religious communities and the analysis of specific social and pedagogical problem areas take on special significance.

The fact that the Nuremberg Forums have proven to be a singular platform for subject-related international, interreligious and interdisciplinary cooperation in this way was appreciated by the practicing educators, but especially also by the overseas speakers.

When the Forum volume appeared in the fall of 1998, reference could already be made to the 8th Nuremberg Forum, planned for September 2000 under the theme "Spirituality and Ethical Education. Heritage and Challenge for Religions."

6. A New Diversity of Religious Didactics and International Cooperation at the 7th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* (1999) in Amman.



Ill. 4 King Abdullah II. and Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan of Jordan open the VII. World Assembly 1999 in Amman

For a long time, religious education in Great Britain had played a pioneering role in a lively, practical didactics of world religions. In the course of the 1990s, the topic of religions and the task of interreligious learning increasingly developed in the German-speaking countries from a rather marginal topic to an area of content to be systematically integrated into religious education: specifically, a broadening across more age groups - from secondary school education to elementary and adult education, with the effort for authentic representations especially also in textbooks, with a movement from “learning about” to learning through encounter, with the promotion of interdisciplinary approaches and first attempts at empirical research.

After Stefan Leimgruber’s work “Interreligious Learning” had initiated a new departure in Roman Catholic religious education, the author’s book “Protestant Religious

Education in an Interreligious Perspective”⁶¹ and Karl Ernst Nipkow’s double volume “Education in a Plural World”⁶² appeared in 1998.

The title of the author’s monograph, *Evangelische Erziehung in interreligiöser Perspektive*, was programmatic, insofar as he endeavored to place “the gospel” (= “Evangelium”) and interreligious learning in a constructive relationship with one another. In doing so, it was important for the author not to see “the gospel” simply as the siglum of Protestantism, but to understand it as the “good news” that Jesus brought, and of which he himself is the content. The author described the history of religious education from the perspective of “reflection on one’s own faith and openness to other cultures and religions.” He described the situation of adolescents with examples from different religious-cultural contexts: a rejection of any generalizing labeling and a plea for a mindful perception of the respective living and learning conditions. Reference to the word, deeds and way of Jesus Christ became theologically central to religious pedagogical orientation, from which a bridge-building “pedagogy of the Gospel” can be derived. The author pleaded, and still pleads, for a definition of the relationship between Christianity and world religions that understands the dialogue in such a way that, in it, the experience of truth and tolerance, identity and understanding are related to each other as two poles. The truth experience of one’s own tradition and the task of mission - i.e. to be a convincing witness of one’s own faith - are not left aside, but are brought into an open process, which includes tolerance and respect for others, enables learning from each other, and is aware that all our earthly knowledge and speaking happens within earthly limitations. That God, that the “ultimate concern,” is ultimately always greater than human understanding, is an insight common to the various theologies of religions. The volume also devotes itself in detail to specific teaching modalities. Under the motto “Learning in the lived context of faith,” principles and examples from various educational fields are developed - from elementary school to adult education.

The doctoral dissertation by Karlo Meyer (1999) also became important during these years.⁶³ Like Werner Haußmann’s doctoral dissertation, it built a bridge between British and German religious education and made both the multicultural experiences in Great Britain and the teaching methods developed there fruitful for dialogue. The approaches and practically tested models of “learning religion” (denominational) and “learning about religion” (religious studies) to a “learning from religion”, as developed by Robert Jackson, Michael Grimmith, John Hull and others, have given

⁶¹ J. Lähnemann: *Evangelische Religionspädagogik in interreligiöser Perspektive*. Göttingen 1998.

⁶² K. E. Nipkow: *Bildung in einer pluralen Welt. I: Moralphädagogik im Pluralismus. II: Religionspädagogik im Pluralismus*, Gütersloh 1998.

⁶³ K. Meyer: *Zeugnisse fremder Religionen im Unterricht. „Weltreligionen“ im deutschen und englischen Religionsunterricht*. Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999.

new clarity to the possibilities of encounter in teaching. Werner Haußmann's suggestion of "personalization" - making religious experiences visible in the life examples of children in particular where direct encounter is not possible - was taken further by Karlo Meyer: Children and their families who live in a certain religious tradition - for example: Islam and Judaism - are interviewed and tell vividly how they live their faith. In doing so, Karlo Meyer consciously wants to take seriously the strangeness between the religions both hermeneutically and practically: how one must give space to foreign religious "facts" in their uniqueness and how essential the follow-up conversation is in which the students are validated.

In these years, the Hamburg path of "religious education for all" has become conceptually and practically significant. The Protestant side - above all the Pedagogical Theological Institute of Hamburg (Horst Gloy, Folkert Doedens) and the Protestant religious education department at the university (Wolfram Weiße, Thorsten Knauth) - has contributed decisively to this. From the very beginning, "Dialogue" has been the decisive characteristic: based on the understanding of dialogue by Martin Buber and Hans-Jochen Margull, it has been developed in discussion with various religious communities in the multicultural Hanseatic city and is supported jointly by them. Part of the dialogue is that the student orientation is given priority over the denominational principle. This has since been elaborated in a wealth of practical teaching aids.⁶⁴

Internationally, it was a special signal that the 7th World Assembly of WCRP/RfP 1999 took place in Amman, Jordan - in the middle of an area of tension in the Middle East. Jordan had proved to be a special "pole of calm" in this conflict region over all these years, promoted above all by the royal house with King Abdullah II and his uncle, Prince Hassan bin Talal, who was for many years president of the Club of Rome and moderator of the World Council of WCRP. The theme of the conference was "Action for Common Living. The Role of Religions in the next Millennium." Prince Hassan himself took on the task of chairman; King Abdullah II gave a committed speech at the opening: The Middle East - as the cradle of Judaism, Christianity and Islam - must give completely new signals of understanding at the turn of the millennium; the Holy Land - and of course especially Jerusalem - does not belong exclusively to anyone, but should become a place of pilgrimage of peace for the world!

360 delegates from all parts of the world attended, along with more than 800 observers from religious communities and other non-governmental organizations, as well as from the political and cultural spheres. The conflict regions of the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone (West Africa), and Indonesia were particularly well

⁶⁴ W. Weiße (ed.): Dialogischer Religionsunterricht in Hamburg. Positionen, Analysen und Perspektiven im europäischen Kontext. Münster 2008.= Religionen im Dialog 2.

represented. From Sierra Leone - ravaged by civil war for 11 years - and from Indonesia came not only religious leaders, but also the state presidents themselves. Ahmad Teju Kabbah of Sierra Leone and Abdurahman Wahid, newly elected president of Indonesia, were themselves devout and consciously liberal Muslims. In all three regions, WCRP worked to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation by building interfaith cooperation. In Sarajevo, the Roman Catholic Cardinal Vinko Puljic, the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Mrjdja Nikolai, the leader of the Islamic community Mustafa Ceric and the representative of the Jewish communities Jakob Finci had agreed on a declaration of "common moral commitments" describing concrete steps toward reconciliation. In Sierra Leone, the Interfaith Council was the body that ultimately brought the government and rebels to joint agreements.

A second focus of the World Assembly was the work of the commissions. At the 1994 World Assembly in Rome and Riva, Italy, the establishment of Standing Commissions had been initiated in order to continuously promote - beyond current conflict resolution - the contribution of religions in the areas of development and ecology, disarmament and security, human rights and human responsibilities and - last but not least - peace education. For the "Peace Education Standing Commission/PESC", those at the Chair of Religious Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg had taken the lead: Religious and Interreligious Education, Education for Nonviolent Communication and Conflict Resolution, Environmental Education and Education for Socio-Economic Development were the three major areas in which they sought to build an international network. The Commission met four days before the World Assembly for a seminar at the Theodor Schneller School in Amman in their newly-designed guest house. Invited to the seminar were representatives of interreligious peace education projects from Israel and Palestine. The courage with which they set pedagogical signs of encounter between young Jews and Palestinians against all tendencies to fanaticism was admirable. The opportunity to meet in an exemplary Christian school in Jordan and to exchange ideas with an international circle of inter-religiously committed educators had an inspiring effect. For the Theodor Schneller School, it was the first time that Christian, Jewish and Muslim educators from Israel and Palestine came together at this seminar, which was called together from all over the world. They got to know the school and its facilities with great interest and spent a morning visiting classroom lessons. The participants asked whether the other religions should not also be discussed in Christian as well as in Muslim religious instruction in the school, which had hardly ever been done before, and whether there should not also be a room for prayers for the Muslim students. Admittedly, they also discovered that there was a white spot in geography books where Israel was located.

During the World Assembly, an “Amman Appeal on Peace Education” was prepared by the Commission and presented to the plenary assembly. It comprehensively highlights the main areas of interreligious peace education:

PEACE EDUCATION AND RELIGIONS

There is hardly any war, civil war or conflict without religious and/or ideological implications.

This fact calls upon religions to make their contribution towards changing these situations of conflict and violence against human beings and nature.

We, responsible persons and believers of the different religions and denominations gathering at the VIIth World Assembly of WCRP at Amman, wish to stress that education is one of the most important factors for breaking down ignorance and prejudices, which are the dangerous preconditions for violent conflict.

Religions have to join in these educational efforts, already undertaken by educators in many areas of the world, in many fields - religious education, history, sociology, ethics and vocational training - and with many resources ranging from the experiences and discoveries of young people themselves to the judicious use of mass media and information technology.

The specific educational contribution of the religions is twofold - inward and outward:

Through an inner renewal of their spiritual resources and motivations, religions can show ways leading towards peace and reconciliation and they can improve the sense of responsibility for social justice and the integrity of creation; such education for renewal can draw on talents and vocations of each individual and contribute to their sense of personal fulfillment and their commitment to communal responsibility.

Looking outward to the wider community, religions have to create an open atmosphere for real encounter and cooperation between different religious and also non-religious persons and organizations. They should devote care to obtaining and spreading an authentic understanding of the faiths of others. Likewise, when articulating their own belief to members of other religions and world-views in a respectful way and at the same time refusing all kinds of proselytizing.

Lively interreligious contact and dialogue are increasingly essential not only for peace education, but for religions themselves.

The following three areas of peace education provide challenges which have to be faced by religious initiatives:

1. Religious and interreligious education

- Encouraging contact and cooperation between theologians and religious teachers from different religions as well as experts of comparative religion
- Improving the training of religious teachers and clergy in the knowledge of other religions and world-views and their ethical principles - permitting each side to present its identity
- Reviewing and revising guidelines, syllabi and textbooks concerning their presentation of other religions and world-views
- Including encounters with believers of different religions in educational programs
- Drawing on the particular experiences of children, young people, women and men in family education and formal education
- Developing and producing relevant material for the media
- Promoting a style of living with respect for differences and with freedom of thought and religious conviction

2. Education towards non-violent communication and conflict solution

- Creating or improving networking between educational projects and initiatives in order to focus on existing and potential ways to lessen conflict and promote cooperation
- Developing the possibilities of spiritual motivation and spiritual training for conflict situations
- Promoting a new culture of communication including the art of listening and the development of a new vocabulary of peace
- Developing critical research into misuse of religion and into the structures of fanaticism, discrimination and intolerance
- Evaluating strategies, methods and experiences of encounter, dialogue and cooperation

3. Environmental education and education for socio-economic development

- Intensifying the cross-cultural and inter-religious consciousness in environmental and socio-economic matters, such as violence created by certain forms of globalization
- Working for a stronger integration of environmental and socio-economic elements in formal education (e.g. syllabi of the schools), vocational training, in-service training etc.
- Providing opportunities to experience sensitivity and solidarity in the framework of practical projects, encounter groups, peace camps and so forth, and to motivate responsibility for sustainable development
- Developing a fruitful cooperation between WCRP and other NGOs in the pedagogical efforts of “green” movements and alternative economic projects, such as

those which enable investment in grassroots development, appropriate technology and self-help initiatives

Encourage within all levels of education the values of a Global Ethic, of participatory democracy and a critique of consumerism and of all forms of violent exploitation of nature and humanity

The aim of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of WCRP is to strengthen the mutual knowledge, the exchange, the systematic analysis and the continuity of awareness building in the three fields of Peace education as described above.

We have been able to refer to the Amman Appeal with its comprehensive statements again and again in our later work.



Ill. 5 Seminar of the Peace Education Standing Commission of RfP preceding the Amman Assembly 1999 in the Theodor Schneller School Rabbi Howard Bogoth presenting the three language children's book "Schalom - Salam - Peace"

In 1999, an important international academic project also began: The author and his colleague and former assistant Klaus Hock from the University of Rostock received funding from the German Research Foundation to carry out an extensive investigation. Its theme was "The Representation of Christianity in Textbooks of Islamic Countries" - as a counterpart to the earlier research project on Islam in German and other European textbooks led by Professors Abdoldjavad Falaturi in Cologne and Udo Tworuschka in Jena. Initially, the author and his colleague selected four countries: Türkiye (with its Kemalist-secular tradition), Iran (as an "Islamic Republic"), Egypt (with its Al Azhar University and strong Christian-Coptic minority), and Palestine (as a problem-laden hotspot region). In a later phase, Jordan and Lebanon were added, and, finally, Syria.

With Patrick Bartsch (Turkologist, Iranist and Islamic scholar) and Wolfram Reiss (a theologian with long experience in the Middle East, later Professor of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Vienna), the author and his colleague found linguistically and technically competent collaborators.

Their starting hypothesis here was that textbooks can be a key to international pedagogical and interreligious dialogue; because:

1. they clarify the state of mutual perception;
2. they reflect the theological and pedagogical state of academic research in the relevant country;
3. they enable dialogue on a circumscribed, exemplary object.

The detailed work for their project began with the procurement of the textbooks, the development of the school-pedagogical framework, the creation of criteria/questions for the scope and content analysis, the preparation of textbook profiles, and the translation of the relevant passages and chapters. At the same time, the author and his colleague established contacts with theologians, religious educators, representatives of the cultural authorities and the churches in the four countries. In the process, they found more open-mindedness and interest than they had initially assumed. The fact that, in the pedagogical field, international thinking is necessary, that the interreligious dialogue should reach the practical level of schools, turned out to be a conviction shared by colleagues in their partner countries.

7. The New Millennium. A Beginning with Sharp Contrasts

7.1 On the Threshold. The 7th Nuremberg Forum “Spirituality and Ethical Education”⁶⁵

The peace education work carried out within the framework of *Religions for Peace* was and is always characterized by two features: the effort to deal with very concrete topics, tasks and projects on the one hand, and the development of overarching contexts on the other, which make visible in terms of content and dialogue that which characterizes the interreligious educational cooperation of the religious communities. Both were the subject of the 7th Nuremberg Forum “Spirituality and Ethical Education. Heritage and Challenge for Religions,” which took place in the year 2000 at the beginning of the new millennium.

The two guiding concepts for the 7th Nuremberg Forum illuminated a central matrix for encounters, understanding and cooperation between the religions, which played an important role in all the Nuremberg Forums and repeatedly raised such fundamental questions as: Can spirituality unite the religions without them giving up their own identity? Can spirituality help in conflicts and worldwide needs? Can spirituality be the basis for ethical education, can it offer teachers, educators, adults as well as young people practical help for giving meaning to life, forming conscience, and acting responsibly? We succeeded in attracting more than 50 speakers from Europe, Asia, Africa and America to work on these questions for a week with more than 200 participants. Among the speakers were Bavaria’s former Protestant bishop Hermann von Loewenich, Karl Ernst Nipkow and John Hull as leading religious educators in Germany and England, the Roman Catholic theologians Gotthard Fuchs and Hans Küng, the meditation teacher Father Sebastian Painadath from India, the Jewish theologian Eveline Goodman-Tau from Jerusalem, the children’s book author Rabbi Howard Bogot and the Christian school counselor Viola Raheb from Bethlehem, Beyza Bilgin as a Muslim religious educator from Ankara, the Muslim literary scholar Nasr Abu Zaid living in exile in Leiden, the “Gandhi of Sri Lanka” A.T. Ariyaratne, and the Buddhist religious leader Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand, winner of the alternative Nobel Peace Prize - to name just a few. The subtitle of the forum - “Heritage and Challenge for Religions” (in German: “Erbe und Herausforderung der Religionen”) - was meant in a double sense: that the religions have a great heritage which can gain renewed importance today, and that, at the same time, they are challenged by this

⁶⁵ J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Spiritualität und ethische Erziehung. Erbe und Herausforderung der Religionen.* Hamburg 2001.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 20.

heritage to look self-critically at their spiritual foundations and to allow themselves to be questioned and reformed by them.

The forum was divided into 5 thematic areas in the proven manner. In topic area 1 - Theological and spiritual foundations of ethics in the religions - representatives of the various religions themselves had their say. In topic area 2 - Spirituality and Peace Work - Religions as a Factor in Conflicts and Ethical Consciousness-Building - religions were considered and critically examined primarily in their political, social and economic contexts. Topic area 3 - Religious value systems - orientation basis for ethical education? - dealt with the basic question of the extent to which spirituality can be the basis for ethical education. In the topic areas 4 - Spiritual impulses and ethical learning in school - and 5 - Spiritual experiences and ways as components of ethical awareness in extracurricular learning contexts - the following questions were concretized: To what extent can spirituality offer teachers, educators, and adults as well as young people practical help for making sense of life, forming conscience, and acting responsibly?

Hermann von Loewenich's and Hans Küng's contributions framed the forum. Both showed ways of taking global responsibility that lead out of confessionalistic narrowness and open up to dialogue among religions and worldviews without leaving the ground of a specific faith. In the process, the spiritual foundation gains new importance for spirit-filled, sustainable action.

While von Loewenich outlined, in accordance with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's maxim of "praying and doing what is just", the most important learning processes in which he had been involved in his own church in positions of responsibility during the decades since 1945, Küng drew contours of a "basic trust" that can be the basis for a fulfilled life and courageous, responsible action. Himself deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and its spirituality, he made clear how saying "yes" to life and its possibilities is a basic dimension that can unite religious and non-religious people and allow them to tackle future tasks in solidarity with one another - in sober awareness of all the complexities, difficulties and disparities that the current world situation held in store. Both expressed the conviction that the future cannot be won through ideological unification, but only through dialogical differentiation, as suggested by the Global Ethic Declaration, a conviction that was also visible in many other forum contributions.

In Topic Area 1 - "Theological and Spiritual Foundations of Ethics in Religions" - the entire spectrum was represented, from the traditional religions of Africa and their balancing system of the living and the dead, the human and spirit worlds, the rhythms of life and nature, to the moral monotheism of Baha'ism, which from the outset included global dimensions.

In the process, unifying principles emerged, not only in that spirituality was developed as a deep foundational dimension of life, which includes wonder, introspection, reverence and imagination - a spirit-filled life that stands in contrast to superficial thinking about purpose and success - but also in that a holistic view was represented throughout, in which spirituality and ethics and a corresponding education are in a close, mutually enriching relationship with one another.

Just as in the Global Ethic Declaration the traditionally negatively formulated ethical commandments of the Decalogue (and, in parallel, the self-commitments of the laity in Buddhism) were transformed into positive directives and describe a “culture” of life preservation, solidarity, truthfulness and partnership, there are parallel ethical value concepts in the various other religious traditions and interpretations. This corresponds to the fact that the commandments are consistently not accentuated in a legal-casuistic sense. Moral behavior is, rather, an expression of gratitude for life given and care experienced, in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Baha’i’ centrally linked with the experience of God; it is part of the spiritual path and a necessary prerequisite for any enlightenment in Buddhism and Hinduism. The examples of the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King (but also as early the Sufi masters) show how a spiritual foundation of life and responsible action are intertwined and how non-violence, fearlessness and love, compassion and selfless service (some of Gandhi’s principles) can and must be experimented with in modern times.

The fact that these three exemplary figures had to die for their convictions shows how little this way of seeing and living is taken for granted and how much self-criticism, reconsideration and reform is necessary within social systems and especially in religious communities.

In Topic Area 2, under the motto “Spirituality and Peace Work,” political, economic and social components of the forum theme were examined. The development of values in Europe and the future task of integrative coexistence of different religions and cultures formed one focus, the question of the role of spirituality in conflict regions and situations another. On the one hand, the demonstrated value of piety and meditation practices in plural contexts has an increasingly important social significance. On the other hand, conflict regions such as the former Yugoslavia, Algeria and Sierra Leone are challenging examples for the tasks of understanding, reconciliation and education. The encounter with the real problems rejects any sweeping categorization. Sober research into the causes of escalating violence and selfish exploitation of resources is just as necessary as reviving the great cultural traditions and religious visions and training for responsible action.

Topic 3 - “Religious value systems - orientation basis for ethical education?” - was deliberately provided with a question mark, which Karl Ernst Nipkow underlined in

his contribution: on the one hand, there are many and exemplary concepts of new learning in interreligious contexts, and on the other hand, in view of the complexity of the problems and the historical legacies, they do not go far enough, as Theodor Kozyrev was able to show with examples from the former Soviet Union. There, he stated, religiously motivated people are engaged in exemplary peace education projects - but on the other hand, they downplay the religious dimension in their work. There, on the one hand, the impending problems of living together on the one planet Earth can be articulated more clearly than ever before, and there, on the other hand, there is only a limited capacity for rethinking. All the more necessary are the paths to conversion and rethinking that are part of the spirituality of religions: whether the sources of encouragement that emanate from them, the power to act with a conscience comforted (not calmed) even in the face of human limitations - or, ultimately, the practical projects in which concrete steps are taken and which can cross-fertilize each other.

Topic Areas 4 and 5 unfolded such steps on a broad spectrum of fields of action inside and outside the classroom.

In Topic Area 4, they were presented from the perspectives of the school practitioner, a pedagogical institute supported by Muslim women, the concept of interreligiously oriented dialogical religious education as planned (and further developed) in Hamburg with the various religious communities, Türkiye, and finally also Israel and Palestine. The fact that there are unifying convictions and experiences not only in the ethos but also in pedagogically relevant spiritual foundations from different religions and, on the other hand, the fact that any rash mutual appropriation is to be resisted, are two equally important components of the effort to achieve understanding for the tasks of the school. Here, pioneers articulated their insights by demonstrating which learning processes are possible when spiritual richness is perceived across religious boundaries, and at the same time pointed out how deficient the awareness of the task still was at the time in the fields of education policy as well as in pedagogical practice of the school-practical area, and especially also among the religious communities.

Topic Area 5, which was dedicated to extracurricular learning fields, contained particularly far-reaching examples of the linking of spiritual orientation and practical work. With A.T. Ariyaratne from Sri Lanka and Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand, two international leading figures contributed here who provided (and still provide) impulses on a Buddhist basis - but in a cross-religious and cross-worldview perspective - both locally and beyond national borders. They clearly named the antagonisms against which they developed their ethos: not only consumerism as a pernicious global substitute religion, but also the "power-hungry fanatical rabble-rousers," as Ariyaratne named the "elites" who he suggested, in his country and elsewhere, deliberately stir up emotions with national-religious slogans, sow separation in society

and thus accept violence and terror as a natural consequence. In both critical analysis of society and in the visions of new forms of community, religious insights and findings (e.g. on the “emergence in dependence” from a Buddhist perspective) and concrete learning steps are guiding principles. Gandhi’s values of truth, modesty and non-violence, the virtues of compassion, sharing in the progress and success of others, and a “culture of giving” are just as deeply rooted in religion as the “Economy in Community” project of the Christian Focolare movement. Economic success is not demonized, but it is assigned as the task of a community of solidarity and an overall path oriented toward sustainability.

The prayer meetings of the religions for peace have proved to be a special test case for the connection between spirituality and ethics. At the time of the 7th Nuremberg Forum, we had already had a variety of experiences with them, initially welcomed on the one hand - after the sign set by Pope John Paul II with the 1986 prayer for peace in Assisi - and on the other hand critically questioned, in part vehemently rejected, especially by evangelical groups. The Nuremberg Group of *Religions for Peace* has dealt with these critical inquiries - especially with the accusation of syncretism. At the Forum 2000, the author gave a lecture on this subject and spoke about prayer meetings of religions as an “inspiration for cross-religious spiritual and ethical cooperation”. The main theses are to be reproduced here:

1. Prayer meetings of religions are the clearest example that people from different religions make the following visible: “Our faith and our spirituality bring us together with people of other faiths, they do not let us remain in isolation and defensive.”

2. Prayer meetings of religions must expect critical objections:

- the suspicion of mixing religions
- the suspicion of denial of the respective claims to truth of specific faiths
- the suspicion of mutual appropriation
- the suspicion of religious show

Each of these critical objections had to be taken seriously by us, precisely because they were mostly voiced by very devout people who were convinced of their faith. We had to ask ourselves thoroughly: What are we doing here together, why is it important to us, how can we counter misunderstandings? In the Protestant Lutheran Church of Bavaria, there was a lengthy discussion about this during the first half of the 1980s: The theological faculties in Erlangen, Munich and Neuendettelsau were asked by the Bavarian bishop for statements. From Neuendettelsau then came the suggestion to speak of “multi-religious” instead of “interreligious” prayer.⁶⁶ This was

⁶⁶ See the handout “Multireligiöses Gebet”, prepared by the Islam Commission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, ed. Landeskirchenamt Munich 1992.

intended to express the multiplicity and diversity of the religious traditions represented at the prayer meetings, which are by no means mixed.

3. Prayer meetings of religions can become the touchstone of sincere encounters between religions:

- through respectfully being each other's guests
- through the open, authentic offering of one another's testimony of faith
- through the sensitive perception of the spiritual richness of others
- by focusing on tasks that affect religions in their coexistence and cooperation

“Being guests of one another” is a particularly good image for visiting one another, but also for coming together for prayer meetings: When one is a “guest,” it means that one is welcome: invited to see, hear, and feel something of the spirituality of a faith community. In doing so, one learns much more about the particular form of faith than just in an intellectual “talking about.” On the other hand, being a “guest” means that one is not taken over, that one does not have to understand what one cannot understand, and conversely - on the part of the guest - that one respects the dignity of the religious practice, that one is attentively present, ready to hear and learn what is important to the host community and why it is important to them, and to respect what is foreign and beyond one's own access. For the preparation of the prayer sessions, this meant that the chosen prayers, meditations, reflections and songs/music had to be accepted by all participants.

Prayer meetings of the religions can prepare the ground for the common responsibility of religions in the world. In them, it can be demonstrated that each of the global challenges, as they are described in the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (or the preservation of the foundation of life) and in the Global Ethic Project with its “four irrevocable directives” (reverence for all life, solidarity, truthfulness, partnership), have specific correspondences in the spiritual foundations of the religious traditions. They form the basis on which both the imagination and the staying power needed for common action can grow.

How spirituality and ethics are related to each other in terms of content can also be seen clearly in most of the topics under which we have placed the prayer sessions and which are finally published in a 2013 anniversary volume “Spirituality. Multireligious. Encounter of Religions in Prayers, Reflections, Songs”⁶⁷ They were a special training ground because all contributions - texts, prayers, reflections, songs - had to be jointly approved, not in the sense that everyone had to find themselves in all texts, but in such a way that no religious community could feel offended by a contribution - and that the reference to the respective overall theme should be

⁶⁷ J. Lähnemann/ Religionen für den Frieden Nürnberg: Spiritualität. Multireligiös. Begegnung der Religionen in Gebeten, Besinnungen, Liedern. Berlin 2014.

recognizable. Themes included “Repentance, Conversion, Purification of the Spirit”, “Integrity of Creation/Conservation of Life”, “Steps to Justice”, “Do Not Forget to Be Hospitable”, “Religions in Action for the Distressed”, “The Shared Responsibility for Peace on Our Planet”, “Religions, Human Rights, Ways to Friendship”, “‘Water is Life.’ Religions’ devotion to the UN World Water Day”, “Working together sustainably! Learning Processes of Religions after September 11, 2001”, “Let’s Protect the Earth”, “Terrorism Has No Religion”, “Freedom, Justice, Human Dignity. Renewal in the Religions” (for the “Reformation Year” 2017).

The topics show that there can also be concrete occasions - terrorist attacks, racist attacks, catastrophes, accidents, examples of environmental degradation.... - that can currently call for prayer meetings.

This already provides a transition to the year after the 7th Nuremberg Forum, the year 2001, which in many respects was double-edged.

7.2 The UN Year for Dialogue among Civilizations. The Terror of September 11, 2001



Ill. 6 At the UN Conference New York 19.2.2001: William Vendley, General Secretary of RfP, receives the brochure "Peace Education from Faith Traditions" from Johannes Lähmann

The work of the 7th Nuremberg Forum in 2000 played a role in a number of important events in the field of international interfaith education:

- at an UN-organized conference on "Peace Education Based on Religions" in New York in February 2001,
- at an international congress in Istanbul in April 2001, where a new teaching program for the school subject of religious culture and ethics in Türkiye was presented and discussed with colleagues from Europe and the Mediterranean region,

- at a round table on religious textbook research in November 2001, also in Istanbul, and
- at another UN conference on religious freedom, tolerance and school education in Madrid, also in November 2001.

The contrasts of 2001 could hardly have been greater: The UN had declared it the year of the “Dialogue among civilizations” - at the instigation of none other than Iranian President Khatami, who himself had founded a center for such dialogue in Tehran. But it was also the year of “September 11”, as the dramatic event soon came to be known in shorthand, when planes hijacked by terrorists crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, bringing them down and killing thousands.

On the one hand - as the list of the year’s conferences shows - there was a clearly expanding variety of efforts at mutual encounter and understanding in the interreligious and intercultural sphere, with many connections into the political level. But on the other hand, a fear and sensitivity toward possible terrorist attacks spread, which seemed to confirm the thesis of the American political scientist Samuel Huntington of the “clash of civilizations” as the primary crisis scenario of the 21st Century.

The UN conference on “Peace Education Based on Religions” in February 2001 was prepared by the organization of the Hague Appeal for Peace. This project work had emerged from a conference of the same name in the Netherlands in 1999, which, in turn, followed on from the corresponding peace conference 100 years earlier. In this context, a “Focus Group on Religion and Spirituality” had been formed to plan the New York conference in detail. It brought together 150 peace educators from all parts of the world and all major religious traditions, for the first time on this global scale.

“Peace is possible. We can do it!”

That was the provocative statement behind the contributions at the conference. Even then, this conviction was not merely an easy *floskel* (empty phrase). For the peace educators who were there with the author came almost without exception from projects that were and are active in various areas of tension in the world: in South and North Korea, in Mozambique and Algeria, in Kosovo, and in the Middle East. Deanna Armbruster, a Jew from the peace village Neve Shalom/Wahhat as Salam, where Jews, Christians and Muslims live together and conduct seminars for Arab and Jewish youth, said, not long after the outbreak of the second Intifada: “In the face of terror and hatred, our peace education is needed more than ever. We have never received so many requests and offers to help as we are now, when all hopes for peace for Israel and Palestine are in danger of being destroyed.”

UN representatives at the conference emphasized the need for peace initiatives that draw strength and staying power from deep spiritual roots. When Quakers strive to recognize God in every living being, Mennonites walk a path where the words of peace of Jesus are taken literally; when a Buddhist says: "We have common roots. We all live in interdependence with each other. We should see the Buddha-nature in everything", these, then, were examples of how spirituality can make the individual capable of having the courage to work towards peace again and again in the face of all opposition. Particularly impressive, therefore, were the examples in which spirituality and overcoming violence went hand in hand - for example, in the case of the Roman Catholic St. Egidio movement, which had decisively advanced the democratization process in Mozambique. Almost all of the examples - with quite similar objectives - emerged from a specific religious tradition. It became apparent that there was far too little mutual knowledge of each other, meaning that the exchange about the problems, the visions, the working methods and the experiences we sought in the Peace Education Standing Commission was recognized as an important task. Our brochure, "Peace Education from Faith Traditions", was available to the participants for this purpose. In it, the three areas "Religious and Interreligious Education", "Education for Nonviolent Communication and Conflict Resolution", and "Environmental Education and Education for Socio-Economic Development" were explained coherently and exemplified with practical examples. This work was also presented in the same year in Lisbon at the North-South Center, in Rome at *Religioni per la Pace Italia*, and, finally in November at the aforementioned UNESCO conference.

Reform processes in religious education were the direct focus of the international congress held in Istanbul in April 2001, at which the new teaching program for the school subject of religious culture and ethics in Türkiye was presented and discussed. In 1984, this subject had been made compulsory in all schools, having previously been offered only as an optional subject in a few grades. However, it was initially - in the spirit of Kemal Atatürk - very strongly related to the Turkish nation. Now, however, Muallâ Selçuk, a professor at the Islamic Theological Faculty in Ankara and a student of Beyza Bilgin, was Director General for Religious Education in the Turkish Ministry of Education and had organized this congress. At the Nuremberg Forum in the fall of 2000, the author had been approached to participate, and so it happened that the international speakers were largely recruited from among colleagues who had participated in the 7th Nuremberg Forum in 2000. Among others, Nevzat Aşıkoğlu from Türkiye spoke on "Parables as Inspiration for Ethical Consciousness Formation" and Beyza Bilgin on "Stories of the Prophets as Inspiration for Ethical Consciousness Formation," i.e., on topics that are also pedagogically relevant across religions. Karl Ernst Nipkow from Tübingen came to Türkiye for the first time, Reinhold Mokrosch from Osnabrück, Raimund Hoenen from Halle, who had helped to

shape Christian teaching during the GDR era, John Hull from Birmingham and Brian Gates from Lancaster, Khairalla Assar from Annaba in Algeria, and many others.

In the new program for religious education, emphasis was placed on the need to strive for objectivity in the presentation of the various religions and that education for tolerance should be a necessary guiding goal of all teaching. In the work of Turkish colleagues from then on, this was increasingly expressed in the concern to take seriously the self-perception of the other religions. The author spoke about how in denominational religious education in Germany increasingly the topic of religions and the task of learning in the encounter has been included,⁶⁸ while a fundamentally interreligiously oriented teaching program was presented. With Beyza Bilgin and Muallâ Selçuk, the author spoke about the first results of our investigation of the representation of Christianity in Turkish textbooks - and that, beside appropriate passages, we had also found overly generalizing and faulty passages. They agreed to convene a round table in November of that year with religious educators from Ankara University and representatives of the minority churches in Istanbul, where the churches are primarily located. September 11 of that year would then give this meeting even more special relevance.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 - how the planes controlled by the Al-Qaeda network crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and into the Pentagon in Washington, bringing down the buildings - were a shock for all those involved in interfaith encounters, indeed for the entire civilized world. It was an event that left many people around the world speechless: In what brains could such a murderous and suicidal project have arisen - and how could even religious motivation be used for it?! The "Allahu akbar," which is supposed to praise the infinite greatness of God and the wonders of his creation, suddenly assumed a disconcerting double-faced nature.

The Nuremberg Group of Religions for Peace therefore quickly agreed to give a sign of how people across the boundaries of religions and nations stand up against all terror and intolerance, and to do so deliberately in the city from which the Nuremberg Race Laws once emanated. It was planned to hold a prayer hour of the religions in a mosque that had opened its doors for encounters for a long time, a mosque, on the other hand, that had already received threats in these weeks. It was not only possible to have the Christian Orthodox side present, in the form of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Seraphim Joanta. It was also possible to persuade the

⁶⁸ Published bilingually in the congress volume: Principles of Interreligious Education in the Context of Denominational Religious Education. Doktriner Din Öğretimi Bağlamında Dinler Arası Öğretim İlkeleri. In: T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. Din Öğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü: Din Öğretiminde Yeni Yöntem Araslari (New Methodological Approaches in Religious Education). Ankara 2003, 471-488.

chairman of the Jewish Community, City Councilor Arno Hamburger, to visit a Nuremberg mosque for the first time.

During the prayer hour, the message of peace from the prophet Isaiah - the word of the swords that become plowshares - was shared. The prayer "O Lord, make me an instrument of your peace" in the tradition of Francis of Assisi was recited. The words from the Qur'an were also quoted: If someone kills a person who has not killed anyone else or caused any other harm on earth, it is as if he had killed them all. And if someone preserves the life of one person, it is as if he preserves the lives of all." (Sura 5:32)

In the course of the following year, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to intensive discussions at the Round Table of Religions in Germany, which resulted in a declaration published on the first anniversary of the attacks:⁶⁹

Working together sustainably! Learning Processes of Religions in the Aftermath of September 11, 2001

September 11, 2002 marks the anniversary of the attacks in New York and Washington - an attack in which religious motives also played a role. As members of the Round Table of Religions in Germany, we ask what consequences need to be considered, not only in the short term but in the longer term, and what religious communities in particular need to learn:

1. The religions are called to walk alongside each other. In doing so, we need the courage to warn each other against ideological abuse.
2. The causes of violence run deep. They include social and economic impoverishment, religious-cultural disrespect and wounded self-esteem, as well as religious fanaticism and political abuse of religious, cultural and national sentiments. In the background are often wounds that religions have inflicted on each other in their history.
3. The terror of September 11, 2001 in the USA is incomprehensible in terms of its scale and inhuman brutality. For religious communities, it represents a challenge which is unique in kind.
4. Even if terrorist acts are only religiously presented, but not motivated, there are views in religious communities that support them and for which the religious communities share responsibility.
5. We therefore emphasize: The religious communities are committed to their faith and thus also to the common good. They must work - together with representatives

⁶⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.religionsforpeace.de>

of politics, business and education - to uncover the mechanisms that lead to terror. In particular, they are called upon to help build a network for the development of peace and justice.

6. A religious ethic is required that points beyond one's own family of faith and awakens a willingness to participate in the world community. Not only in economics and politics, but also in religions and cultures, global thinking and action must occur.

7. At the same time, an effective institutional form of interreligious crisis management is required: Beyond the condemnation of any terror in the name of religions, structures must be developed to remain in dialogue in the case of mutual accusations and violations, to participate in the de-escalation of violent actions, and to initiate reconciliation processes.

8. September 11, 2001 demands sustainable thinking and acting: - in a continuous encounter and understanding between people of different religions and cultures,

- in an education that overcomes prejudices and in which past injuries are dealt with,
- in an education that brings to life each individual's religious and cultural heritage and makes it fruitful for a diverse community that is not "homogenous",
- in its commitment to the disadvantaged and marginalized,
- in an integration effort in which all can participate with their abilities and special gifts on an equal footing.

We hope that the "Day of Religions," which we initiated and which will be held in Hamburg for the first time on November 14, 2002, will generate lasting impulses for understanding.

Bonn, September 2002

Round Table of Religions in Germany

Less spectacular in media coverage, but still "historic" in certain respects, was the round table on textbook research planned in Istanbul in the Spring of 2001: In November 2001, representatives of the Islamic Theological Faculty of Ankara (the "mother faculty" of all theological faculties in Türkiye) and of the Christian minority churches in Türkiye (the Ecumenical Orthodox and the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchates as well as the Roman Catholic Church) sat down with the author and his collaborator Patrick Bartsch in Istanbul to discuss the results of our study of the representation of Christianity in Turkish textbooks. They had sent a summary of their analyses of the religion and history textbooks to the participants in advance. It was structured systematically in terms of content: What do Turkish students learn about Jesus, the Bible, doctrines and ethical principles of Christianity, its history, denominations, cultural development, contemporary phenomena, about social work, mission, and interreligious dialogue (or what do they not learn or what do they learn in

a biased or incorrect way)? They were also concerned with pedagogical points of view: *When is what* taught and *how*?

The conversation was constructive: Beyza Bilgin, Professor of Religious Education in Ankara, had already translated our analysis, presented in German and English, into Turkish, and an intensive exchange ensued: How does the Christian side explain that the doctrine of the Trinity is not the belief in three gods? How is it that the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) is always referred to in the textbooks to show that the decision in favour of the four Gospels in the New Testament was late and unreliable (a historically completely false fact)? Why does hardly anything appear in the textbooks about the rich cultural heritage of Christianity in Asia Minor and about contemporary lived Christianity? - The practical result of this round table was that, two months later, the Turkish Ministry of Education asked the Christian churches in Istanbul to set up a commission to work concretely on improvements to the textbook chapters on Christianity. This commission was formed, met monthly, and drew up proposals for improvement. Such improvements could be seen concretely in later textbooks.

On another international level, with worldwide political representation, a UN Consultation on Religious Freedom, Tolerance and School Education was held in Madrid from November 23-25, 2001.⁷⁰ It had been exactly 20 years since the UN Declaration “on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief.” The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Abdelfattah Amor, in cooperation with the Spanish Government had managed to bring together some 800 delegates from 80 states, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to work systematically on the significance of the Declaration for school education. Surveys conducted by Abdelfattah Amor in various countries and continents had shown that in many places school education did not fulfill the conditions of freedom of religion and belief, tolerance and non-discrimination: for example, when only the dominant religion is considered in school, when false prejudices are spread about other religions, when minorities are not taken into account or cannot articulate themselves, but also when no religious knowledge is taught at all in school. It was not a conference about (interreligious) theology and (intercultural) pedagogy. Rather, it was a matter of pledging the international community of states, but also non-governmental organizations and religious communities, to the imperative of tolerance and to encourage corresponding educational efforts.

The major differences between the various regions of the world and the religious and ideological contexts became apparent time and again: the emphasis on human

⁷⁰ In detail Hj. Biener, J. Lähnemann: Religionsfreiheit, Toleranz und schulische Erziehung. Eine UNO-Konferenz in Madrid. Religion - Staat - Gesellschaft 3, 2002/1, 61-75.

rights in a political context posed different challenges for the Chinese delegation than, for example, for the U.S. delegation or for the representatives of Muslim countries. During the debates and in the corresponding drafting group, a great deal of work was done on the final document in order to be able to express a unifying line of principles and recommendations despite all these differences. Following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 20, 1989), it was emphasized that parents and guardians must have a choice of schools in which their children are educated in accordance with their religious and/or ethical beliefs. The implications are clear when one thinks of the situation of believers in actively atheist states or of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic states. The affirmation of this principle can decidedly be seen as a gain for religious freedom in the positive-active sense. The catalog of measures not only emphasizes the need to find a positive relationship to plurality and to practice active tolerance, and condemns any form of discrimination, but also explicitly applies this to the diversity of religions. States are called upon not only to strengthen human rights, but even more to “ensure acceptance of plurality and diversity in the field of religion and belief, as well as the right not to receive religious instruction if it does not conform to one’s own convictions”. States are also called upon to eliminate discriminatory elements in curricula, textbooks and teaching methods, as well as to take measures against intolerance in the media and new information technologies.

In terms of positive actions, the following are recommended:

- Public relations campaigns to promote non-discrimination and tolerance using all available media,
- Tolerance programs as foci in teacher education,
- Promoting the international exchange of experience in the educational field,
- International or interfaith encounter programs for students, student teachers, and teachers.

A specific outcome of the conference was the mutual awareness of religions, ideological and pedagogical preconditions and experiences in the different countries and continents and the exchange about them. The fact that it was possible to insist on “freedom for religion” as well as “freedom from religion”, for example, among the antipodes of China / Cuba on the one hand and the Islamic-influenced states on the other, was seen as the beginning of a necessary international and cross-worldview discourse.

The mandate for religions, as well as their potential to participate in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation (and, above all, to make this effective in educational terms), was elaborated as an essential motif in a number of impressive contributions. Here, non-governmental organizations in particular

had an important platform to articulate themselves and gain inspiration for mutual exchange and the broadening of existing networks.

This global framework was, then, also the guiding principle in the preparations for the 8th Nuremberg Forum. Here, too, the various regions of the world with their particular educational contexts were to be represented. In addition, however, beyond formal educational policy, specific content from the religions with their pedagogical and ethical implications were to be especially highlighted. We therefore chose “preservation - development - reconciliation” as our guiding concepts. We understood them not only as counter-terms against one-sided consumerism and profit orientation as well as political abuse of power, but also consciously as referring to the ethos of the religions - an ethos that is to be developed from the spiritual roots of the religions and to be actualized by religions sharing responsibility in the political as well as in the educational field.

In the run-up to the event, the next brochure of the Peace Education Standing Commission was published.

The title “A Soul for Education” was taken from the motto of the movement “A Soul for Europe”. The authors explained their intention in the following way:

Giving this report the title “A Soul for Education” we take up insights of the VIIth Nuremberg Forum (“Spirituality and Ethical Education: Heritage and Challenge of Religions”). Education needs a soul: a conviction for humanity rooted in the hearts of men as it can be found in spiritually inspired people. Spirituality and Ethical Education should be bound together. The religions have a special heritage in this field. Spiritual life and spiritual renewal are increasingly relevant to resist an ideology of purpose and success. Spiritually inspired Ethical Education is of importance to oppose egoism, violence and the exploitation of our planet.

For the 8th Nuremberg Forum, the organizers secured Rita Süßmuth, former President of the German Bundestag, for the opening address. The author had had the opportunity to give the keynote address on her 65th birthday on February 17, 2002, at the Konrad Adenauer House in Berlin under the theme: “Dialogue of Cultures in Germany. Visions without Illusions.” In it, he made clear: We need visions that lead beyond the present potential for conflict. But we need them without the illusion that harmonious coexistence will result, as it were, automatically from the visions. The author wanted to show that it takes hard work, a careful analysis of the interrelationships, and, above all, patience to achieve real integration.

8. Preservation - Development - Reconciliation. Religious Education in Global Responsibility. The Forum 2003⁷¹

The 8th Nuremberg Forum stood out from previous forums with two special features: It opened with the Day of Religions, which - as an initiative of the Round Table of Religions in Germany - was held for the second time. 24 religious communities in Nuremberg had "open doors" for school classes and visitors on that day.

At the central event (and simultaneous forum opening), leading representatives of the religious communities in Germany responded to the presentation by former Bundestag President Rita Süßmuth (Preservation - Development - Reconciliation as political vocabulary? ...) at the Faculty of Education- among them Bishop Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter of the Protestant Church, Auxiliary Bishop Hans-Joachim Jaschke of the Roman Catholic Church, Metropolitan Serafim of the Orthodox Church, Nadeem Elyas and Ali Kizilkaya as chairmen of the Central Council of Muslims and the Islamic Council of Germany, Evelyn Goodman-Tau for Judaism, Alfred Weil for the German Buddhist Union and Nicola Towfigh for the Baha'i National Spiritual Council, moderated by Jürgen Micksch, Chairman of the Intercultural Council of Germany.

In St. Sebaldus' Church, a Greek Orthodox dance group, a Muslim band, and a Christian choir performed a "Concert of Religions." A prayer session for peace and justice with members of the Nuremberg Group of *Religions for Peace* followed, and the city invited everyone to a reception in the assembly room of the Historic City Hall.

Following the forum, cooperation partners on the research project "The Representation of Christianity in Textbooks of Islamic Countries" from Türkiye, Iran, Egypt, Palestine, Algeria and Syria (and, on the Christian side, from Greece) met with the German research team to discuss benchmarks for international textbook research and development based on the research results.

The fact that Rita Süßmuth and Hans Küng, two particularly prominent personalities, framed the work of the Forum, that Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, who was unfortunately prevented from coming in person, was present with his contribution on the Middle East conflict zone, and that A.T. Ariyaratne from Sri Lanka and Sulak Sivaraksa from Bangkok participated in the entire Forum as leading figures of "engaged Buddhism", lent the cooperation many inspirations.

Throughout the diversity of all contributions, working out the preservation value of a humane ethos of religious traditions, developing it for contemporary problems and working on reconciliation in the face of historical and present-day violations proved

⁷¹ J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Bewahrung - Entwicklung - Versöhnung. Religiöse Erziehung in globaler Verantwortung* Schenefeld 2005. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbeggnung* 23.

to be a necessary endeavor - from a global perspective as well as especially in regional areas of tension, and, not least - preventively and with a view to the future - on the municipal level.

The speakers, who had traveled to Nuremberg from 22 different countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, represented a slice of globality themselves through the diversity of the religious-ideological contexts and the fields of activity from which they came. The breadth of the overall topic was made comprehensible and sufficiently clear by a basic structuring into five thematic areas - supplemented by workshops on scientific and practical areas of work - that had proven itself in previous forums.

Thematic Area I - "Religions as Preservers, Developers, Reconcilers?" - offered fundamental contributions from across the religions - from Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'i and indigenous religions, authentically presented by representatives of the relevant religious tradition. It was worked out how all religious traditions are challenged to reinterpret and update their peace-promoting basic motivations in contrast to aggression-promoting instrumentalizations of religious sentiments and convictions. In the process, starting points for a comprehensive peace and cultural dialogue between the religions were shown, which can make them promoters of "preservation - development - reconciliation" in the political as well as in the educational field.

In Thematic Area II - "Sustainability and Religious Values - Long-term Perspectives for Politics, the Economy and Cultures" - experts were present who brought up various levels of political, economic, ethical and media decision-making processes. They showed the interdependence of the various conditioning factors in different focal areas of a future-oriented development, whereby the regionally specific conflict potentials, the images that different cultures and religions have of each other (e.g. "the West" vis-à-vis the Islamic world and vice versa), but also the potential for preservation and reconciliation in the various cultures and religions became visible, which must not be overlooked in the political, economic and social spheres either.

In Thematic Area III - "Religious and cultural education in a global framework - perspectives of educational renewal" - educationally innovative basic contributions from various European and overseas regions were presented for discussion. Thereby, the obstacles to attitudes conducive to understanding and reconciliation which already exist within circumscribed denominations and regions were truthfully outlined, but, at the same time, educational visions and tasks were described which are essential for the formation of a transnational sense of responsibility and for which at least starting points of an international network for this work do exist.

Thematic Areas IV and V focused on pedagogical practice, namely in Thematic Area IV for a “school in global responsibility”, and in Thematic Area V for family, local community and extracurricular education.

Here, constructive models were presented showing how a formation of meaning and ethos can be initiated in and out of school, which can draw from the rich spiritual treasure of religious traditions, but at the same time can also critically, and self-critically, counteract fanaticism, egotism, and anti-social and life-negating attitudes.

The workshops on research and practical projects and on interreligious hermeneutics (“Dialogue as Reconciliation - the Legacy of History”) offered more in-depth studies of fundamental questions and pedagogical concreteness.

To provide an insight into the manifold explanations, the contributions of Rita Süßmuth and Karl Ernst Nipkow are presented below, with reference to other contributions as well as the workshop on interreligious hermeneutics, and, finally, the closing lecture by Hans Küng.

Rita Süßmuth addressed the question of whether preservation, development, reconciliation can become part of political vocabulary and offered a constructive answer herself. She made clear how reconciliation cannot grow without development, and attested to the fact that many groups in civil society have thought and acted as pioneers in this field. She specifically called for cooperation between universities and municipalities on integration issues and argued that the coexistence of religions does not weaken their identity, but can strengthen it instead. She saw in the notion of being at home in a specific religious tradition the potential for a dynamic approach to globalization, which could be realised in a participatory society through democratic practice.

Midway through the conference, Karl Ernst Nipkow addressed the overarching question: How does one learn globally? He approached it in a multifaceted way, with references to all of the Forum’s topics. His reflections on an education that can overcome friend-foe stereotypes were characterized by critical realism - given the de-solidarizing structures that extend into many regions of the world and the lack of emotional and cognitive disposition to counteract them. It became apparent that people’s mental and ethical capacities for acting responsibly have not kept pace with global development. At the same time, Nipkow accorded visionary perspectives, for which there are already practical experiences in alternative educational projects, an important place within the necessary renewal.

These considerations were “grounded” in experiences and project examples from many different religious and regional contexts: from A.T. Ariyaratne with his Sarvodaya movement based on Gandhi’s principles in Sri Lanka, by Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand with his “Spirit in Education” project within the framework of the “engaged

Buddhism” movement, by Beyza Bilgin with her introduction of the topic of the global ethic into Turkish religious education, by Norman Richardson with interreligious education in Northern Ireland, by Fedor Kozyrev with the beginnings of a “Humanitarian Religious Education” in Russia, and by Viola Raheb and Ophir Yarden in a very sobering way for Palestine and Israel. Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan - then president of the Club of Rome, moderator of the presidium of WCRP/RfP and always tireless in peace initiatives for the Middle East - sent the participants his complementary reflections on “Religions as Drivers for Fanaticism or for Reconciliation? The Middle Eastern Conflict in a Global Context”, in which he highlighted the communication problems in the Arab countries’ and Palestine on the one hand, on the other Israel and the “West”’s perception of each other, which are repeatedly exacerbated by one-sided portrayals in the media, and called for political counter-programs.

The fundamental pedagogical perspectives were also “grounded” by the total of 22 contributions on pedagogical renewal and fields of learning both inside and outside the classroom from the most diverse religious and social contexts.

One example with a Christian background was the presentation by Ingo Baldermann on “Biblical content as the bread of life for children”. He asked the question: What can children hope for? What helps them to articulate their needs, to gain the confidence and courage to face life? To this end, he presented examples of existential teaching encounters with lament and hope in the biblical Psalms and in the way of Jesus. He showed how Holy Scripture offers images, symbols and forms of expression that can become the “bread of life” for children across religions.

The lecture by Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand can be seen as an example with a Buddhist background, which complementarily reflects another deep spiritual background of experience. He directly brought together the challenges of preserving life in a globalized context with Buddhist principles, which he interpreted dynamically: awareness of the interdependence of everything that exists and overcoming suffering through right insight, right action and right mindfulness, which for him has an interpersonal as well as a social dimension. In this context, alternative education is aimed at educating people not for a specific purpose, but rather to allow each person’s gifts to come to the fore in the full sense of the word: “What a person can be, he should be. This involves a threefold path of practice: in wisdom (panna), ethics (sila) and mindfulness (samadhi). His thoughts on mindfulness are reproduced here:⁷²

The third factor in the Buddhist three-fold training is mindfulness. Ultimately,

⁷² S. Sivaraksa: ‘Alternative Erziehung zur Lebensbewahrung auf der Basis religiöser Grundsätze.’ In Lähnemann, *Bewahrung* (2005) 211-218, 217f. - The broader area of Hindu and Buddhist peace work was later explored by Martin Bauschke in his study ‘In den Spuren Buddhas und Gandhis. Friedensengagierte Buddhisten und Hindus’ (In the Footsteps of Buddha and Gandhi: Buddhists and Hindus Committed to Peace). Verlag CreateSpace 2018 (available online).

Buddhism urges us to be “awake” or what is often called “enlightened”. ...

Without mindfulness, moral training may bring about narrow-mindedness or hubris; that is, the certainty or feeling that one is better than those without morality.

The training of the mind will contribute to mindfulness; one will be quick in taking care of one’s feelings, especially greed and hatred, and will have concentration in leading life. With mindfulness, one may learn to become less attached to oneself. Moreover, mindfulness contributes to happiness in the present. It enables the mind and the heart to operate synchronically, and may bring about internal peace. Additionally, mindfulness enables one to grasp the realities of the past, the present, and the future. And lastly, mindfulness enables one to overcome mental defilements, thereby contributing to liberation. ... Mindfulness increases the capabilities or potentials of the mind, making it stronger, more stable, more courageous, more persistent, more diligent, and more responsible. Moreover mindfulness helps increase virtue by fostering loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity-all these, even at the moment when one is being exploited or oppressed. In other words, mindfulness entails cultivating the capability, value, and health of the mind, which are indispensable in modern society.

A Buddhist education shows us how to act ethically with wisdom and mindfulness. Such an education is valid not only in our personal affairs, but also in how we interact with the world. This means that we must confront those causes which are linked to the abuses of capitalism and consumerism.

The last larger topic area consisted of contributions to the workshop under the title “Interreligious Hermeneutics” with the specific focus “Dialogue as Reconciliation - the Legacy of History”. The starting point was an observation that is made again and again, especially in textbook research, namely that history is presented and evaluated primarily from one’s own perspective, that generalizations and incriminating prejudices often play a role in this, and that the history of conflicts is perceived much more strongly than the history of constructive encounters: Thus, can from a Christian perspective, the history of the expansion of early Islam and its supposed threat to the Occident is often given one-sided weight; in textbooks from Muslim-influenced countries, a direct line is often drawn from the Crusades to colonialism. Conversely, the contribution of Judaism to the cultural history of Europe is often neglected. The participants in the workshop were given the following questions to which to respond in their statements: Where do I see problematic points in the history of religious encounters and their treatment? Which guidelines and criteria for mutual perception should be considered? What would be the most urgent areas of work? Jonathan Magonet, director of Leo Baeck College in London, highlighted as a special experience how Judaism, in its long history as a minority in different societies, had to deal with and accommodate images determined by the outside, how encounters with the self-image of ‘the other’, concrete encounters and the religious

dimension of “repentance” are part of the challenges and possibilities of a new way of thinking. As a Middle Eastern Christian with a Lebanese background, Georges Tamer also knew from his experience about the burdensome legacy of dialogue - despite a coexistence that has been peaceful across many periods. He emphasized the necessary ethos of open-mindedness and acceptance with the ability to overcome ambiguities, misinterpretations and misunderstandings. For him, this includes a dynamic development of identity in which the history of the development and encounters of one’s own religion is perceived self-critically and one is willing to listen to the positions of others. Fuad Kandil, as a Muslim, similarly considered it necessary to adopt a new basic attitude which abandoned the stereotyping and demonizing of the past. He recognized a traditional difficulty of understanding in the relationship between “earlier” and “later” religions: namely, that the later religion in question can concede a place to the earlier - in the case of Islam, of limited positivity - in its own system, while the earlier religions have great problems with the classification of the later ones, but also find themselves rather “appropriated” in the view of the later ones. He drew attention to the fact that current public discourse - especially with regard to the catchwords “Islam” and the “West” - is often more likely to feed stereotypical images. Elisabeth Erdmann, as an historian and expert in history education, focused on the three necessary elements of understanding: well-founded and differentiated information, personal encounters, and efforts to set common tasks. She used an example from the Crusades to show how an historical example can be used to arrive at a multi-perspective viewpoint. Finally, John Taylor, as convenor of the workshop, brought an overarching view from his experience in interreligious crisis management (as long-time secretary general of *Religions for Peace/World Conference on Religion and Peace/WCRP*). The fact that it is not abstract religions that encounter each other, but always people shaped by religion, people, that they are traditionally afflicted by their history with a lack of knowledge about the faith of others on the one hand, and a rather exclusive self-image on the other hand, shows for him how the levels of encounter, trust-building, learning about content, patient work on perceptions of the self and others, and also (self-critically) overcoming the injuries from history are among the necessary tasks, so that potential for reconciliation ultimately be gained from the legacy of history.

Finally, Hans Küng also focused on a treatment of history for which renewed demands have been made in the present, by once again illuminating the guiding concepts of the forum - preservation, development, reconciliation - in a coherent manner on the basis of paradigm conflicts between and within the religions. Aware of how difficult it is to bring the abundance of religious phenomena and their historically evolved manifestations into a synopsis, he nevertheless showed - here, focused on the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam - lines and tendencies that represent a continuum in all their diversity. Firstly, he was able to outline a core of identity - for Judaism: Israel as God’s people and land; for

Christianity: Jesus Christ as God's Messiah and Son; for Islam: the Qur'an as God's Word and Book (thereby connected by the relationship to the one and only God of Abraham, the gracious and merciful Creator, Preserver and Judge of all people). This core must be preserved if the community of faith is not to be separated from its roots. At the same time, there is a potential for development in the religions, which can be seen in their dynamic history, which is by no means straightforward, which is marked by very characteristic "paradigm shifts", and which should be brought into present encounters in a critical and self-critical way. Küng saw the work on this - in the religions and between the religions - as a necessary condition for reconciliation in the present, which then allows religions to be credible advocates of a necessary basic ethos in processes of globalization and an education corresponding to it.

This rounds off the great arc in which the guiding theme was pursued in its entire breadth. The abundance of the perspectives presented and the tasks named could appear overwhelming. They can only be tackled through a sensible distribution of tasks and cooperation, in which not only schools and communities, academia and research, but also politics and business strive to make their own contribution. Encouragement should especially come from the examples in which religiously inspired visions are made a reality day by day against all odds in hotspots of social, political and religious conflict.

The Forum volume, which was particularly rich with a total of 49 contributions⁷³ was dedicated to Susanne Lähnemann, the author's wife, who unfortunately died the following year after a cancer in the year of the Forum, in which she was then still able to participate. She had accompanied all forums intensively, often as hostess. Through her work for the Schneller schools in the Middle East, among other things, she was always very connected with the concerns of the forums. As recently as spring 2003, she had taken part in a trip by the board to support the schools in Amman, Jordan and Khirbet Kanafar in the Bekaa Plain in Lebanon. While they were on the road, the Iraq war broke out, justified by the USA in part with false reports about Saddam Hussein's weapons stockpiles, and the travel group experienced these tensions and fears directly. This war, against which the Nuremberg Group of Religions for Peace and other civil society groups protested, has had a similarly fatal effect on the fragile stability in the Middle East as the attacks of September 11, 2001.

⁷³ 11 contributions from the forum appeared in English in the brochure "Preservation, Development, Reconciliation. Religious Education and Global Responsibility. International and Interreligious Contributions 2005" by the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of Religions for Peace, divided into the content areas "Religious and inter-religious education" (1), "Education towards violence-free communication and conflict resolution" (2) and "Environmental Education and Education for Socio-Economic Development" (3). Nürnberg / Chair for Religious Education 2005.

Ultimately, it favored the rise of radical Islamist forces and thus the exodus of many Christians and other religious minorities, especially from Iraq.

9. Pedagogical Applications, Political Grassroots Work, International Academic Exchange 2004-2006



Ill. 7 The 8th World Assembly in Kyoto 2006

9.1 Initiatives in Germany, the Middle East, Japan

Against the background of the areas of tension that - with far-reaching cultural and religious implications - have burdened international politics on the one hand, and the increasing pluralization in schools and domestic society on the other, the years 2004-2006 saw important initiatives which have left lasting traces in the German educational landscape. It became increasingly natural, in curriculum development as well as in higher education, to give greater prominence to the topic of religion; and, especially in textbook development, a start was made on allowing the perspective of the respective others to be articulated by representatives of the various religions themselves.

A signal for this is the volume “Dein Glaube - mein Glaube” (Your Faith - My Faith), edited by Werner Haußmann and the author, introduced with fundamental theses on “Religious Encounter as a Perspective for Teaching” and exemplified in teaching models with a focus on secondary level I education (5th-10th grades).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ W. Haußmann, J. Lähnemann (ed.): Dein Glaube - mein Glaube. Interreligiöses Lernen in Schule und Gemeinde. Göttingen 2005. = Theologie für Lehrerinnen und Lehrer - Thema.

The introductory theses describe the school situation and outline the current task:⁷⁵

Life in our classrooms, which was never entirely uniform in the first place, has, in the past 30 years, become pluralistic in ways that were hard to imagine before: diverse and different - in metropolitan and rural areas, in West and East.

The situation described is mirrored in the schools: From areas with populations affiliated with the traditional churches, the range extends to districts in large cities where children from 10 or more nations attend the same school or where secondary school classes consist of 40% or more Muslim students. However, there are also classes where children with at least some religious affiliation and concept of religion represent a great exception.

Our overall perception has become global - albeit filtered in many ways by the media. Our own location has become more uncertain.

Challenges and demands arise for schools and teaching, for teachers especially in the subjects of religion and ethics: How do I deal with this plurality? How can I do justice to the students with their different backgrounds? What are the consequences of plurality for organizing school life, for working in different subjects, for setting goals, and for the content and methods of religious education? How can 'identity and understanding' (the title of the 1994 EKD memorandum on religious education) be responsibly related to one another?"

It follows as the first thesis: It is necessary to recognize the present religiously plural situation and to take it seriously. The explanation states:

This thesis concerns the immediate area of teaching as well as the global contexts in which we live.

First of all, we need to perceive the students in their respective life contexts and take them seriously:

What do I know about their prior religious and spiritual formation, about their experiences, hardships, joys and questions? "There is no child who is not able to do something, who has nothing worth knowing and interesting to tell, who cannot inspire or surprise classmates or teachers by abilities that may have blossomed in obscurity for a long time."⁷⁶ Each child has his or her distinctive path on which he or she wants to be accompanied; each class is a separate organism within the framework of the plurality described above. Teachers here have the task of discovering to make this distinctiveness visible and fruitful in conversation, in work, in being together with

⁷⁵ Haußmann, Lähnemann, *Dein Glaube* (2005) 9ff.

⁷⁶ G. Pommerin-Götze: 'Orient und Okzident im Klassenzimmer', in: Lähnemann, *Wiedererwachen* (1992) 342-355, 355.

their students. Every child asks - aloud or silently - the fundamental questions of life: about God, about right and wrong, heaven and hell, about the meaning of life, no matter the culture or religion he or she grows up, even where there are no fixed ideological preconceptions.⁷⁷

Equally important is the teacher's self-perception in this context: Where do I have my place, where is my way into the ideological-religious plurality?

In addition to the task of recognizing our own place in coexistence with the students in a differentiated and sensitive way, there is the other task of raising awareness of global connections.⁷⁸

The second thesis is: The different religions must be considered in their specific historical and present structures and contexts, but also in the way they relate to each other.

From the explanation:

The task described by this thesis is very far-reaching and very demanding. After all, can I teach a religion without belonging to it myself? Can I simplify the system of meaning of a religious community (which has shaped people in many ways over millennia) in such a way that students understand it and yet it is not distorted in the process? Can there be a meaningful comparison of religions - highlighting commonalities, convergences, and differences? Can I make the life significance of religions visible to students who have only very vague ideas about their own tradition? Can existing prejudices and stereotypes be countered through differentiated information?

The most important prerequisite in this field is sensitive curiosity, the will to inform oneself in a differentiated way, to listen and to perceive what is important and "holy" to people in the various religious traditions, and to do so without dogmatic blinkers. It is not necessary to renounce one's own position or way, nor to look uncritically at other traditions, but to be attentive and open to discovering and encountering new things. It is important to keep in mind that each of the various religions is not something static, but something that has grown - like a tree that lives from its roots, or like a river that is fed from its sources - and that they each live in a contextual relationship to their cultural, historical and political environment and have influenced it in many ways....

⁷⁷ R. Coles: *Wird Gott nass, wenn es regnet? Die religiöse Bilderwelt der Kinder*. Aus dem Amerikanischen von A. Dittmar-Kolb. Hamburg 1992.

⁷⁸ Cf. on "Global Learning": J. Lähnemann: 'Das Projekt Weltethos - Herausforderung für die Erziehung.' *Concilium* 37/Oct. 2001, 495-508.

The third thesis is: For a dialogical didactics of world religion, it is important for encounters that those involved are aware of their own religious traditions in a differentiated way.

To this end, it is explained:

This thesis may be unexpected when it comes to encounters with world religions. Nevertheless, it is introduced here very consciously. For in the encounter with the world religions, the question of one's own position or path is always an assumption. Genuine dialogue cannot be conducted in free-floating arbitrariness. In terms of religious education, this means that the alternatives of religious instruction that provides "neutral" information about religions on the one hand, and denominationally based religious instruction on the other, are outdated. Both forms, if they are exclusively represented, are ultimately unsuitable for dialogue.

The problem is that students have less and less structured religious socialization (little familiarity with religious knowledge and practices, often distanced attitudes towards religious communities), although there is a basic openness to, and sometimes even curiosity about, religious phenomena.

On the other hand, it turns out that specific religious and cultural traditions are very deeply anthropologically anchored in terms of identity. This is shown by how easily sentiments in this area are brought to life - even unexpectedly - and how they can be abused, especially in the absence of a reflected relationship to one's own religious tradition. Certain population groups repeatedly advocate for the supposedly Christian Europe (for example, in contrast to Islam), even though they have long since distanced themselves from traditional church culture. In areas of tension - such as India, the Middle East or the Balkans - not only unreflected images of the religion and culture of others, but also of one's own tradition, can be instrumentalized politically. The teaching of thoughtful knowledge of the religious traditions of one's own cultural sphere is therefore necessary, precisely in order not to be caught up by slogans and to be able to orient oneself critically in the ideological plurality of the present. ...

The fourth thesis rounds off the basic considerations: Dialogical learning is above all learning in encounters and through encounters. The document explains:

Like all good teaching, the didactics of world religions thrive on the most authentic encounters possible. This is particularly important because - in contrast to the content of many other lessons - it is always people who give face and expression to what the religions stand for. Where it can be arranged, religious education should therefore take place in contact and cooperation with representatives of different faith communities. In the teaching examples in this volume, this is pointed out again and again.

However, this is not possible in the same way in all places. Above all, it is still little practiced. There are often fears and reservations:

Can I engage in a mosque visit in view of what is said in the media about “aggressive Islam” or “indoctrinating madrasas”? - Am I not intruding too much into the “privacy” of others when I ask them for a personal account of their faith? - Do I behave appropriately among people from a completely different cultural background and not ignorantly violate unspoken rules? - Am I capable of providing information when asked about my own faith?

It is important here to accept that learning by encounter is a process which includes the risk of the first step on both sides and which - if one pays attention to the signals of the other with sensitivity - can yield surprising and enriching things. ...

As good as it is to have the other as an explicit interlocutor, there are many ways today to get to know the other, at least as an implicit interlocutor, where direct conversation is not possible: in narratives, in biographies, in the presentation of experiences from the point of view of those affected.

It is characteristic that, in this volume, a specific tried and tested teaching model was offered for each of the major world religions: for the encounter with Islam for grades 5/6, for Judaism for grades 7/8, for the 9th grade on the topic “Hinduism, Gandhi and the Christians”, and for the final grades of secondary school on “Buddha and Jesus”. Werner Haußmann offered a special approach under the motto “Faith takes shape” with a unit on “Learning with religious artifacts.” Günther Gebhardt and Stefanie Schnebel showed ways of working with the Global Ethic project. The topic “Faith in Creation - Natural Science - World Responsibility” was jointly developed as a “Common Challenge for Jews, Christians and Muslims” by the Jewish religion teacher Markus Schalom Schroll, the Islamic teacher Rabeya Müller, and the author.

The whole breadth of the state of discussion was made visible in 2005 by the “Handbook of Interreligious Learning” as a publication of the Comenius Institute.⁷⁹ In a total of seven extensive parts, contexts and social perspectives (I) were illuminated, theological and socio-philosophical positions (II) presented, the understanding of interreligious learning (III) discussed, connected with experiences in interreligious dialogue, elements of interreligious learning discussed, places and fields of action of interreligious learning (V) presented, methods and approaches of interreligious learning (VI) and finally models, projects and initiatives presented. The whole breadth of those active in these fields - theological and religious studies, political and cultural, general pedagogy and religious education - are represented in this

⁷⁹ P. Schreiner, U. Sieg, V. Elsenbast (ed.): Handbuch Interreligiöses Lernen. Gütersloh 2005.

volume. Among other things, it was one of the first opportunities to deal with the concept of competence, which in some respects replaced the earlier orientation towards learning goals - i.e., the description of characteristics that specifically start from the situation of the learners.⁸⁰

In 2006, the *Handbuch Friedenserziehung - interreligiös - interkulturell - interkonfessionell* (Handbook of Peace Education - Interreligious - Intercultural - Interconfessional) was published to commemorate the author's 65th birthday.⁸¹ The breadth of perspectives indicated by the subtitle was unfolded in 70 contributions. Hans Küng wrote a foreword, Karl Ernst Nipkow a key essay on the history of peace education. He traced the arduous path to a disposition towards peace in church and society - and later published a separate volume on the subject. In three major thematic areas, the commemorative volume explored the foundations of and for peace education (with indicators of peace and discord and the threats to peaceful coexistence), the foundations of religious peace education in theology and religious studies, and fields of action of religious peace education and practical examples.

Our project "Christianity in the Textbooks of Islamic Countries", funded by the German Research Foundation, facilitated an international interreligious exchange. From March 20-30, 2006, our team traveled to the Middle East to discuss the results of our previous research and developments in Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon: Klaus Hock, Wolfram Reiss, Patrick Bartsch, and the author. For Syria, we were joined by the Syrian sociologist Khairallah Assar, who taught in Annaba in Algeria, and for Lebanon by Jonathan Kriener, historian and staff member of the Georg Eckert Institute for Textbook Research in Braunschweig. In extensive correspondence, we had worked out a detailed program for the meetings in Amman at the Theodor Schneller School, in Damascus, in Khirbet Kanafar at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School, and in Beirut. At the beginning of the year, the first two volumes containing our research and findings had been published: by Wolfram Reiss on Egypt and Palestine, by Patrick Bartsch on Türkiye and Iran - each volume more than 500 pages long, with the analysis of several hundred textbooks. Therefore, we knew how different the situation can be in different countries. Through Fuad Giacaman, the director of the Arab Education Institute in Bethlehem, the organizers had made contact with the director of the Palestinian Curriculum Center and the chairwoman of the National Committee for Civics Textbooks, through Prince Hassan of Jordan with the deputy director of the Royal Institute for Interreligious Studies and with Islamic theologians at Jordanian University, and also with representatives of the churches in Jordan. We

⁸⁰ J. Lähnemann: Lernergebnisse, Kompetenzen und Standards interreligiösen Lernens. In Schreiner, Sieg, Elsenbast, *Handbuch* (2005), pp.) 409-421.

⁸¹ W. Haußmann, Hj. Biener, K. Hock, R. Mokrosch (ed.): *Handbuch Friedenserziehung - interreligiös - interkulturell -- interkonfessionell*. Gütersloh 2006.

discussed, in particular, the serious differences between religious books, which were entirely concerned with the affirmation of one's own religion, and history and civics books, which - especially in Palestine - were committed to objective information and the idea of tolerance. To cite one example: While Egyptian textbooks drew a direct negative line from the Crusades to the colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries, Palestinian history textbooks spoke of the Frankish wars instead of the Crusades, thus delimiting the view beyond the religious dimension. For religious education, it was not yet possible to imagine that, beyond familiarizing students with their own religion, other religions should also be taken into consideration: that would only confuse the students! In contrast, we were amazed in Damascus, where we were still able to travel without border problems and also to take in the beauty of this city steeped in history: We met with the Ministry of Education's textbook managers for the various school subjects - and we were presented with the goal that in the future, chapters on Christianity in textbooks about Islamic religion should be written by the Christian side, and chapters on Islam in textbooks about Christian religion should be written by the Muslim side. Unfortunately, the war in Syria has frustrated this project. In Lebanon, it was made clear to the delegation that one should not speak glibly of a country dominated by Islam there, since Christianity is equally represented in the population and in the culture. The religious books used primarily in the widespread religious schools - Sunni, Shiite, Christian - were still entirely determined by the relevant inward-looking perspective with direct or indirect devaluation of other forms of faith and in no way related to a plural society, which Jonathan Kriener has critically elaborated. In contrast, in the subjects of national studies, philosophy and civilization, and history, which are taught in the state schools, the delegation was able to observe efforts toward tolerance between the various religious groups, towards unifying values in ethics, and an overall balancing presentation, also with regard to history.

The year 2006 was also marked by two major international meetings: the 8th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace in Kyoto* in August, and the 9th Nuremberg Forum in September.



Ill. 8 Interfaith education discussion in a working group in Kyoto 2006

With the 8th World Assembly, the *Religions for Peace* movement returned to the site of its foundation. Gathered there were 500 delegates and a total of 2000 participants from more than 100 countries. “Confronting Violence and Advancing shared Security” was the theme. Along with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi and Iran’s ex-President Khatami, Hans Küng was one of the opening speakers, and the assembly almost unanimously embraced the Declaration on Global Ethics. For the educational work, the author had prepared a key paper, which was discussed and supplemented in several subgroups. It articulated the hardships and problems that many children around the world suffer, and, in particular, the widespread lack of fundamental orientation in questions of meaning, culture and ethics, for which religious communities in particular should be special advocates: as communities that can create meaning in life and convey an understanding of the world that is not only oriented toward short-term goals.

In the “Kyoto Declaration for Peace Education”, the challenges at the beginning of the third millennium were named in four sections, reference was made to the spiritual, ethical and social potentials that religions can contribute, proposals for their implementation were described, and concrete steps to this end were listed.

With regard to the potential, it states - following the Declaration on Global Ethics:

- The religions are concerned with giving meaning to life, making interpretations of the world, and not only for short-term goals. The ethic of the great religious traditions is rooted in global, not particularistic, terms. The Global Ethic Declaration of the World Parliament of Religions (1993) shows this very clearly.

- The Religions can foster the Learning for a Culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life - and this in interfaith cooperation.
- The Religions can foster the Learning for a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order - and this in interfaith cooperation.
- The Religions can foster the Learning for a Culture of Tolerance and a Life in Truthfulness - and this in interfaith cooperation
- The Religions can foster the Learning for a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership between Men and Women - and this in interfaith cooperation

With regard to its realisation, the following is stated, among other things:

- Being rooted in an ultimate concern, religions can give the strength to work in the long, not only in the short term - and this should become a familiar part of all religious educational endeavors.
- From their experiences they can be active in the prevention of conflicts, in conflict resolution and in post-conflict reconciliation work - and for this educational work has to be expanded.

It will be important to find a good balance between teaching one's own religion and knowing about the other - and this will be relevant for concepts of confessional as well as of non-confessional Religious Education. Wherever direct encounter between religious communities is possible, it should be promoted to enable authentic presentation of religious beliefs and practices.

- The Religions have to build up a global consciousness for Religious and Inter-Religious Education, for an Education towards Violence-free Communication and Conflict Resolution, and for Environmental Education and Education for Socio-Economic Development.
- A basic condition is the respect for the conviction of the others and to try to see it from their point of view.
- A specific task is to recognize carefully the real situation of children and to encourage their creativity, taking into account that children can be educators themselves.
- A helpful means will be to bring youth together for social action: Youth can inspire and teach Youth.
- There are many inspiring stories in different regional and cultural contexts which can be used for a fruitful exchange between educators and educational institutions.
- It is a task as well as an opportunity for Religions for Peace through its international, regional, national and local bodies - to support the emerging networks in Religious Education, Peace Education, Social Education, Human Rights Education and Environmental Education worldwide.

It is clear that all initiatives must be contextualized to the specific area, cultural, social and educational conditions. For example: Japan as the country of the 8th World Assembly of RfP reveals the uniqueness of a very specific religious environment.

- A more intense exchange is to be developed concerning the fundamental visions and goals in Peace Education Projects, their training methods, their experiences and the transfer possibilities, so that educators, communities and also cultural educational bodies can profit from each other.

Thinking globally, acting locally and working constructively at international, regional and national level - with careful regard to the specific contexts, challenges and possibilities - makes Peace Education in and through the Religions a key tool in confronting violence and advancing shared security.

9.2 Making Visions Come True. The 9th Nuremberg Forum

The same year as the 8th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* in Kyoto, the organizers hosted the 9th Nuremberg Forum. It was the prelude to the author's last official year of service at the university. It was intended to take stock after 25 years of Forum history. The motto - "Making Visions Real" - was chosen very deliberately: It had become clear time and again that visions are necessary to initiate innovative educational processes. And visions are a basic element of the various religious traditions. At the same time, they can be quite ambivalent: there are both healing and highly problematic visions. However, 'to realize healing visions', it is necessary to take a variety of learning steps, to work realistically on the conditions and possibilities, and to have staying power in the face of the obstacles and setbacks that have been, and continue to be, experienced in understanding and educational work between the religions.

In terms of breadth and diversity, this forum surpassed its predecessors, which is also reflected in the number of 64 contributions and in the overall size of the forum volume (560 pages).⁸² Even the table of contents with its subject areas makes this clear:

- I: Images of Salvation and Judgment in the Religions - Perspectives for Present and Future?
- II: The Challenge of the One World - Religions in the Socio-Political Arena
- III: Having dreams, realizing ideas - boundary-breaking potentials of interreligious education

⁸² J. Lähnemann (ed.): Visionen wahr machen. Interreligiöse Bildung auf dem Prüfstand. Hamburg 2007.= Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegabung 26.

IV: Principles, Projects, Practice - Interfaith Education Local, National, European, Global

- 1) From practice - for practice: learning in the encounter on site
- 2) Concepts and projects in Germany
- 3) A Soul for Europe? - Experiences and future perspectives (from 12 European countries)
- 4) The Global Perspective

In addition, there were workshops on interreligious hermeneutics and on interreligious textbook research.

The participation of well-known public figures from the Church and politics - including the Bavarian Bishop Johannes Friedrichs and the future Bavarian Minister of the Interior Joachim Herrmann - and the large audience at the closing lecture by Hans Küng on the "Building Site Global Ethic" - were a clear affirmation of the Forum's concern.

The fact that the Nuremberg Forums initiated dialogue between religions and cultures for education and training long before the current heated debates, and opened it up for academic and practical pedagogical tasks for 25 years running, was appreciated by politicians as well as the religious communities in Germany, and especially by those responsible for education.

The fact that Karl Ernst Nipkow, as the doyen of Protestant religious education in Germany, was involved throughout the forum helped to provide structural clarity - beyond the key opening presentation.

Some essential guidelines of the work at the forum must be pointed out, even though the whole fullness of the contributions cannot be represented here:

- 1) It was a consistent experience across the first three topics that theological developments in religions are relevant to politics and pedagogy and that, conversely, political and pedagogical perspectives need to be considered in theology.

From the vantage point of the religions, it was demonstrated how the visions and the images of the future of the religions can be inspiring and encouraging for socially responsible action, but that they can also have a paralyzing and even destructive effect. The range is already evident in the titles: when Fuad Kandil spoke as a Muslim about "Earthly Life in Probation. Life in the Sign of Great Hope", and Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, on the other hand, spoke about "End Time Expectations and Redemption Fantasies in Apocalyptic Trivial Literature ...", and was able to address both the politically dangerous end-time images of U.S. Christian fundamentalists and the counter-imaginings of Iranian President Ahmadinejad. In view of this, he could even ask whether it was not necessary to make such visions untrue.

In the political and social field, Norbert Klaes was able to show in how many cases conflict mediation through interreligious cooperation has been successful during the past decades (e.g. in South Africa, Sierra Leone and Uganda), while Klaus Lefringhausen analyzed global injustice and - in the updated metaphor of Jesus having to answer to the Grand Inquisitor - articulated it as a question to politics as well as to religions. Sulak Sivaraksa, winner of the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize, presented the "Assembly of the Poor" in Thailand, which has been repeatedly attacked by large corporations as well as by political rulers, and with which he has carried out environmental, educational and human rights work in his country - based on Buddhist values.

2) Present at the forum were pioneering educational projects from areas of tension in which interconfessional and interreligious visions are particularly put to the test. It was no coincidence that Fuad Giacaman, director of the Arab Education Institute in Bethlehem, gave his presentation under the title: "Hope does not disappoint" - loosely based on St. Paul's words "Hope does not disappoint" from Romans 5. He explained the project "Living in the Holy Land: Respecting Differences", which was jointly developed by Israelis and Palestinians, and in which authentic educational material about the religions for Israeli and Palestinian schools was further developed by representatives of both sides, even if cooperation was already at that time almost only made possible by digital means. Mato Zovkic, Roman Catholic Vicar-General of Sarajevo, presented on contemporary developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the effort to achieve understanding between Muslims, Orthodox and Roman Catholics, which cannot occur without taking ethnic identities into account, but which precisely requires a better knowledge of the content of the "faith of the others" as an educational task. Norman Richardson used the example of Northern Ireland to show how an educational system that is widely divided along denominational lines can perpetuate hostilities that are dressed up by religion, and how, on the other hand, learning from intercultural and interreligious educational projects in other European regions can be of considerable help to the forces striving for understanding.

3) The international and global horizon of the educational task was present throughout, both in the pedagogical and religious-pedagogical fundamental Topic Area 3, in which "boundary-breaking potentials of interreligious education" were developed, as well as in the larger Topic Area 4, designed as a symposium or market of possibilities: "Principles, Projects, Practice - Interreligious Education Local, National, European. Global." Topics comprehensively explored in presentations were: how world responsibility is to be perceived in "Global Learning" (Annette Scheunpflug), what role media culture plays in this field (Manfred Pirner), how Islamic religious education can open up to interreligious education (Cemal Tosun), what visions are essential for young people today (Friedrich Schweitzer), how environmental challenges

also affects interreligious learning (Gottfried Orth) and what educational standards should be aimed for in religious education (Folkert Doedens).

The presentation of the educational projects during the afternoon symposia showed that the contextual conditions of the educational system, the local, regional, national, and continental social and cultural conditions, have to be taken into account. The symposia provided a wealth of impressions of what has developed in the field of intercultural and interreligious education locally, in Germany, in Europe and worldwide, and what was being done at these different levels. For example, the model project of Christian-Muslim cooperative religious education at the German Protestant High School in Cairo (Frank van der Velden) provided an example of interreligious communication structures that are also relevant for higher education in Europe. There, the religious education cooperation between Germany and Türkiye has led to an exchange between the universities of Erlangen-Nuremberg and Ankara within the framework of the ERASMUS/SOKRATES program of the European Union (Beyza Bilgin/Johannes Lähnemann). For countries where there is no place for interreligious learning in schools, pedagogical means of providing interreligious information and possibilities for encounter were sought and supported by books and pedagogical materials (e.g. by Laurent Klein for France, and Alicia Cabezudo from Latin America for many scenarios in many different countries).

4) Finally, long-term tasks of interreligious learning and research were worked on in the workshops:

- The workshop *Interreligious Hermeneutics* had the theme “Discovering one’s own in the light of others” and from the perspectives of the representatives of different religions, illuminated where, through encounters, their own religious tradition became more clearly defined for them and how elements of their own respective tradition proved helpful for understanding and dialogue through encounter. On the one hand, one has to be self-critical of one’s own thought patterns in order not to transfer them “colonialistically” onto others, but on the other hand, one’s own character does not lose its strength in the encounter, but instead emerges more clearly and demands communicable articulation that leads out of narrowness and provinciality, which opens up creative processes and experiences.
- The workshop on *Interreligious Textbook Research* took up the experiences acquired through the research project “The Representation of Christianity in Textbooks of Islamic Countries”, and placed them within a larger interreligious and international horizon (Klaus Hock, Wolfram Reiss, Georg Tsakalidis, Baker Al Hiyari). The focus on positive developments in textbooks with regard to the presentation of religions, especially Christianity and Islam, which could be observed in the various countries in recent years (more authentic, historically differentiated and more educationally lively chapters) showed the fruitfulness of

the textbook analyses and the suggestions for improvement resulting from them for a field of research which, in many respects, still presented itself only as a prelude to much further necessary work.

5) The idea that the *Global Ethic project* can offer a helpful frame of theological, social, political, cultural and pedagogical reference that can be applied to various contexts inside and outside the classroom when they are considered in real terms was not only visible in individual contributions (Christel Hasselmann, Manfred Müller), but, above all, in the committed closing lecture by Hans Küng, who described the “Construction Site Global Ethic” against the background of current conflict-laden events - as a project which seeks to lead religious and world-view communities into a global recognition of responsibility, and which requires comprehensive educational efforts across generational and institutional boundaries.

The most concise contribution was Karl Ernst Nipkow’s key presentation “Interreligiöse Bildung auf dem Prüfstand - Bilanz und Ausblick nach 45 Jahren” (Interreligious education on the test bench - assessment and outlook after 45 years)⁸³, in which he focused on the last 10 years and for the earlier decades referred to the historical research survey in the author’s “Evangelische Religionspädagogik in interreligiöser Perspektive (Protestant religious education in an interreligious perspective) and with regard to the definition of the specific field of research to the *Handbuch Interreligiöses Lernen* (Handbook on interreligious learning).

Nipkow unfolded the assessment and outlook in 20 theses, which he explained in detail. The author has selected the theses that are of fundamental importance beyond the German context. They are reproduced here.

Thesis 1: The last decade has brought considerable theoretical progress and the consensus of a majority of experts that Interreligious Learning (IRL) must not mean surrendering one’s own religious identity.

Thesis 3: Interreligious learning aims at a permanent educational competence and not at an ability to cope in everyday life only when needed in special situations.

Thesis 4: The concept of “interreligious education” carries more weight than that of “interreligious learning.” It aims for the largest possible number of interreligiously educated contemporaries capable of dialogue, whose educational competencies are clearly identifiable, such as the ability to take a multi-perspective view instead of one based only on one’s own group, to think in complementary terms instead of a dualistic friend-foe approach, and to engage in religious self-criticism instead of thoughtless, blind loyalty.

⁸³ In Lähnemann, *Visionen* (2007) 14-28.

Thesis 5: The ethical and emotional pedagogical keys to understanding are mutual recognition, religious sincerity, and the trust that grows from it.

Thesis 9: Interreligious learning is a matter for the whole school, not only a task of religious education, but also of several other school subjects, especially such as history, geography and sociology.

Thesis 12: There are different degrees of interreligious openness in all religions, the causes of which lie in general fears of minorities and in the reluctance surrounding a free, independent use of one's own religious capacity for reflection.

Thesis 13: In all religions, interreligious learning as learning in and through differences is affirmed only to a very limited extent by the conservative wings of each and is harshly rejected by radical groups.

Thesis 14: The initially seemingly easier path of interreligious learning through the identification of common ethical values is an important path, but it is questionable whether it leads to the deeper mutual religious recognition and tolerance that is to be desired.

Thesis 15: Interreligious education and dialogue skills are results of a longer learning path with identifiable stages of competence.

Thesis 16: Since we are committed to joint efforts for the future, the question that must be asked in all religions is: How do majorities learn?

Thesis 17: In the fruitful tension between consensus and difference as the guiding principle of these remarks, four special tasks arise in conclusion for the religious education of all religious communities: first, education for a strong, active tolerance.

Thesis 18: A second special task of religious education, in view of differing value priorities and differing cultural ties, is the inculcation of a religious and ethical tactfulness.

Thesis 19: A third special task of religious education in all religious communities concerns the ability of ethical-religious assessment and theological self-discernment, especially among older young people and adults.

Thesis 20: A fourth special task of religious education for all religious communities is education to avoid violence and to promote commitment to peace and justice.

Since the 9th Nuremberg Forum was the last during the author's official term of service, the question was whether there would be any further forums. It turned out to be a stroke of luck that, one year after the author's retirement in 2007, Manfred Pirner from the Ludwigsburg University of Education was appointed as his successor. He was one of the speakers at the Nuremberg Forum in 2006 with the topic "Popular

Media Culture - ‘lingua franca’ for Interreligious Education?’ and brought with him broad experience in religious education. Since then, he and the author have planned and led the 10th, 11th and 12th Nuremberg Forums, together with Werner Haußmann.



Ill. 9 Local Interfaith meeting in the Buddhist Center in Fürth/Germany 2007

The author gave his *farewell lecture* at the end of the summer semester of 2007 under the motto: “No religious peace without interreligious learning”. It was firstly a review, tracing the path that led to and was shaped by the Nuremberg Forums. This was followed by a description of interreligious learning as a multidimensional task: 1) for theology, 2) for politics, 3) for pedagogy.

1) The author emphasized: “Theology today can no longer do without a concern for the plurality of religions and world-views. And this applies to foundational work in all religions.” He described the areas of tension between the claim to truth and tolerance, between mission and dialogue, and pleaded for a definition of the relationship between Christianity and world religions that is truly dialogical: in each case, the experience of truth and tolerance, identity and understanding are to be related to each other as two ends of one spectrum. The truth experience of one’s own tradition and the task of mission (i.e.: to be a convincing witness to one’s own faith) are not left aside, but are brought into an open process that includes tolerance and respect for others, makes learning from each other possible, and is aware that our earthly knowing and speaking happens within earthly limitations.

2) The author described interreligious learning as a task for politics in connection with a statement by the former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt at the Siemens Forum in 2004, who named this as the most important and most difficult topic of our time. As a reason for the fact that the danger has come to a dramatic head, he pointed out that not even one per cent of Muslims have any idea of what Christianity teaches, but conversely, not so much as one per cent of people in the West have even the faintest idea of what Islam is. And worst of all, he said, this was true of leading politicians as well - "including the sitting U.S. president", he said verbatim. This led the author to the thesis:

"Politicians, like religious representatives, must take seriously, much more clearly than before, the fact that religions and worldviews are a factor that cannot be neglected in their interaction with one another - both for conflict prevention and conflict management, and for the affirmation of meaning and motivation to take responsibility in society."

3) The author unfolded interreligious learning as a task for pedagogy in three steps:

- 1: Recognizing and taking students seriously within the context of their own lives,
- 2: Exploring the various fields of pedagogical action (curriculum development, textbook research, teacher training),
- 3: Learning from each other in an international horizon (using the example of the three thematic areas to which the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of Religions for Peace (RfP) has dedicated itself (religious and interreligious education, education for non-violent communication and conflict resolution, education for social-ecological responsibility).

10. Europe as an Example of Dynamic Interreligious Educational Efforts and the Areas of Tension “Media and Religions” and “Human Rights and Religions”

How do religions figure in the public education system? This is a fundamental question that the Peace Education Standing Commission has always grappled with. If the curricula deal not just with one religion, but with different religions, this means, after all, that religions move beyond the introduction to their own faith, which is reserved for the religious communities themselves, into the light of day and become visible in terms of their educational relevance. This question is difficult to answer because of the fundamentally different educational systems and religious conditions on the various continents. Since we had a broad range of educators from the various European regions represented at the Nuremberg Forums, we approached the question in the context of Europe with the Peace Education Standing Commission in cooperation with the Comenius Institute in Münster, the central educational institute of the Protestant Church in Germany. Peter Schreiner, a lecturer there, had broad pan-European experience through his leadership of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS).

Together with the author he had the idea of preparing a map which illustrates the situation in different parts of Europe, accompanied by a handbook. The young scholar Florian Ermann designed the map.

10.1 A European Map and Manual

The map shows tendencies and developments in no fewer than 45 European countries (including Türkiye).⁸⁴ In the handbook, the authors presented problem-focused insights in thirteen of them, covering different parts of the continent. The majority of the papers were given at the 9th Nuremberg Forum in September 2006 (under the general title: “A Soul for Europe”) and first published in the Forum volume: J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Visionen wahr machen. Interreligiöse Bildung auf dem Prüfstand* (Hamburg 2007). (Making visions come true. Interreligious education under scrutiny).

In the introduction, the author explained the main findings and results. They are documented in the following terms:

⁸⁴ J. Lähnemann, P. Schreiner (ed.): *Interreligious and Values Education in Europe. Map and Handbook*. Münster 2008 (3rd ed. 2009)

1. The Situation

In nearly all countries of Europe, there is a growing insight that religion should be part of public education:

- to transmit the necessary knowledge about the cultural-religious heritage
- to be orientated about the religiously rooted values and ethic for personal life as well as for society
- to reflect meaning and aims for life in the light of the scriptures, traditions and spiritual practices of religions
- to educate for tolerance and prevent wrong prejudices through authentic information about and - if possible - encounter with the different living religions

The European Map of Interreligious and Values Education (EMIVE) shows that Religious Education (RE) in public schooling is established in all Western, North, Central and South European countries (exception: France), and that it is in development also in the former communist Eastern states.

2. Questions

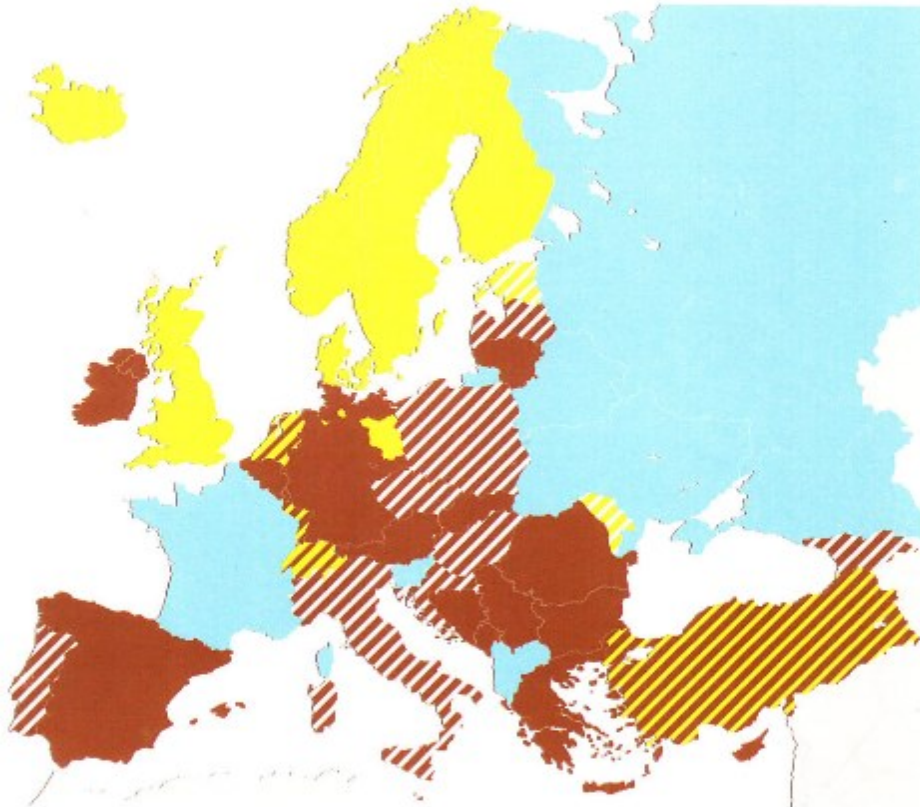
There are various points of discussion and - partly - controversy:

- Should RE be a compulsory or an optional subject? And: If it is compulsory, does it need a substitute like ethical education?
- Should RE be taught in a confessional way (i.e. Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, and so forth) or on a multi-religious/non-confessional basis?
- Who is mainly responsible for RE: the state, the religious communities, or both in cooperation? What are the juridical conditions? Can religious communities contribute to a lively encounter in public schooling?
- Does RE mean “learning about religions” or also “learning from religions”?
- Is RE taught by ministers/clergymen and/or by state-employed teachers?
- What are the conditions for teacher training - in state universities, teacher training colleges, colleges of religious communities?
- Do the syllabi include mainly information about one religion or also about other religions?
- Is cognitive learning dominant, or is there also existential and social learning?
- Are there standards for value and ethical learning which can be common for RE as well as for ethical education - as for example the Global Ethic Project?

Johannes Lähnemann & Peter Schreiner (Editors)

Interreligious and Values Education in Europe

Map and Handbook



In cooperation with the
Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC)
of Religions for Peace (RfP)
and the Comenius-Institut, Münster, Germany



(The color brown indicates that in these countries you have predominantly confessional teaching, the color yellow stands for a multi-confessional approach. Blue means that there is no religious education in schools. Stripes indicate Religious Education as a voluntary offer or that there is a mixture of confessional and multi-religious approach).

3. Trends

There is a general trend not to leave RE only to the religious communities or to private initiatives. Religion is increasingly seen as a field for public discourse and public learning:

- The map shows that in the north-West and north of Europe RE is dominantly multi-religious/non-confessional (England/Wales/Scotland, Norway, Sweden). Also, in countries with a strong confessional tradition (Ireland, Iceland) there is much space for multi-religious learning. In the south and east we have predominantly confessional RE and - traditionally - little information about other religions. But there are examples of a lively discussion to incorporate more elements of interreligious learning (e.g. Türkiye and Greece). In the central Europe (especially the German-speaking) countries we find a mixture of confessional and non-confessional approaches.
- The international exchange has helped to establish common goals in most of the syllabuses: that RE has to contribute to build up the students' personal identity in relation to their own religious affiliation/cultural tradition, that they are rooted in an understanding of the meaning of life which helps them to become responsible citizens of their respective society, that they develop tolerance for different religions and world views and a sensitive consciousness for ethical questions and decisions.

4. Problems

The concrete conditions for interreligious and values education are still extremely different in the different parts of Europe:

- There are countries with a highly developed infrastructure where RE has a continuous history - in countries with a multi-religious approach (for example England) as well as in countries with a confessional approach (for example in most parts of Germany or Austria): in syllabus development, the production of textbooks and teaching material and in teacher training on a university level.
- There are countries where the whole position and presence of RE is very weak: without or with little teaching material, without regular syllabuses and with teachers who have little opportunity to gain the necessary professional skills ...
- In the majority, there is more responsibility for RE with the religious communities than with the state. In some cases, there is a lively co-operation between religious communities and state institutions, but in many cases there is almost no control of the content, aims and methods by state or independent pedagogical institutions.

Institutions like the SACRES (Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education) where representatives of the school, the parents and the religious communities work together in England are still an exception.

- Interreligious cooperation concerning the presence of RE in public schooling and also in the pedagogy of the religious communities themselves is still very rare. This is a crucial point for countries where we still have segregated societies (as in Northern Ireland and in the former Yugoslavia). But also, in countries without traditional tensions the reciprocal control of the presentation of the different religions in textbooks and syllabuses is mostly not developed.
- There are still few examples of direct encounter with the religions in the pedagogical field, of visits in the places of worship as part of “outdoor schooling” and of lively learning. There is little recognition of the rich cultural heritage and mutual influence of different religions in different parts of Europe (e.g. Judaism in many European countries, Christianity in Türkiye, Islam in Serbia/Bosnia and Spain). And also conflicts and hurts in history should be reflected.
- The research of students’ identity development, their religious and philosophical interests and questions in a growing pluralistic society (with the tendency to “patchwork religiosities”) is just in the beginning.
- There are too few examples of learning on a “neighborhood” basis and exchange between RE and other subjects in school.

5. Tasks and plans for action

- A new impetus on the part of the religious communities and the politicians is needed for interreligious and values learning, in order to face cultural-religious agnosticism, religious and ethnic fanaticism as well as relativism, from the side of the religious communities and from the political side.
- It should become part of the Interreligious Councils’ and of multi-religious groups’ efforts to assist the possibilities of interreligious and values learning - on the international, the national, the district and the local level.
- Religious and interreligious agencies should offer authentic information about the religions and structured possibilities for encounter, dialogue and co-operation.
- Religious communities should be partners for syllabus and textbook development (not only for RE, but also for history, geography and elements of the school ethic and school life). In confessional RE knowledge about other religions should necessarily be part of the curriculum. In multi-religious/non-confessional RE religions should be presented as “wholes” and as “systems of responsibility” (and not only in “piecemeal fashion”). Competent members of the religious communities should be asked and prepared to re-read new curricula, textbooks and teaching material.

- Interreligious experts can offer their service as mediators in cultural-religiously rooted conflicts or tensions (for example in questions of reciprocal participation in religious festivals, questions of school worship, clothing and physical education of girls, sex education ...)

In the face of repeated objections that seek to remove religion from the public sphere, and especially from education, it should be pointed out that there are opportunities for a lively and not uncritical cooperation of social forces in the field of education. Just as music lessons remain sterile without contact with musicians, and sports only remain alive through the relationship to work in sports clubs, the same is true in the field of religions. Of course, there must be no room for indoctrination. This is part of the self-understanding of our education system based on our Basic Law.

On the political level, this understanding was supported by the OSCE - the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in which 57 states participate - through the educational dialogue it promotes. A milestone were the “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools” developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) in cooperation with experts, first published in 2007. According to the OSCE’s own account (<https://www.osce.org/odihhr/27217>), they were written to improve understanding of the globally growing religious diversity and the growing presence of religions in the public sphere. The primary goal was to help OSCE Participating States promote the study and knowledge of religions and worldviews, especially as a means of strengthening religious freedom.

The recommendations are developed in five chapters: The first chapter develops the goals and makes visible how this content area can contribute to the promotion of human rights, especially the right to freedom of religion or belief. The second chapter provides an overview of the human rights framework and the implications to be drawn for teacher education and curriculum design so that freedom of thought, conscience, and religion can be given their due - the rights of parents, children, and teachers, along with an increase in interest in communities that represent religious minorities. The third chapter gives examples of approaches to and concepts for developing curricula for teaching about religions and worldviews. It discusses various principles and identifies professional standards - regarding historical and contemporary developments in faith communities, being attentive to different interpretations of reality, and the various regional manifestations of religious and secular plurality. Different types of curricula and pedagogical approaches are presented (teacher-centered, student-centered ...). Competencies are identified toward which teaching should be aimed. The fourth chapter is specifically dedicated to teacher education. It looks at the areas of teacher education and professional practice, and coherently describes the skills and knowledge needed for teaching about religions. Finally, the

fifth chapter deals with the practical application of the overall context of human rights for the learning area of religions and beliefs and the legal frameworks that are relevant for this. These include state neutrality and the right to opt out of religious education.

A fundamental question that has accompanied these efforts, as well as the initiatives associated with the Nuremberg Forums, has been: “How can these insights and ideas be communicated more broadly?” The question “How do majorities learn?” had been explored repeatedly, especially by Karl Ernst Nipkow. What structures are needed to make this happen? How can they be implemented in projects, how can they be evaluated, so that real learning takes place?

Other fundamental questions that arise are: What role do the media play in the tasks of interreligious education? What can they achieve? Do they also have problematic effects? What is the relationship between religions and the media?

Manfred Pirner, as the author’s successor, was true to his word in continuing the work of the Nuremberg Forums. The connection between the media and interreligious education was obvious: He had completed his habilitation on “Television Myths and Religious Education” and distinguished himself with further work on media education; the author was able to contribute the diverse international and interreligious connections that had developed in the course of the Nuremberg Forums, especially in cooperation with *Religions for Peace*. The author and his successor brought together their main areas of work and research - interreligious education on the one hand, media education as a theological, social, pedagogical and especially religious education challenge on the other - and prepared the 10th Nuremberg Forum, together with Werner Haußmann.

10.2 “Media Power and Religions”. The 10th Nuremberg Forum

In choosing “Media Power and Religions” as the challenge for intercultural education as the theme and motto of the 10th Nuremberg Forum, the organizers were guided by the insight that the media increasingly shape the public image of religions and cultures. Often, this image is one-sided and negative. In the Western media, for example, Islam often appears as an aggressive religion, while in Islamic countries, there is talk of the “decadent West.” However, Hindu fanatics and ultra-orthodox Jews also make the headlines. Sometimes, as in the case of the “Mohammed cartoons,” media reports have even triggered, and continue to trigger, tangible “religiously motivated” conflicts across national borders. Against this background, education and critical debate about the opinion-forming power of the media appear to be urgently needed. On the other hand, the organizers observed that, both in Europe and beyond, the public media are making greater efforts to provide authentic information about religions. Discussions about them are initiated in order to contribute

to understanding between different ideological and religious positions. Interreligious and intercultural topics are the subject of motion pictures, television series or popular books, which are consumed by millions of people. Popular media can even serve as a common reference point for intercultural and interreligious understanding. Active participation of adolescents as well as adults in media culture thus becomes an important objective of education.

The topicality of this issue also became clear to the organizers when they approached colleagues from the fields of theology and religious studies, the humanities and social sciences, general education and religious education in a tried and tested manner for their cooperation - across cultures and religions. This was already evident from the participation of representatives from politics, religious communities and the media: The Federal Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière as patron, represented at the forum by the head of his policy department, Stéphane Beemelmans; the former Minister President of Bavaria, Günther Beckstein; Heiner Bielefeldt as UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion; Archbishop Ludwig Schick; Regional Bishop Stefan Ark Nitsche; Rabbi Elisa Klappheck; Bekir Alboga as Dialogue Officer of the Muslim association DITIB; Reinold Hartmann from the ZDF, and media researchers Norbert Schneider and Johanna Haberer - who also served as Vice-President of the organizers' university - to name just a few important ones.

In the period surrounding the Forum, there were also explosive events that had broad media repercussions: Since July 2010, reports had been circulating that the US pastor Terry Jones intended to carry out a public Qur'an burning on the anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center, i.e. three weeks before the Nuremberg Forum. Fierce reactions and discussions worldwide were the result. Jones initially refrained from the Qur'an burning, but put his plan into action in March 2011 - resulting in violent outcries, especially in Afghanistan. In early September 2010, barely a month before the Nuremberg Forum, the controversial discussion about Thilo Sarrazin's book "Deutschland schafft sich ab" (Germany is abolishing itself) reached its climax when he lost his post as a member of the board of Deutsche Bank. Here, too, the great media attention played a decisive role in ensuring that Sarrazin's theses, some of which were clearly Islamophobic and anti-Semitic, were rapidly disseminated among the German public, and there was hardly a TV talk show that omitted the subject of Sarrazin.

In the detailed planning of the topics, the organizers tried to take the complexity of the overall topic into account. The first topic area was devoted to the portrayal of religions in the public media. It uncovered both potential and weaknesses, which stem not least from the lack of religious expertise on the part of many journalists and media makers, but also from the lack of expertise of some religious representatives in dealing with the media. Topic Area 2 focused on a religion-specific problem by reflecting on the dialectic of the prohibition of images and the cult of images in

religions and discussing the significance of images and other media for religions. The third topic area dealt with media ethics in the context of religious plurality: What are the essential standards for the religions and what contributions can the different religions make to media ethics? Topic Area 4 illuminated the broad field of “media and interreligious/intercultural learning. A fifth topic area was designed as a symposium on textbook research, under the heading: “Interreligious textbook research/textbook development. Focus: Christianity - Islam. Standards and Perspectives.” Here, a summary of years of textbook research was to be worked out, which had been initiated at the Nuremberg Chair and carried out in cooperation with the University of Rostock.

In his opening speech, which attracted a great deal of attention and was broadcast in full by Bayerisches Fernsehen, Norbert Schneider, Director of the North Rhine-Westphalia State Media Authority, outlined the “significance of television for interreligious and intercultural understanding.” He shed light on the functional and structural characteristics of this medium and called for greater use to be made of the opportunities offered by television (and other media), also and especially for interreligious communication processes, despite justified criticism. This concern was underscored by Markus Weingardt who presented a critical appraisal of the media presence in peace-promoting contributions by religions: The major religions are presented in the media as factors that aggravate or even cause conflicts, while the numerous worldwide initiatives by well-known religious representatives to overcome armed conflicts and violent strife (as compiled by Weingardt in his book *RELIGION MAKES PEACE*⁸⁵), receive hardly any attention. However, the fact that it is not at all easy, even for ethically responsible journalists, to report factually and ‘objectively’ in interreligious conflict situations became clear in Norman Richardson’s contribution on the situation in Northern Ireland. In the context of this conflict situation, however, it also became clear how important the role of the media could be for teaching basic religious education and thus also for promoting interreligious understanding.

In Topic Area 2, the focus was on deepening and differentiating the forum topic from the perspective of various religious traditions. In the contributions, it became clear that even in the religions which explicitly prohibit images - Judaism and Islam - it is not a matter of a superficial total rejection of pictorial representations, but that in a deeper sense, the underlying intention is the defense against the reification and functionalization of the transcendent, which is thereby made available and placed in the service of human beings. By opposing the tendency to deify the human, this

⁸⁵ M. Weingardt: *RELIGION MACHT FRIEDEN: Das Friedenspotential von Religionen in politischen Gewaltkonflikten*. Stuttgart 2007.

commandment has a strong ideology-critical impulse against personality cults and debasing depictions, as Karl-Josef Kuschel pointed out.

The other side of the subject of images from the point of view of religious traditions is the value of images and symbols in bringing the transcendental reality closer to human reality and making it comprehensible. For devotion and piety, but also for the pedagogical task, it is ultimately difficult to do without them, and they have given entire cultural epochs their unmistakable face. Saeid Edalatnejad from Tehran was able to show this in the context of the Iranian-Shiite tradition, as was Alfred Weil for the Buddhist schools of thought, in which a rich world of symbols and images grew up after the initial lack of images in Buddhism. Emanuel Perselis from Athens illustrated the spiritual and pedagogical value of religious images using the history and veneration of Orthodox icons: produced in devotion, the icons themselves lead to devotion. They take into account the Incarnation - that God became human in Jesus - and thus illuminate the Christian experience of salvation. The icons of the saints show models to be venerated and followed. They encourage and strengthen in faith, as the theologian John of Damascus in particular explained in the 7th century. Influenced by the pedagogical experiences that can be acquired with the icons, Perselis suggested making the subject of images the subject of interreligious learning in general.

Media ethics issues discussed in Topic Area 3 concerned, on the one hand, how the media deal with religions (are they presented appropriately, fairly, in a differentiated way...?). On the other hand, there was the question of what contributions the various religions can make to media ethics. Heiner Bielefeldt discussed in particular the relationship between freedom of opinion and freedom of religion, the determination of which has a key function in dealing with social conflicts in the area of media and religion, concretized by Matthias Rohe with regard to the legal situation in Islamic countries. In very fundamental considerations, Thomas Hausmanninger arrived at the formulation of a general target norm for media-ethical reflection: that all structures and all individual actions in the area of media communication should serve to enable, preserve and promote a morally good and successful life for people. This target norm can be developed in maxims, e.g., equitable access and participation, and illustrated by discourses in and between religions, and with regard to their contribution to civil society.

In Topic Area 4 - "Media and interreligious / intercultural learning" - it became particularly clear that the topic of the media must be reflected within the horizon of new kinds of experiential fields: the pluralization of the life contexts of adolescents, which is characterized by individualization, secularization and transreligious as well as transcultural phenomena, especially in "Western" contexts. This is contrasted by a media world that can become dominant, especially among adolescents, and that they can use in a consumptive but also in a productive way. Manfred Pirner

and Dieter Spanhel (general pedagogy) each started from an observation of weaknesses: that the topic of the media has so far been neglected in the didactics of world religions and interreligious learning and mostly narrowed down to the functional use of didactic media (Pirner), and that adolescents encounter little in the way of religious symbolic language in the pluralized media world (Spanhel). While Pirner argued in favor of taking children and adolescents seriously as experts on their own world (and also on their media world) and for working with them on a multi-layered and critical way of dealing with the media's offers of meaning, Spanhel emphasized, in addition, how important the encounter with lived religion is in order to find a helpful orientation in questions of morality, cultural norms, religious interpretations of meaning and goals in life.

The specific areas that were examined made it clear how diverse the perspectives of the overall topic are: with regard to creative interreligious exploration of the Holy Scriptures (Susanne Strass), with regard to the effects of music (Peter Bubmann) and with regard to work with literary texts (Georg Langenhorst). Karlo Meyer and Georg Schwickart, two authors who themselves bring religions closer to children and young people through texts and images, had their say. Similar to the other contributions, they emphasized that when encountering the contents, narratives, and symbols of religions, their peculiarity, often strangeness, and "resistance" should not be ignored; rather, respect for otherness should be emphasized over superficial harmonization.

The symposium on interreligious textbook research that followed the forum was given a special status. Behind this was the realization that even in the age of audiovisual media, textbooks play an important role in conveying information and shaping attitudes. In countries with comparatively little developed teacher training, they are often the "teachers' teachers." As several research projects have shown - not least the research project led by the Universities of Erlangen-Nuremberg and Rostock on "The Representation of Christianity in Textbooks of Islamic Countries" - this is particularly true in the field of interreligious learning. We succeeded in inviting cooperation partners from the countries in which the research project was carried out: from Türkiye, Iran, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan, as well as experts from Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain, Greece and South Africa. The idea was to formulate and describe in more detail standards for interfaith textbook research and development against the background of the organizers' research and recent developments in the various countries. The organizers felt that they should be given to author teams, publishers and cultural authorities to encourage competent and sensitive textbook development in the interreligious field. The author had prepared a draft, which was intensively discussed, corrected and supplemented, and finally met with the approval of all symposium participants.

There are a total of nine points in which the need and the task in the respective content area were outlined; existing problem areas were then articulated, and, finally, standards were formulated:

Interreligious Textbook Research and Development. A Proposal for Standards⁸⁶

The importance of textbook research - even in the age of audio-visual media - lies in the fact that school textbooks pass on fundamental knowledge to the younger generation: selected, methodologically prepared texts (historical and religious sources, stimulus texts, material for committing to memory), key themes, pictures, suggestions. In a situation of limited specialist training for teachers, textbooks often “teach the teachers” and play a substantial role in lesson planning.

Interreligious textbook research is of particular relevance in the face of the sweeping generalizations, prejudice and stereotypes regarding other religions and cultures (“Islam is like this” - “The West is like that”) that were, and still are, to be found in school textbooks. They are not infrequently reinforced by the media and can easily be misused for political ends. In the tension between a “Clash of Civilisations” and the “Dialogue among Civilisations” that is needed, school textbooks have an important task.⁸⁷ In this respect, we look at cultures not as fixed entities. Differentiations and changes in the different beliefs and in different regions are to be taken seriously.

Based on this understanding and the experience of the research project “The representation of Christianity in textbooks of countries with an Islamic tradition”⁸⁸ we propose below a set of “Standards” for interreligious school textbook development as possible guidelines for author teams and publishers, for education authorities and curriculum planners. The standards show how interreligious issues should be handled in curriculum and textbook design.

To achieve this, we envisage issues and tasks under eight headings:

⁸⁶ The standards were elaborated in cooperation with Musa Al Munaizel / Amman, Dr. Patrick Bartsch / Bamberg, Prof. Dr. Harry Harun Behr / Erlangen-Nürnberg, Dr. Saeid Edalatnejad / Tehran, Prof. Dr. Klaus Hock / Rostock, Dr. Werner Haußmann / Erlangen-Nürnberg, Prof. Dr. Christoffel Lombard / Cape Town, Prof. Dr. Manfred Pirner / Erlangen-Nuremberg, Prof. Dr. Wolfram Reiss / Vienna, Dr. John Taylor / Geneva, Prof. Dr. Cemal Tosun / Ankara, Dr. Georg Tsakalidis / Kosani-Greece, Dr. Frank van der Velden / Cairo.

⁸⁷ Cf. K. Hock/J. Lähnemann: ‘Schulbuchforschung interreligiös - auf dem Weg zu besserem gegenseitigen Verstehen.’ In Lähnemann, *Bewahrung* (2005) 380-398, 394.

⁸⁸ K. Hock/J. Lähnemann (ed.): *Die Darstellung des Christentums in Schulbüchern islamisch geprägter Länder*. Hamburg 2005. I. W. Reiss: Ägypten und Palestina. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 21. II. P. Bartsch: Türkei und Iran. = *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung* 22. Cf. ‘Christianity in Islamic Textbooks.’ *Panorama* 16 (2004/2005), 105-119. K. Hock/ J. Lähnemann/ W. Reiss (ed.): *Schulbuchforschung im Dialog. Das Christentum in Schulbüchern islamisch geprägter Länder*. Frankfurt 2006. = *Beiheft der Zeitschrift für Mission* 5.

1. an authentic, professionally sound portrayal of the religions,
2. developing a dialogue-oriented interpretation of religion and belief,
3. portraying the religions and their importance in the lives of real people, how history is to be handled,
4. dealing with religions' cultural heritage and their contextuality,
5. the controversial issue of attitudes to the phenomenon of mission, to religious freedom and tolerance,
6. mutual understanding in the field of ethics,
7. the life conditions of the students and their relevance for religious learning and
8. pedagogical and media didactic approaches which accept the students as independent partners in the learning processes.

First, we summarize the need for each heading and the tasks involved; we then describe the respective problem areas, and finally we set out the Standards to be achieved.⁸⁹

1. Portraying the religions in an authentic, professionally sound way

1.1 Real dialogue requires that a religion should be portrayed through understanding of self rather than understanding of the other. But also a serious critical view from outside can be helpful. Distorted images and difficult prejudices can be overcome through a pedagogy that is pluralist and presents multiple views for example between an author and a practitioner of the faith. Contradictions arising between self-understanding and understanding the other should be examined and the underlying assumptions explored.

1.2 One problem is that religious communities have often seen themselves, or still see themselves, as competitors in the claim to exclusive truth; or they exist side by side and ignore each other. Also, textbook authors sometimes lack the training and academic qualifications necessary for a sound understanding of the different religions. Furthermore, interreligious topics are rarely given enough space within the syllabus.

1.3 For this, Standard textbook authors should have access to professionally sound sources from the religions in question, backed up by reliable religious scholarship.

Care should be taken to consider the religious communities in the round; not through individual unconnected characteristics, but through their religious beliefs, fundamental views on the coherence of life, their teachings, rituals, social structures and

⁸⁹ For positive examples in new textbooks cf. the textbook research contributions of the 11th Nuremberg Forum - Lähnemann, *Visionen* (2007) 490-513. Klaus Hock presents in his contribution an overview of the constructive elements in different countries with a Muslim Majority.

ethics. However, differences within a religious tradition should be addressed accurately and sensitively.

Authenticity has an additional meaning: that expert adherents of each religion are actively involved in the process of correcting, supplementing, even writing. This calls for interreligious and interdisciplinary cooperation for which religious studies and educational sciences are of special relevance.

Besides this there should be professionally sound interdisciplinary collaboration, and coordination between religious education, moral education and other subjects (history, geography and social sciences, musical and language teaching ...) whose textbooks touch religious content. A task of this complexity calls for a careful division of labor among the subject areas, a clear overall didactic plan reflecting current research into teaching and learning with special consideration to the continuity of learning from one age group to the next aiming at the competence to be able to deal with different world views.

2. Developing a dialogue-oriented interpretation of religion and belief

2.1 An accurate presentation of the beliefs of others is only possible if the interpretation of their core teachings is based on discussion with theologians and educators of the other religions. The effort must be made to set out what is binding in the beliefs of different religions, what differs in emphasis but is not necessarily controversial, and what after all is contradictory and incompatible.

2.2 The challenge here, especially from a religious education point of view, is that there is no long tradition or experience of exchanging views on religious beliefs. This difficulty is compounded by the traditional structural relationship, especially between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, whereby younger religions cast the older in their own mold (causing thereby a sense of expropriation and misunderstanding). The older religions, meanwhile, perceive the younger to have distorted their own religious convictions. In the religions of south-east Asia, Hinduism and Buddhism are often a source of popular topics (Yoga, Dalai Lama ...) but they are rarely considered in the overall context of the particular religious tradition.

2.3 Here the standard must be to link the writing of school textbooks to the fundamental work of theological reflection in the religions as well as to religious studies research and encouragement to explore original texts.

This requires a challenging core conceptual framework for the religions in which textbook writers participate without obstacles to comprehension. The educational task is thus accepted as a valid component of, and is embedded in, theological and religious studies work. Interpreting the fundamental texts and traditions of other religions is a way of engaging openly with the content of other religious traditions.

The aim should be to think in terms of interconnection (Karl-Josef Kuschel⁹⁰), not separation, nor unilateral confrontation or harmonization. In this way what unifies, or differs in emphasis or is contradictory, becomes apparent; as do mutual influences and stimuli. To present points of view which one does not share respectfully and in their contexts is especially challenging (for example, the view of Jesus in the New Testament tradition and in the Qur'an, or the world view in Judaism, Christianity and Islam compared with Buddhism and Hinduism).

3. Portraying the religions and their importance in the lives of real people

3.1 Religions cannot be comprehended solely through their teachings, traditions, rituals and aesthetic forms of expression. Their true meaning lies in their impact on the lives of real, ordinary people in a variety of cultural contexts especially in the country where a textbook is to be published. (For example, how do Hindus celebrate Holi in England? What does the Sabbath mean in the everyday life of a liberal American Jew? Or of a woman who is an Orthodox Israeli Jew? How do they experience the Sabbath; what interpretations from Jewish tradition are important or helpful to them?)

3.2 Many textbooks are dominated by a view of religion from an external, objective viewpoint. Even self-portrayals may adhere to a descriptive, theologically normative level. Just what impact religion actually has (which can be in tension with what it "ought to have" in the opinion of a religion's theologians and experts) on subjective experiences, on coping with life's problems, on the meaning and experience of happiness in the lives of "normal", ordinary people, is not adequately explained.

3.3 This standard should illustrate the "seats in life" (the sociological setting) of a religion or its components through vivid, concrete examples of real, average - preferably young - people.⁹¹ In this way individual differences can be seen, as well as the diversity of ways in which a religion is practiced. This would counteract the difficult issue of textbooks which portray religion as a fixed and rigid structure, incapable of renewal or change.

4. Conveying a differentiated view of history

4.1 A special challenge for school textbook writers is the two-way perception of how the religions developed historically. Traditionally, textbooks have concentrated largely on the history of social tensions, selecting dates and events from the troubled

⁹⁰ K.-J. Kuschel: *Juden - Christen - Muslime. Herkunft und Zukunft*. Düsseldorf (Patmos) 2007.

⁹¹ The principle of "personalization" can be helpful: using ideal-typical figures from other faiths in order to illuminate the different self-understandings found there, thus establishing a meeting-point which helps pupils to grasp what the lesson is all about. Cf. W. Haußmann: 'Walking in other People's Moccasins'? Openness to other religions in confessional religious education: possibilities and limits. *BJRE* Volume 13 No. 2 Spring 1993, 12-22.

periods of encounter between the religions and their political and social legacy. By contrast, the history of cross-fertilization and cultural exchange receives scant attention, and migration can be a fascinating context for study of differences and continuities. Successful examples taken from history can inspire alternative views of the past and the present.

4.2 One's own perception of history, often associated with accusations and insinuations, frequently legitimizes a sense of superiority of one religion over others. The self-identity of religious communities and denominations is often sustained by the exaggeration of historical slights and the celebration of "victories", especially where ethnic identity was, and is, part of this. In many fields a critical analysis of the historical constructions is in its infancy and far from achieving wide currency. Yet students can have a sense of being part of history, including a global dimension of history.

4.3 This Standard should allow the cultural achievements and cross-fertilization of the religions to be duly acknowledged, without ignoring the history of conflict ("the Crusades", "the Turks at the Gates of Vienna"). For this, sources should be used with great care, and views accommodate a shift in perspective.⁹² Writing teams should consult historians from the religious communities as well as secular historians in order to avoid sweeping historical generalizations, too often the tinder that has ignited new conflicts. In this way a living and differentiated view of history can emerge.

5. Taking account of the cultural heritage and contextuality of the religious communities

5.1 Religions are more than a teaching edifice. They represent living greatness - with their traditions of worship, their prayers, meditations, educational and pastoral work and, not least, their aesthetic forms of expression: music, theater, dance, and performing arts. They have shaped philosophical traditions of thought, with the result that it was the Jewish and Islamic, the Classical and Christian heritage that laid the foundations of Western civilization.

5.2 School textbooks have hitherto - with some exceptions - largely ignored the cultural traditions of other religions. This is often due to their minority status, but also to the dogmatic view taken, both historically and ideologically, of other religious

⁹² Cf. Hj. Biener: Herausforderungen zu einer multiperspektivischen Schulbucharbeit. Eine exemplarische Analyse am Beispiel der Berücksichtigung des Islam in Religions-, Ethik- und Geschichtsbüchern. Hamburg 2007. = Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegegnung 25.

communities.⁹³ Yet the contribution made by the different religious cultures to the social structures of individual countries is important.

5.3 For this, standard textbooks should incorporate the formative cultural and social effects of the different religions, especially of a country's own minorities. This includes perceptions of the life of faith and spiritual forms of expression and their relevance to the direction of one's life; also, awareness of education and science and of social and charitable activities.

6. Dealing openly with the topical issues of mission, tolerance and interreligious dialogue

6.1 "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions", "No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions" - these principles formulated by Hans Küng present a huge educational challenge affecting all, including the religions, in our globalized world. Given religious claims of absolute truth and sense of mission, it cannot be taken for granted that they will come about. For a belief in mission is the premise on which religions crossed geographical boundaries. When a comprehensive message of salvation is part of religious conviction, the urge is that it should be universal. It would be dishonest to omit this from discussions of the religions. The right to bear witness to, and canvass for, one's faith is as much part of positive religious freedom as the principle that this must be without any kind of pressure or dishonest influence.

Regional and global activity among the religions includes an increase in working together for peace and social justice across religious boundaries, and evaluating this for educational purposes should follow.

6.2 In previous textbook analyses, mission has proved a particularly sensitive theme in the way it is portrayed. In the Islamic world, but also on the Indian subcontinent, mission is widely (and simplifyingly) seen as the traumatic legacy of the colonial era, resulting in a negative portrayal of, and strong warnings against, Christian missionary activity. Christian cultural establishments in particular were accused of dishonest attempts to gain converts.⁹⁴

Islam, on the other hand, has often - since its rapid expansion in early centuries - been accused of a basic aggressiveness. The fact that it can demonstrate a long

⁹³ While European textbooks do at least occasionally refer to the culture of Islamic Andalusia, rarely mentioned is that of the Orthodox and Ancient Near Eastern churches is rarely mentioned.

⁹⁴ It should be recognized that the great missionary societies in the West have long since been pioneers of open religious dialogue, advocates for indigenous cultures and promoters, in social or educational terms, of those bodies which reject proselytizing (that is, using dishonest means to convert others to one's own faith).

history of relative tolerance and the nurture of philosophical cultural traditions was largely disregarded.

So far, the history - albeit of a recent date - of work towards understanding and peace among the religions has yet to be reflected in more than a few textbooks.

6.3 For this standard future textbooks, as well as describing the religions' different messages of salvation, should contain the history of interreligious dialogue and interreligious encounter, the groundbreaking signs and declarations.⁹⁵ There are the prayers for peace in Assisi or on Mount Hiei in Japan, the "Parliament of the World's Religions" and its Declaration Towards a Global Ethic (1993), the international movement "Religions for Peace", and last but not least, local initiatives such as meeting centers, dialogue weeks, prayers and meditations for peace. Any of these may serve as examples in school textbooks.

7. Finding common ground in ethics

7.1 That the different religions have much in common in their fundamental ethics is shown particularly clearly in the Global Ethic Project initiated by Hans Küng. At the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 a declaration was signed by all major religious leaders affirming the precept of the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.") and four irrevocable directives taken from the four ethical commandments of the Decalogue and the obligations undertaken voluntarily by a lay Buddhist: non-violence, solidarity, truthfulness and partnership.⁹⁶ These fundamental convictions do not constitute a uniform ethic. They have to be discussed and concretized in different contexts and in exchange with non-religious humanistic positions.

7.2 The declaration for a global ethic has been studied widely from Germany to Iran but appears in only a few European textbooks. However, the educational initiatives and resources of the Global Ethic Foundation bear impressive testimony to how learning together in an interreligious and collaborative pedagogy can address ethical issues in a nuanced, up-to-date way.

7.3 This standard should aim to provide school textbooks with the core ethical beliefs common to the religions - while respecting the different foundations. The

⁹⁵ One measure, and not only for Christians and Muslims, was provided by the Chambésy Declaration by the World Council of Churches in 1976. This states that, "Muslims as much as Christians have an absolute right to persuade and to be persuaded, to live by their faith, and to organise their religious life in accordance with their religious duties and principles". (It was endorsed at a meeting with the World Muslim Congress in Colombo in 1982). The present day dialogue is inspired by the Amman Interfaith message (<http://ammanmessage.com>) and the letter of 138 Muslim representatives to Christian leaders of 13.07.2007 (www.acommonword.com).

⁹⁶ H. Küng; K.-J. Kuschel (ed.): A Global Ethic. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions. London 1993.

declaration for a global ethic would be a helpful guide here because the ethical commandments of the Decalogue and the lay Buddhist obligations are expressed as positive aspirations. They also extend beyond the individual, addressing aspects of society, ecology and communication.⁹⁷

8. The life conditions of the students and their relevance for religious learning

8.1 In schools as well as in society, there is no longer confessional homogeneity - not only in European countries. Children and youth are growing up in an environment which is plural in religious matters and in matters of world views. Nevertheless, they all have the fundamental questions of life of which religions and world views are the predominant agents - the questions of life and death, of the central meaning of life, of justice and injustice, of overcoming sorrow and trouble. Teachers should be able to find out and recognize the situation and the questions of the students in their specific living context: What do I know about their upbringing, their experiences, needs, wishes, questions? It is a challenge for textbook writers to take this dimension seriously and to give impulses for it to the teachers.

8.2 In textbook tradition, it is still largely a deficit that the children's fundamental questions are mostly not taken as seriously as they should - even where intercultural education is intended. Thus, the plurality as well as the individuality of the students is not properly recognized.

8.3 It should be a standard for textbook writers to take the lead from children and adolescents with their interests, their searching for guidance, for meaning in life, belief and responsibility of behavior. Encounter with the world of the religions should promote a culture of questioning among the students, fostering their curiosity, learning about symbols, empathy, but also their ability to think critically and with differentiation. Many of the central interpretations for life are found in the world's religions; leading figures as role models, stories, pictures, rituals and ceremonies and social activities - all are capable of vivid, stimulating presentation in textbooks. As far as possible, textbooks should also deal with the "religion of children and young people"; in other words, students should be shown young people with whom they can identify.

9 Portraying religions vividly and age-appropriately

9.1 Since we began our school textbook research, the didactic and methodological potential in education of active, structured learning has aroused international interest. Only in the past ten years have these learning processes on the topic of the religions really taken off in Germany. Thirty years ago, the topic was virtually confined to the final stage of the Gymnasium (upper secondary school). Now the topic

⁹⁷ See above the four irrevocable commitments in chapter 4.1.

is “debordered” by handling the questions according to age group, debordered through cognitive and existential activity and debordered through multiperspectivity already at primary school. Many ideas have come from religious education practice in Great Britain which made early progress because of its long experience of cultural diversity and its non-confessional approach.

9.2 The fundamental problem here is that, to a large extent, religious socialization in families does not exist. Even the efforts of the religious communities themselves to fill the education gap reach only a small proportion of adolescents. On the other hand, the European project “Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European countries (REDCo)”⁹⁸ has shown that young people generally are interested in finding out about religions, and that the school is best placed to provide this information. However, religious education and history teachers generally have very limited specialist skills in this area: courses are usually too short and the knowledge they provide about the religions is often superficial. This places even greater responsibility on the textbooks.

9.3 For this standard, the topic of the religions should be handled in a structured way appropriate to the age group: from simple explanations familiar to the children’s own experiences to wider contexts. Equal attention should be given to the cognitive, existential and social learning outcomes. Students should be introduced to learning through encounter, an opportunity now widely available, and to the cultural manifestations and achievements of the religions. Though it is ideal if the other is an explicit interlocutor, at least textbooks make it possible to get to know the other as implicit interlocutor. Where direct conversation is not feasible, there are stories, biographies and experiences narrated first-hand.

Finally, the extra-curricular life of the school can include festivals, events in the arts and partnerships beyond the school itself.

School textbooks can initiate and inform, but putting the ideas into practice depends heavily on the skills of the teachers. Essential background knowledge and contexts should be clarified in authoritative teacher handbooks.

It is important that the encounter with the world of religions is open in such a way that teachers as well as students are not forced to accept a special religious viewpoint. The multiplicity of perspectives offered in the religious traditions, but also a critical view from outside should be guaranteed, and so encourage vivid, enriching and also critical learning.

⁹⁸ W. Weiße in Lähnemann, Schreiner, *Interreligious and Values Education in Europe* (2008) 81-83.

In conclusion, the Standards proposed here may be regarded not only as suitable guidelines for future school textbook design for interreligious learning, but may also be applied to textbook research and the evaluation of new textbooks.

They complement the recommendations of UNESCO and the League of Arab States regarding textbook design for the teaching of history in Europe and in the Arab-Islamic world.

Last but not least, they may assist in the evaluation of other media.

10.3 “Terrorism has no Religion”. 10 Years on from September 11

The year 2011 marked the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In the Nuremberg *Religions for Peace* group, the question arose: Can we set a special sign on this day in our city, from which the Nazis’ racial laws once emanated, and which now distinguishes itself as a city of human rights?

A signal for these considerations was given by Muslim youths, who wore T-shirts with the slogan: “Terrorism has no Religion!” Asked about their motives, they emphasized: “We want to set a sign against terrorists who think they can claim religion for themselves!” Even if this statement can be questioned in its sweeping nature, the signal that the young people wanted to send seemed important to the group for a planned prayer meeting. Therefore, it was taken up for the prayer meeting. Another question was: Will a mosque be willing to host a prayer meeting of the religions? Will a representative of the Jewish community also come to the mosque? What about the various Christian denominations and the participation of Buddhists, Hindus and Baha’i? And: Can prayers, songs, texts from the holy scriptures be found, which can underline that “Terrorism has no religion!”?

Many telephone calls, consultations, and an intensive search for sources followed. It was an almost adventurous journey at times, but ultimately a very moving and impressive event, burning with topicality after a new shock in August 2011: In order to supposedly save the Christian West, the Norwegian right-wing extremist Anders Behrend Breivik had deliberately killed young people at a vacation camp organized by the Social Democratic Labor Party, whose program includes understanding between cultures - like September 11, 2001, an act that seemed incomprehensible, and which was not only criminal, but also darkened the image of religions.

The congregation of the DITIB mosque in Nuremberg had invited faith communities from the city to the prayer meeting. All the faith communities which had been invited were represented.

A Christian and a Muslim read from the Bosphorus Declaration of the Conference of Religions for Peace and Tolerance:

“A crime in the name of religion is a crime against religion. We refuse to corrupt the tenets of our faith with false interpretations and unchecked nationalism. We oppose those who desecrate the sanctity of human life.

Let us remind all believers that the Holy Scriptures of all three monotheistic religions mention peace as a supreme value: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.’ - ‘Allah calls all to the House of Peace. His ways are the ways of peace.’”

Finally, Günther Beckstein spoke on behalf of the Bavarian state government, recalling his visit to the mosque exactly ten years earlier after the attacks in the United States.

The interreligious and intercultural infrastructure that had developed in many German cities and metropolitan areas was exemplified in Hagen in 2011. The Day of Religions was held there that year, in a tried and tested way, in cooperation between the city and the Round Table of Religions in Germany. For more than five months, an extensive program was built around it: with visits, with festivals, with historical and contemporary guided tours on religions in the city, with further training for teachers, with 88 free group tours for school classes. The author was asked to give the lecture at the central event on November 17. The topic was: "Religions - bridges or blockades to integration?" The diverse activities in the city actually suggested that the ‘bridges’ should be spoken about in quite positive terms. On the other hand, the public discussion at that time was still strongly steered by Thilo Sarrazin’s book ‘Deutschland schafft sich ab’ (Germany is abolishing itself), published the year before. Sarrazin argued that Germany is abolishing itself because it has given, and still gives, space to Islam, especially to migration from Islamic countries. He claimed that immigrants from the Islamic world are, on the whole, more incapable of integration than all other groups resident abroad. This group, he said, accounts for 70-80% of all immigrant problems in education, the labor market, transfers/social security, and crime. The author was far from altogether dismissing his analyses and concerns: Germany does have a major problem with its aging population, with its low birth rate, with the impending shortage of skilled workers, with an above-average proportion of school and training dropouts among young people with an immigrant background. There is also no denying that there are urban regions in which non-integration-oriented, parallel-society structures have developed. However, the selection of facts that Sarrazin made and the authors to whom he referred, were clearly one-sided overall. His demand was clear: “Assimilate!” In the end, he joined the ranks of those who call for a clash of civilizations, which the American political scientist Samuel Huntington has predicted will be the real source of conflict in the 21st century. In contrast, the author emphasized that the goal of integration must be clearly distinguished from assimilation, the one-sided assimilation into a culture. Rather, he argued that it is a matter of a path of encounter and coexistence to which

everyone can contribute their life backgrounds and develop them. Of course, the basic condition remains that the foundations of our constitution, plural democracy, human rights, freedom of religion and freedom of opinion in a comprehensive sense must remain guaranteed.

The author then listed problem areas that make integration difficult:

- Attitudes toward democracy, especially regarding freedom of religion
- Parallel societies in metropolitan areas
- Conflict-oriented reporting in the media
- absolutism in some religious communities
- Generalized images of “the other”
- Inherited linguistic burdens
- Deficiencies in education, especially also in cultural-religious education
- The still insufficient public profile of religious forums on different levels (local, state, federal).

They all pose a challenge to education, dialogue and cooperation. But then the author also deliberately spoke of the *bridges*, of positive developments. Unfortunately, it is still much rarer to put them in the foreground, to actively publicize them, to present them to a wider audience as an encouragement, than to emphasize the problems, the dangers, the fears, however little these should, of course, be concealed. The author mentioned international examples - such as the cooperation of religions in South Africa in overcoming apartheid, the mediating role of the Council of Religions in Sierra Leone in overcoming civil war, the peace work of the Roman Catholic community of St. Egidio in Mozambique, and the Buddhist Sarvodaya (“Welfare for All”) movement in Sri Lanka - and referred to the book by Markus Weingardt, ‘Religion Macht Frieden’ (Religion Makes Peace; 2007), who systematically presented the diversity of such initiatives.

However, for Germany, too, the author was able to show that an astonishing wealth of initiatives had developed that would have been unthinkable in this diversity 30 years earlier, even if their work had often not yet reached the full breadth of the population:

- The Intercultural Council of Germany
- The Round Table of Religions in Germany
- The Islam Conference
- Religions for Peace - Grassroots Groups in 13 Metropolitan Areas
- Interfaith councils/forums in many German cities
- Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation
- Christian-Islamic societies
- Dialogue officers of the religious communities
- Intercultural Pedagogy, Interreligious Learning, Islamic Religious Education

Joint campaigns by the Central Council of Jews, the Working Group of Christian Churches/ACK, the Central Council of Muslims and DITIB are aimed at grassroots work: “Invite your neighbor,” “Do you know who I am?”

The author concluded with eight imperatives which he explained in more detail and which have been taken up many times in the “interreligious scene” in Germany:

- Renew yourselves, modernize yourselves!
- Overcome generalizations!
- Conduct dialogue systematically!
- Work together!
- Stand up for each other!
- Allow self-criticism as well as mutual criticism!
- Advocate for comprehensive education from an early age!
- Think globally!

11. Human Rights, Human Dignity, Religious Freedom. Challenges in the 2nd Decade of the New Millennium

The beginning of the second decade of the 21st century was marked by hopes on the one hand, disappointments and new challenges on the other. The question of human rights - the struggle for them on the one hand, their violation in many states and systems on the other - once again became unmistakably challenging. The “Arab Spring,” the rebellion against ossified power structures in the MENA (Middle East / North Africa) region, carried by the young generation, in Egypt by Muslim and Christian groups together, aroused great expectations. It had a more lasting effect only in Tunisia. In Libya, chaotic conditions developed after the assassination of Muammar al-Gaddafi; in Egypt and Syria, the traditional power structures finally prevailed, accompanied by massive human rights violations. In the shadow of the emerging war in Syria which began as peaceful protests by civilians demanding reforms, resulting in a war in which hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians have been killed, maimed, imprisoned, and banished from their homeland by the country’s ruler Bashar al-Assad as part of the fight against terrorism, the so-called Islamic State was able to establish its regime of terror. In the great powers of Russia and China, autocratic structures became entrenched. In several European countries, nationalist parties gained new followings. In Latin American countries, too, democratic structures proved unstable. The commitment to human rights took on a new urgency, especially for religious communities. Nevertheless, the breadth of civil society initiatives has increased considerably in these years, as can be seen from the growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2010, 3,183 NGOs had consultative status with ESOSOC, the Economic and Social Council at the UN,⁹⁹ 320 of them with a religious focus (in 2003, there were only 263).¹⁰⁰

This was the background at the time when we decided to choose human rights as the topic of religious and interreligious education for the 11th Nuremberg Forum. The city of Nuremberg and our university offered special foundations for this: Nuremberg had been striving for years to gain a profile as a city of human rights - in contrast to the history of the National Socialist Party Rallies in the 1930s and in awareness of the tremendous crimes that came to light at the Nuremberg Trials after the Second World War. A visible symbol of this effort is the “Street of Human Rights” at the German National Museum, designed by the Israeli artist Dani Karavan: with 27 white columns eight meters high, two floor plates, a row of columns and an archway.

⁹⁹ M. J. Petersen: International religious NGOs at the United Nations. *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 11, Nov. 2010.

¹⁰⁰ J. Berger: *Religious non-governmental organizations: An exploratory analysis*. Baltimore, MD: International Society for Third-Sector Research and the John Hopkins University, 2003.

On each of the columns is engraved a human right - in German and then each in a different language. This street is both an indictment of the crimes of the Nazis and a constant reminder that human rights are still being massively violated in many countries around the world. The Documentation Center on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds is an equally visible reminder: A wide, walk-through glass arrow pierces the meter-thick walls of the "Colosseum" designed by Nazi architect Albert Speer and, with images, text, sound and demonstrations, introduces visitors to the fateful history to which Nuremberg was subjected during the "Third Reich." Equally important is the biennial Human Rights Award, which is presented to individuals who are threatened in their home countries because of their commitment to human rights. Through international recognition of their work and its publicity in the media, they can experience a certain degree of protection and also receive financial support for their projects. The Human Rights Office, headed by Martina Mittenhuber, was therefore a natural partner for our project. In addition, our university had established the first chair in human rights in Germany and had gained an outstanding champion in Heiner Bielefeldt, who also held the internationally important position of UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. With him - and in special connection with their earlier commitment to the Global Ethic Project - Manfred Pirner, Werner Haußmann and the author planned the forum, which would resonate particularly widely.

11.1 Human Rights and Inter-Religious Education. The 11th Nuremberg Forum 2013



Ill. 10 Saeid Edelad Nezhad/Teheran, Norman Richardson/Belfast, Manfred Pirner/Nürnberg, Cornelia Roux/Stellenbosch, Heiner Bielefeldt/Erlangen, Johannes Lähnemann/Goslar, Manfred Kwiran/Braunschweig at the 11th Nuremberg Forum 2013 (f.l.t.r.)

As in previous forums, the contextual embedding of the topic was important to us. Thus, both fundamental questions such as the justification of human rights and their universal validity were considered as well as their actualization for different political, religious and cultural contexts, with interreligious learning as the target interest.¹⁰¹

The universality of human rights appears to be questioned from the perspective of non-Western cultural traditions and from certain Islamic positions: Human rights in their formulation related to the individual are said to be in competition with more

¹⁰¹ Papers and results are published in M.L. Pirner, J. Lähnemann, H. Bielefeldt (eds.): *Menschenrechte und inter-religiöse Bildung*. Unter Mitarbeit von W. Haußmann und A. Roth. Berlin 2015.= *Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbeggnung* 32. - Published also in English: M.L. Pirner, J. Lähnemann, H. Bielefeldt (ed.): *Human Rights and Religion in Educational Contexts*. Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2016.= *Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Rights* 1. (See as summary Manfred L. Pirner 11-27).

collectively shaped social cultures (e.g. in Confucian China) or even with fundamental commandments of God (as they are present in the Sharia). Therefore, the first topic area addressed human rights and religion as a whole with its legal, philosophical and theological foundations, and also to the question of the political environment and the views and discourses in various religious communities. In the second topic area, the challenges for religious, and especially interreligious, education came into view, and in the third topic areas of conflict and projects on the relationship between human rights and religion in schools. For the opening lecture, we were able to recruit Ziba Mir Hosseini, a Muslim woman from London who is internationally active in the fight for women's rights in Islam. She explained the distinction between fundamental legal principles, which are classically represented by the Sharia, and the collections of laws, which as *fiqh* (jurisprudence) represent interpretations of the law bound by time. This distinction provides an instrument to legitimize their women's movement *Musawah* ("equality"), which has spread in many countries, on the basis of a genuine Islamic foundation.

In his fundamental contribution - "Human Rights between Universalism and Religious Particularism," Friedrich Lohmann showed the double face of religions as both promoters of and obstacles to human rights: On the one hand, he suggested that "self-relativization" and thus tolerance and solidarity can be derived from the fundamental reference to transcendence in religions. On the other hand, religions traditionally often contain exclusivism and salvation triumphalism, which lead to the restriction or even elimination of other faith communities. This leads to enlightenment and education becoming necessary obligations for religious communities.

This field of tasks was illuminated in several contributions to the forum. While there was agreement that human rights did not simply result from religious convictions and have often had - and continue to have - to be asserted against religious claims, it was shown on the other hand that particularly profound motivations and attitudes for the realization of human rights can be acquired from religions.

Heiner Bielefeldt explained that freedom of religion and freedom of opinion can be regarded as a test case for the universality of human rights. Restrictions and threats to this human right come partly from the religious communities themselves (and by no means from Islam alone!), but also from state ideologies, such as in China - and finally also from new radical secularist or liberalist positions that want to push religions out of the public arena into the private sphere.

A particular challenge is that conflicts have re-emerged not only in regions with long-standing tensions over human rights and especially religious freedom - such as Saudi Arabia and Northern Ireland - but also in areas where different ethnicities and religions have lived together comparatively peacefully for long periods - such as

Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, Egypt, Syria, Nigeria and Myanmar, to name but a few.

Hassan Yahya Bajwa illustrated this on the basis of the Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan. The processes which - despite constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion - have led to the exclusion and persecution of the Ahmadis (including the introduction of blasphemy legislation) were described in detail. Societal, social, and, in this case especially, dogmatic influences (there can/should be no new revelation according to the Qur'an) were analyzed - and the international contribution to fight the unjust situation was highlighted as necessary.

Gundula Nägele used the example of the Baha'i, for whom all opportunities for development are radically curtailed in Iran, to show how a religious community that is oppressed and defamed in its country of origin for similar dogmatic reasons is particularly active internationally in promoting human rights. The Baha'i International Community (BIC) is present at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO). Its advocacy of human rights is derived directly from the principle of human dignity, which is theologically anchored in the Baha'i religion. There is a deliberate reference to the responsibility of religious leaders, who are obligated to stand up for freedom of conscience, the free choice of religion, the possibility of changing religion, of practicing it and communicating it to other people.

From the Iranian Shiite tradition, Saeid Edalatnejad from Tehran tried in his contribution - which can certainly be classified as critical of the regime - to emphasize the flexibility in the interpretation of Islamic legal traditions, namely in view of the unrestricted freedom of religion, which he suggested also ought to be achieved in Islamic societies for the various Muslim denominations as well as for all non-Muslims.

Andreas Nehring shed light on developments in Buddhism without ignoring the political conflicts in which Buddhists are involved - in Tibet as well as in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. He showed how Buddhism, conventionally often considered rather apolitical, is articulating itself anew around human dignity, which is centrally anchored in human rights. The example of the Dalai Lama, who was involved in the Global Ethic Declaration, and socially engaged Buddhism, which was represented by A.T. Ariyaratne and Sulak Sivaraksa at the earlier Nuremberg Forums, as well as the discussion about the justification of human rights (e.g. from the conviction of the interdependence of everything that exists) were presented as a living process of discourse in a global context.

In the broad topic of human development and religious education, the contributions to the forum referred to pedagogically relevant settings that focus on human rights in very different ways.

Friedrich Schweitzer demonstrated that religious education can certainly be considered a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) emphasizes

the right of parents to "choose the kind of education their children shall receive" (Art. 26), after declaring that education should "promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups" (which, in turn, includes religious education). Moreover, religious education can be understood as part of "freedom of thought, conscience and religion" guaranteed as a fundamental human right in Article 18. The most relevant document, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), includes references to this right, but cannot be considered fully satisfactory from an educational point of view. Schweitzer explained and reflected on the legal situation, especially from the perspective of religious education and in light of interreligious education. It showed that there is a need to further develop the understanding of children's religious rights in multi-religious contexts and in light of the challenges of interreligious education.

Hans-Georg Ziebertz pursued another relevant question: namely, how Christian and Muslim young people evaluate different human rights. He shared important results of a pilot study conducted in 12 countries. Overall, there was a high level of agreement on human rights among both Christian and Muslim young people, especially on children's rights, women's rights, freedom of moral speech, protection against torture, freedom of assembly, the right to demonstrate, and the separation of state and religion (for most of these rights, slightly higher agreement among young Muslims). The results contradict certain stereotypes that the media help to propagate, namely that approval of human rights is naturally associated with Western (Christian) thought, while Islam is said to have a problematic relationship with human rights. In any case, the Muslim youths interviewed here did not conform to this prejudice.

Henrik Simojoki was also concerned with acquiring a differentiated perspective when he posed the question of how religious education can contribute to a form of human rights education that takes into account the "new contextuality" of religion in the globalized world - For example, a media-mediated view that tends to convey blanket ideas of culture clashes globally often determines dialogue behavior on the ground. Simojoki speaks here of "glocal" constellations of interreligious coexistence in world society. For him, this results in the necessity of a localizing didactics. Within it, dialogical potentials should be used at local level and controversial topics should not be excluded, which requires cooperative learning by Christian denominations as well as the Islamic religious education that is being established. It also seems important to deal critically with media presentations of religion. Another task is to cultivate political and religious discernment. Finally, sensitivity must be developed for the variety of meanings which currently shape young people's identities, which no longer simply take place through traditional denominational forms of socialization.

That human rights work and learning with human rights are a fundamental interreligious task for religions in their coexistence. The author used the example of the *Religions for Peace (RfP)* as the largest international coalition of religions, especially on the basis of the total of 9 world assemblies (from 1970 in Kyoto to 2013 in Vienna). He showed which steps had to be taken and how the cooperation has expanded, in terms of content, regionally and from global to local activities - and how, in addition to failure in dire conflicts, concrete results have been achieved in processes of conflict and reconciliation, for tolerance and for respect for human dignity and equality. In the process, the spiritual foundations of the faith communities in all their diversity (and without “mixing”) have proved to be a diverse source of common commitment. He have explained this in detail: ¹⁰²

One of the fundamental commitments of the Religions for Peace movement is to work towards ensuring peace, equality and dignity for people of all religions and beliefs. It is a fundamental commitment for religious people as a whole to work to ensure that the religions themselves do their homework in this area.

In order to do so, it helps to bring to mind the spiritual foundations of our religions. In their own unique ways, they can each be a source of strength and motivation to campaign for freedom, equality and dignity for others.

Freedom: For people of faith who see their lives as a gift from God this means, above all, freedom from selfishness, from egocentricity, from only focusing on our own gains. For Buddhists, it is freedom from holding on to what is transient. It is freedom from idolizing possession and power, which always come at the cost of others. Freedom is also freedom of thought. The Qur’an says ‘there is no compulsion in religion’ - and all religions know that a true, sincere choice for a faith can only ever be a voluntary choice. It was therefore logical when, at the first large dialogue conference of the World Council of Churches in Chambesy near Geneva in 1977, it was stated that Muslims and Christians alike must have the unrestricted right to convince and to be convinced, and to live out their faith and organize their religious life in accordance with their religious obligations and principles. Regrettably, there are too many countries in which this fundamental right is not granted.

Equality: In Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha’i faith (and equally in the Zoroastrian and the Sikh religions), the belief in God as the creator means that God made all people equal, as one big family, as it is said in a central Baha’i prayer. In the Bible, St. Paul uses the image of the body with different limbs which have different tasks but can only form a body by working together (1 Corinthians 12); and he emphasizes that the weaker limbs should be given special honor. Buddha taught

¹⁰² J. Lähnemann: ‘The Contribution of Interreligious Initiatives to Human Rights Education.’ In: Pirner, Lähnemann, Bielefeldt, *Human Rights* (2016) 323-345, 330f.

that people belong together and should be in solidarity with all things that live and exist.

When equality is understood as equal dignity, it is clear that the widening gap between the very rich and the very poor is an appalling injustice, and it is an urgent task for churches and other religious communities to campaign for the reduction of debt for the world's poorest countries. Symbolic leaders are also incredibly important, such as Mahatma Gandhi, who took equality so seriously that he could call himself a street sweeper of India. He encouraged all of the members of his ashram, even Brahmans, to clean their own toilets. He himself adopted an untouchable girl.

Dignity: This is demonstrated when every human being is respected as a person with abilities and weaknesses, and when the needy in particular are not lost. Jesus presented the example of a child to his disciples. The openness and dependency of a child makes it clear that people are not accepted by God because of their abilities but because of their need for love. This makes actions which help children a particularly important task for religions. They must not accept children being neglected and exploited, with such terrible practices as child labor in mines and child prostitution, or that they are put at risk of suffering from neglect in a society dominated by consumerism and 'spiritual pollution'.

The interreligious work carried out here is a practice ground that the believers from the different religions can come to in freedom, equality and dignity. When we visit one another in churches, mosques, synagogues and temples, we begin to understand what is important for the others' faiths and why it is important. When we hold conversations with one another, we see the prejudices and the burdens we bear in terms of our history. We give one another the sign of our faith and recognize what unites us and what makes us different. We then often understand our own faith better and more clearly. We discover where we can work together: for freedom of religions, for equal rights in education, against xenophobia and intolerance.

At the conclusion of the Forum, Manfred Pirner, under the heading "Human Rights and Religion in Educational Contexts. Foundations and Conceptual Perspectives"¹⁰³ in which he once again took up the initial questions of the forum and looked back on the forum contributions under 5 questions:

"In my opinion, five fundamental questions appear to be central for the development of such a basis in regard to gaining a religious pedagogical perspective of human rights.

1. What is the relationship between (particular) religious traditions and (universal) human reason? In brief: How do faith and reason relate?

¹⁰³ In: Pirner, Lähnemann, Bielefeldt, Human Rights (2016) 335-346.

2. What is the relationship of the (major world) religions to each other?
3. What can religions contribute to society in regard to underpinning, promoting and critically monitoring a human rights culture?
4. What can a human rights culture contribute to a constructive and internal further development of the respective religions?
5. What contribution can a human rights culture provide to formation and education?

After discussion of these five fundamental questions, I will then sketch the consequences for religious education in five theses.”

He concluded his remarks with five theses on “Human Rights and Religious Education.”

In a preliminary remark, he starts from the premise that the relationship between religious education and human rights, similar to the relationship between religions and human rights, is fundamentally to be grasped as dialectically reciprocal.

Religious education fosters a culture of human rights and is simultaneously subject to critical evaluation on the basis of its standards - a process which again serves for the advancement of education and at the same time strengthens religion as well as religious education. This is particularly true for public religious education in nursery schools, child day care, schools, media and adult education, but basically no less so for religious education and socialization in the family and community.

The theses are as follows (here in selection):

1. Religious education in families, communities and in public contributes significantly to the support of children, adolescents and adults in their competence to perceive and practice their human right to religious freedom.

As Friedrich Schweitzer argues in his contribution to this volume, the enjoyment of the basic right to freedom of religion is inconceivable without religious education. The right to religious education is ultimately a consequence of both the human right to freedom of religion, as well as the human right to education.

2. Recognition of religious freedom for all men and women is at the same time a central criterion for the quality of religious education, particularly in the public realm. It is honored in an exemplary way by interreligious education. Religious education today only does justice to its mandate, if it not only provides an introduction into the beliefs of one religion, but at the same time fosters understanding of the legitimacy of other religions and worldviews. This takes place above all when information is provided on all religions and worldviews in a way that is fair and non-polemic, that offers not only the possibility of learning from them, but ultimately even the freedom to choose them as one’s own personal creed. In terms of a distinction coming from the British context, the author understands interreligious

education as a combination of learning about religion and learning from religion, which by the way is also characteristic, for example, for German (Confessional) Religious Education at public schools (RE). As a rule in Germany, we naturally proceed from the assumption that students who are nonbelievers or subscribe to other beliefs should also be able to profit from Protestant or Roman Catholic RE without our trying to proselytize or convert them. In a similar manner, for instance, Protestant students in Protestant RE classes can also learn something beneficial by concerning themselves with Islam or Buddhism. Both major churches in Germany emphasize in this respect that RE in public schools is meant to help the student develop a free and independent choice in matters of faith.

Aiming at learning from religion also means that RE teachers at German public schools have already long been providing such “translations” as have been called for in the discourse of social and human rights ethics (see the opening chapter): Religious statements of faith are didactically treated in such a way that they can be approached by nonbelievers and those of other beliefs. RE teachers offer “translations” of specific religious perspectives into secular perspectives or those of other religions, and they introduce their students into the particular language of a religion so that they are able to make sense of it and “translate” some of its ideas into their own views, languages and life-worlds.

For public religious education, that is to say, for RE in public schools, respect for the religious freedom of all should be an obligatory hard criterion: only religious communities that subscribe to this freedom right can claim the right to participate in shaping and developing RE as a school subject - or even, as in most German federal states, claim to have their own confessional RE established at public schools.

However, the author advocates that freedom of religion also be applied to religious education and instruction in the family and community and, in these fields, be understood as an internal criterion of quality. Here, too, the relationship to other religions and worldviews cannot be excluded. Parents would do well, in spite of their legitimate advocacy in favor of passing on their own religious orientation, to allow their children the freedom to choose their own path and their own position in matters of faith. Religious education through force or conscious manipulation contradicts both the understanding of faith by the major world religions and the human right to religious freedom - and by and large it no longer works in an open and pluralistic society anyway.

3. The goals and objectives in public religious education as a whole are determined by standards of the religious traditions represented as well as by educational criteria that correspond to the basic values of our constitutional law and therewith of human rights. In a wide sense, religious education thus contributes to a culture of human rights.

RE in schools, as one central location of public religious education in most countries, rightly sees itself as an exemplary case of humane education in schools, i.e. its central goal is the development of the whole person of the student, of personal growth, of support for the search for meaning and orientation in life, of social and ethical learning against a horizon of pluralism in religious beliefs and worldviews. In this manner RE in schools reveals certain convergences with the basic goals of education in human rights.

Conversely it can be asserted that only those religious and philosophical communities should have the right to participate in RE at public schools or to run their own state-recognized private schools when their central convictions are compatible with the fundamental values of constitutional law and human rights.

4. Religious education should address human rights more strongly than up to the present. In this endeavor, it should take a conscious and explicit stance in the context of the worldwide intercultural learning process of human rights and contribute to political consciousness.

Addressing human rights in the context of the worldwide, intercultural human rights learning process means, among other things, that for example Christian religious education should not make an exclusive Christian claim to the foundation or interpretation of human rights. The present curricula in Germany, for example, still contain a dominance of Christian teaching and interpretation of the dignity of man and human rights. In my opinion they must be supplemented by conveying the insight that non-Christian and nonreligious justifications and interpretations of human rights have their own validity.

The other main task of religious education is to be seen in making human rights understandable, not only in their ethical values but also in their legal and political character. This raises the critical question of whether the academic discourse on religious education has sufficiently perceived the political dimension and responsibility of RE over the past 30 years.

In this sense, there should be a demand for stronger attention to the political dimension of human rights in religious educational processes.

5. The treatment of human rights in religious education has positive repercussions for the religious communities.

In places of public religious education, religions - as communities and institutions - can also learn through the teaching and learning of religious and non-religious individuals. The Memorandum on Religious Education by the Protestant Churches of Germany of 1994 offers a particularly felicitous formulation for RE at public schools: "In the teaching context of public schools, Religious Education puts to the test the capacity of the Christian faith in society for communication, tolerance and dialogue as

a contribution for the benefit of all” (declaration of the Evangelical church in Germany). Through such learning based on open dialogue, religious education and education in human rights can go hand in hand. Evidence from Germany and many other countries shows that religions engaging in public religious education will not remain unchanged, but will receive valuable impulses for their further development.

11.2 Working on a Religious and Civic Culture of Welcome against the Background of Global Threats



Ill. 11 Prayer at the St. Martha Church Nürnberg 2013: “Treasures of the religions”

In the context of, and in the aftermath of, the 11th Nuremberg Forum, there have been various national and international efforts with regard to religions and human rights, challenged by newly flaring flashpoints ranging from extremism to terrorism.

In Germany, there have always been critical questions as to whether Islam can stand unreservedly behind human rights, especially with regard to freedom to change one’s religion and the acceptance of non-religious viewpoints.

So it was a special signal when, one month after the Forum 2013, a declaration on religious freedom was adopted by the Round Table of Religions in Germany, at the Day of Religions, which took place in Coburg:¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ www.runder-tisch-der-religionen.de. Stellungnahmen.

*The Human Right of Freedom of Religion: Declaration of the
Round Table of Religions in Germany*

In light of the current pressures and persecutions faced by religious communities in many countries around the world, especially when they constitute a minority, the Round Table of Religions in Germany would like to stress the broad meaning of the human right of freedom of religion.

Fundamental to this is Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

“Everyone is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany emphasizes this in even greater detail. Article 3 (3) states:

“No one may be discriminated against or given preference on account ... of their faith, their religious or political views.”

And in Article 4:

“(1) Freedom of faith, conscience and religious and philosophical belief shall be inalienable.

(2) The free exercise of religion shall be guaranteed.”

To further explicate the meaning of these provisions, one may list the following specific points:

- Every person may have a religion.
- They may profess it publicly.
- They may practice it.
- They may not be disadvantaged or favored because of their religion or a non-religious conviction.
- They may change their religion.
- They may leave their religion.
- They may also have no religion.
- They may publicly express their point of view.

Restrictions on freedom of religion can have various causes:

- A religious community’s claim to absolute authority, especially if it is linked to the cultural tradition of a country and therefore other religious and ideological orientations are marginalized, excluded or even fought against.
- The social structure, for example, when adherents of one religious community are seen as more economically successful and others experience themselves as disadvantaged.

- The prevalence of secularism or a secular ideology in certain states, which classify religious communities as detrimental to the development of society and therefore restrict or even directly oppose them in their public activities.

In contrast, we declare:

- Freedom of religion in its full sense is freedom “for”, “within” and “from” religions.
- Freedom “for” religion includes the right to have a religion, to practice it, to express it publicly and to advocate for it.
- Freedom “within” religion means the need to allow denominational diversity within religions; the right to change a religion/confession.
- Freedom “from” religion refers to the right to have no religion, to leave a religion, and the right to criticize religious as well as non-religious viewpoints.
- The limits of freedom of religion are where a religion or a worldview community opposes freedoms guaranteed by the Basic Law.

Adopted by the Round Table of Religions in Germany at the Day of the Religions in Coburg, October 24, 2013. The Round Table of Religions in Germany includes representatives from Judaism, the Christian churches, the Muslim community, The German Buddhist Union and the Baha’i religion. Chair: Dr. Franz Brendle. Vice Chair: Prof. Dr. Johannes Lähnemann.

Crucially, this declaration was supported by all members of the Round Table of Religions, also explicitly by the representatives of the various Muslim umbrella organizations in Germany.

Internationally, three conferences were of particular importance in the years 2013-2016, in each of which interreligious and intercultural education played an important role: the 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Vienna in November 2013 under the overall title “Welcoming the Other: Action for Human Dignity, Citizenship and Shared Wellbeing; the European Assembly in Castel Gandolfo in October 2015 with the theme “Welcoming each other in Europe: From Fear to Trust”; and the 12th Nuremberg Forum in October 2016 with the overall theme “Public Theology - Religion - Education. Interreligious Perspectives”.



Ill. 12 Singing together at the 9th World Assembly 2013 in Vienna

During the process of preparation for the World Assembly, the author received a request from the General Secretariat of *Religions for Peace* to prepare a basic commission paper for the topic area “Welcoming the Other through Religious and Multi-religious Education”. The paper was to 1) identify the problems in the development of religious and inter-religious education and the major players in addressing them, 2) highlight the particular opportunities and “assets” of multi-religious cooperation to address the problems - and to illustrate this with “best practice” examples, and 3) make recommendations for multi-religious action through inter-religious councils and groups.

It was an opportunity to take stock of the work of the Peace Education Standing Commission to date and to highlight it for a worldwide circle of those committed to education in the religions.

The basic insight that stands at the beginning seems almost banal, but is ultimately fundamental: 1) Young people, just like adults everywhere, live in an ultimately plural world. 2) Young people, like adults, live in a world shaped by a new globalism. However, educational efforts can only do justice to this if their specific, very different living conditions and problem constellations are taken into account. The way in

which religious education can offer help with orientation, existence and action must be designed in a correspondingly differentiated way.

At the World Assembly in Vienna in November 2013, several content areas were worked on, dedicated to the protection of human dignity, civic engagement and working for the common good of all under the theme “Welcoming the Other.” Various international religious organizations were involved in the commission’s work on peace education, including the Women and Youth Network of *Religions for Peace* and the UN-affiliated Alliance of Civilizations. Thanks to the keynote paper, to which the individual presenters referred again and again, it was finally possible to present a very diverse and clear overall result, which offered much in the way of concreteness with a brief description of six best practice examples from Europe, South America, a Polish-Italian-Lebanese cooperation project, Israel, India and Thailand. Several other actions were also named - including the “restoring dignity” exhibition for women’s dignity developed by the women’s network and the “arms down” campaign of the youth network. Main results were presented in the closing plenary before the approximately 900 delegates.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, the interesting individual projects could only be dealt with very briefly in the report. The author therefore endeavored to make the important ones among them, at least from the European area, better known. Two prizes the author was awarded gave him the means to do so: the Höffmann Scholarship Prize for Intercultural Competence of the University of Vechta in the state of Lower Saxony and the INT°RA Project Prize for Complementarity of Religions of the Interreligious Institute Nachrodt in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The European Assembly in Castel Gandolfo in October 2015 offered the opportunity to present a publication that could be prepared with these funds as a text to accompany the report. Here, the Focolare Movement a spiritual movement founded by Chiara Lubich and rooted in Roman Catholicism, which had long been organized ecumenically and designed to be interreligiously open, had offered to act as the host. It has its headquarters in Castel Gandolfo near Rome, in the converted audience hall there, which Pope John Paul II. made available to the movement. The preparatory committee under the leadership of the Belgian Yolande Iliano, the European president, chose the motto “Welcoming each other in Europe: from fear to trust.” In the brochure the author prepared, he addressed the opportunities of interreligious education more fundamentally and presented exemplary projects in more detail than in the commission’s report at the World Assembly in Vienna.

¹⁰⁵ The full Commission Report is available as a PDF on the RfP homepage: www.rfp.org.



Ill. 13 European Assembly of Religions for Peace in Castel Gandolfo/Italy 2015

Under the heading “The role of interreligious education in overcoming fear and building trust,”¹⁰⁶ the author described how reservations and fears between religious, ethnic and political groups can be the source of tensions at present as in the past - and that the lack of knowledge and a welcoming atmosphere can easily be abused politically and lead to fanaticism and violence. Thus, the three basic tasks of religious education - namely, to provide orientation, existential support, and guidance for action in matters of religion and world-view - continue to remain highly relevant. As a challenge, the author described how migration, travel, flight, and the media make it increasingly impossible to keep “the others” out of one’s own sphere of life, and that there are still too many examples of narrow-minded education and black-and-white thinking. The author described the ways of religious education characterized in the English religious education textbook by Michael Grimmith - “Learning Religion”, i.e. becoming familiar with a certain religious tradition, “Learning about Religion” - imparting knowledge”, “Learning from Religion” - learning important things for one’s own path from the traditions and sources of the religions - as complementary approaches. On the question of the “added value” of religious

¹⁰⁶ J. Lähnemann (ed.): *The role of interreligious education in overcoming fear and building trust*. Nuremberg 2015.

education, the author referred to the “Spiritual and moral dispositions”, which are laid down in the well-known “Birmingham Syllabus.” It was produced by a committee composed of representatives of various religions, teachers, and community education leaders. It had been presented at the Vienna World Assembly by Ravinder Kaur Nijar, a woman from Glasgow who belongs to the Sikh religion: “Appreciating Beauty,” “Being Thankful,” “Caring for Others, Animals and the Environment,” “Sharing and Being Generous,” “Being Regardful of Suffering,” “Being Merciful and Forgiving,” “Being Hopeful and Visionary,” “Being Courageous and Confident,” “Being Silent and Attentive to, and Cultivating a Sense for, the Sacred and Transcendent” are some of these dispositions described as basic humanistic traits and dispositions, each related to basic religious convictions.

Four examples were then described in the brochure that can help to promote a welcoming culture and build trust: The Global Ethic project with its diverse pedagogical suggestions in a global horizon (1), the Belgian-Dutch project “Open Doors”/“Hopen Doors,” which brings together religious communities, community education providers, teachers, parents and children in an urban context (2), the religious education needs that have emerged from our interfaith textbook research (3), and the “Sources of Humanity” project, in which a diverse interfaith group examined and evaluated the Bible and Qur’an for their contributions to human dignity (4). Since a larger edition could be printed, it was sent to the 300 delegates in Castel Gandolfo, the participants at the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) 2016 in Chicago, and finally to all those who participated in the Nuremberg Forum 2016, as well as to many others involved in the educational field.



*Ill. 14 Prayer of Religions in the Sultan Eyüp Mosque in Nürnberg 2014
with the Jewish Kantor Baruch Grabowski*

Two problematic developments with religious and political implications have posed a particular challenge to politics and public debate in recent years, especially for religious communities: firstly, the success of the so-called Islamic State (IS) with its murderous activities, which was able to take control of large parts of Iraq and Syria before being driven back by large-scale military action. Then there was the huge wave of refugees who left their homeland for economic and political reasons and arrived in Europe, which has not abated to this day.

At international level, there have been repeated efforts to bring together representatives of different religions, especially in areas of tension, to create levels of mediation through them and to pave the way for humanitarian aid. The Amman Declaration of religious leaders from Judaism, Christianity and Islam under the leadership of Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan and RfP Secretary-General William Vendley was issued after the conquest of Mosul by the so-called Islamic State. The author translated and distributed this moving statement in the interfaith scene in Germany.

It states, among other things:

“Amman (July 24, 2014):

In recent days, we have read with horror about Christians being asked to leave the town of Mosul within twenty-four hours. We have also heard about the desecration of Christian holy spaces and their symbols - the bombing of churches and a cross being removed from St. Ephrem’s Cathedral, the seat of the Syriac Orthodox archdiocese in Mosul.

These actions are an appalling blot on the proud tradition of pluralism in a region which has been home to Chaldeans, Assyrians and other Churches of the East for more than 1,700 years. Indeed, the destruction caused by the violence has engulfed all of the diverse populations that make up Iraq - the Turkmens, the Yazidis, the Sunnis and Shias, Kurds and tens upon thousands of Arab families who have been uprooted from the region in fear of their lives. These horrors continue to unfold on a daily basis and follow a brutal period of fighting in Syria. Today, the United Nations estimates that one out of every three Syrians is in need of urgent humanitarian aid. We cannot stand by and watch idly, as the lives of the most vulnerable, our women and our children are destroyed in the name of religion.

We have also viewed with concern the ongoing situation in Israel and Gaza, and leaving aside the horror of that situation for a moment, have been particularly distressed by how the name of religion has been invoked to justify the murder of ordinary people. Statements posted by young people on social media justifying the taking of innocent lives as “commandments from God” are a testament to how the pressure of living under the threat of violence can cause the minds and moral compass of not just the military and seekers of power, but also that of ordinary civilians to atrophy. We should do all that we can to end the violence even as the numbers of casualties rise on a daily basis. Now, more than ever, we should all remember the quote of Malachi 2, verse 10 - “Have we not all one father?”

In these troubling times, when we bear witness to a moral crisis of unparalleled dimensions, we should recall the Islamic concepts of *haq el hurriya* and *haq el karama*, the right to freedom and the right to human dignity that are to be enjoyed by people of all faiths. To quote the words from the Quran: “We have honored the children of Adam and carried them on to land and sea.” (Surah (17) al-Isra’: verse 70). It would behove us to remember the words of Rabbi Magonet citing the hallel: “To get out of this narrowness, I called on God; God answered me with a broader vision. Give thanks to the eternal who is good, for God’s love is la-olam: for the whole world.”

And we should pay close attention to Pope Francis’ remarks on the situation in Mosul, “May the God of peace rouse in everyone an authentic desire for peace and reconciliation. Violence cannot be overcome with violence. Violence is defeated with peace!”

Religious leaders and their followers must draw strength from the ethical precepts that have been set over the course of our civilizations. When people turn to their religious leaders for advice, they must not receive rigid statements drawn from the misinterpretations of religious beliefs. Rather, they should be able to draw inspiration from the clear ethical standards that have been set over time, the standards that are born out of the timeless concepts of justice, compassion, generosity and imagination.

In this spirit, we appeal to the leaders and brokers of power in Mosul, the Middle East region, and indeed around the world that the holy spaces, both in our sites of worship and in our hearts, should not devolve into venues that separate us from each other. Instead, they should be venues for dialogue and for conversation, so that we may recognize the values of human dignity and solidarity to which we all subscribe. Only by having these shared conversations, we will be able to better understand each other.

Now, more than ever, it is time that we heed the words put forth in the Qur'an: "There shall be no compulsion in religion." (Surah (2) al-Baqarah: verse 256). If we ignore this call for conciliation, attitudes will continue to harden, and we will witness the people of Iraq being torn asunder - among Muslims and between the people of different faiths in the region. We cannot allow this tragedy to unfold in a land that is home to one of the world's most ancient civilizations. We must repay the debt we owe to Mesopotamia.

Signatories:

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Founder and Chairman, Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS) and Co-Founder & Chairman of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD)

Mr. Jamal Daniel, Co-founder, Vice President and Trustee, Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD)

Chief Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat, Co-Founder & Secretary, Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD)

Mgr. Michael L. Fitzgerald, Board Member, Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD)"

Of course, it may be asked: What have statements like these achieved? Have they not remained too weak an attempt in the face of military power and the attraction that extremism can exert on insecure young people in particular? Nevertheless, they do illustrate the solidarity that has grown among high-ranking religious leaders - and help to attract funding, especially in the area of interreligious education, in order to prevent false prejudices and to make the fundamental core of peace in the religions visible.

Another major challenge was the huge number of refugees who came into Europe and Germany, especially from 2015 onward. An initially overwhelming climate of welcome by many civil society, and especially religious, groups, as well as Angela Merkel's dictum "We can do it," quickly turned into great skepticism and even rejection in broad sections of the population, politically exploited by the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) and other right-wing nationalist groups. The discussions about restrictions on the right of asylum, about deportations and, on the other hand, about urgently needed integration measures in the social and educational sectors fostered a climate dominated by confrontation and polemic. In this situation, the Round Table of Religions in Germany took an unequivocal stand in 2016 in a declaration on the refugee question, which focused above all on the preservation of human dignity on the basis of value concepts in the various religions:

*Declaration of the Round Table of Religions in Germany on the
Refugee Question*

"If a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as a native, and you shall love him as yourself; for you yourselves were strangers in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Leviticus / Deuteronomy 19:33-34

Jesus says: "I was a stranger and homeless, and you took me in or did not take me in. ... Whatever you did or did not do for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did or did not do for me." Adapted from Matthew 25:35

"O you humans. We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you into associations and tribes so that you may know each other. The most respected of you with God is the most God-fearing of you. God knows and has knowledge of everything." Qur'an Sura 49:13

"The earth is one homeland. All people are its citizens." Baha'u'llah

"Look upon every supplicant as your spiritual master." Vimalakirti Sutra (Buddhism)

The statements of our holy scriptures with regard to strangers, the needy and the relationship of different peoples to each other are clear. They correspond to the central statement of the Declaration of Human Rights: "The dignity of the human person is inviolable."

For people who live in the traditions of their religions, they are binding. Xenophobia and fanaticism must not be justified on religious grounds!

For religious communities, the following benchmarks emerge in the current refugee crisis:

In all necessary measures, the dignity of each individual person and the prospect of successful coexistence must be respected, nationally and internationally.

This applies to the fight against the causes of flight as well as to care in the refugee camps of the various countries, to reception in Germany, and also to unavoidable repatriations.

We are particularly committed to joint action by religious communities, both nationally and internationally. In this context, freedom in a comprehensive sense has special weight for us, in that we want to stand by persecuted and marginalized groups.

Everything that serves a welcoming climate in our communities and our society - in encounter, understanding and cooperation - we support out of deep conviction.

For the members of the Round Table of Religions in Germany (RT/D) from the Central Council of Jews, the Protestant Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (DITIB), the Islamic Council, the Central Council of Muslims, the German Buddhist Union (DBU) and the National Spiritual Council of the Baha'i". signed. Dr. Franz Brendle, chairman of the RT/D"

In the background of all the efforts described here is the question of the social relevance of dialogical and religious education work, which has also always played a role in the Nuremberg Forums. For the 12th Nuremberg Forum in 2016, Manfred Pirner and the author wanted to explicitly address this. To this end, they deliberately linked their project with the initiatives of the international network for Public Theology. This movement, which has developed in the field of Christian theology and has been introduced into church-theological discussions in Germany above all by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, the chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, has so far had less of an eye on other religions and interreligious education. This led the organizers to the overall theme "Public Theology - Religion - Education. Interreligious Perspectives."

12. Public Theology, Religious Diversity and Interreligious Learning. The 12th Nuremberg Forum

Manfred Pirner, Werner Haußmann and the author formed a larger theological/religious education preparatory group from our university and the University of Bamberg for this forum. We enlisted the cooperation of the chairperson of the Global Network for Public Theology, Elaine Graham from Chester in England, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm as the opening speaker, and the Egyptologist and cultural scientist Jan Assmann from Konstanz, known for his critical contributions to the role of monotheistic religions, for the closing lecture.¹⁰⁷ Hanan Alexander from Israel and Sabrina Worch from the University of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg spoke for the Jewish perspective, Abdullah Sahin from London, Mouhanad Khorchide from Münster university and Mohammed Nekroumi from the Department of Islamic Religious Studies at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg for the Muslim perspective, and Heeson Bai from Canada for the Buddhist perspective. With Bernhard Grümme and Bernd Schröder, a Roman Catholic and a Protestant religious educator were involved as champions of public religious education. We decided to hold the whole conference in English this time.

In his opening speech, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm made it clear how theologically responsible public work of the churches, in view of the current massive threats to a positive intercultural coexistence, must make an important contribution to our society, and indeed in cross-religious cooperation. He justified this from an inclusive understanding of the Trinity:

“Faith in God as the Creator will see God as the Creator of the whole world and the Father of all people, not just Christians.

Faith in Jesus Christ will be guided by how Jesus himself, grounded in his mission from God and for the sake of humanity, repeatedly erased constricting boundaries and lived radical love.

Faith in the Holy Spirit seeks to make Christians an exemplary community, and at the same time instill a deep awareness of the community of the whole human family. It seeks to make Christians credible partners in the commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, which is today incumbent on people in all religions and also on people outside the religions.”

Religious contributions to the common good: The variety of approaches to this in the various religious communities was evident throughout. It also became clear that the

¹⁰⁷ It was published in two volumes: M.L. Pirner, J. Lähnemann, W. Haußmann, S. Schwarz (ed.): *Public Theology, Religious Diversity, and Interreligious Learning. Contributing to the Common Good Through Religious Education*. New York/London 2018. M.L. Pirner, J. Lähnemann, W. Haußmann, S. Schwarz (ed.): *Public Theology - Perspectives on Religion and Education*. New York/London 2019.

religious communities repeatedly encounter two dangers: the retreat into a merely internal view of their own religious tradition on the one hand, and the adaptation to a certain ideological orientation in a social system on the other. The public work of religious communities needs a critical-constructive orientation. On the Christian side, colleagues from South Africa and others made particular reference to Bonhoeffer's motto of "praying and doing what is just," or Reinhold Niebuhr's advocacy of a reform of Protestant Christianity in particular, with a view to a clear perception of the challenges of a modern world. "Buddhistically," the movement of "engaged Buddhism" came into view, or of a Buddhism with a "small b", as Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand put it, which, for example, with its "Parliament of the Poor", initiated socially critical action, but also, with the "Spirit in Education" movement, made the spiritual foundations of religion fruitful for educational tasks. The forum was preceded by a young researchers' workshop with contributions from Europe, Africa, Asia and America, accompanied by "senior researchers," of whom the author was also privileged to be one.

The author, in his paper "The Contribution of Interreligious Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Initiatives to Public Education," listed some developments and basic problems facing interfaith education in the public sphere:¹⁰⁸

During the past decades, the number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) worldwide has increased massively. They have an increasing impact in the fields of social, humanitarian, cultural and ecological development. According to a study of a few years ago¹⁰⁹ 3.183 NGOs hold a consultative status at ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council at the UN), of which 320 can be characterized as religious (in comparison, in 2003 there were 263 according to the analysis by Julia Berger¹¹⁰). Most of the RNGOs are related to a specific religion: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (by far the largest number), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim; only a few of them are multi-religious and work internationally. Among them are Religions for Peace (RfP; originally the World Conference on Religion and Peace), the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the United Religions Initiative (URI) and the World Parliament of the Religions. They have in common that they draw on the spiritual sources of the religions as a basic power for humanitarian development. They work for common action in parallel fields as secular NGOs - for justice, peace, the integrity of life, as advocates for children, empowering women and youth, for the socially

¹⁰⁸ M.L. Pirner, J. Lähnemann, W. Haußmann, S. Schwarz, *Public Theology* (vol. 1, 2018) 186-197, 186.

¹⁰⁹ M.J. Petersen: International religious NGOs at the United Nations. *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 11, Nov. 2010.

¹¹⁰ J. Berger: *Religious non-governmental organisations: an exploratory analysis*. Baltimore, MD 2003: International Society for Third-Sector Research and the John Hopkins University.

deprived - focusing specifically on freedom of religion and belief and overcoming prejudice against different cultures and traditions. But until now, comparatively little has been done for public and state education.

In his paper, the author explored selected examples of activities in this field, namely the initiatives of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of Religions for Peace. Initiated at the 6th World Assembly of Religions for Peace 1994 in Riva del Garda, Italy, the idea of this commission was to create and develop more systematic and continuous work in the field of interreligious education, which includes the cooperation between educational activities of religious communities and different forms of state and public education.

Parallel to the development of recommendations of the Peace Education Standing Commission, a changing attitude concerning religion in education on the European political level emerged. After 2002, the Council of Europe started to pay attention to education about religions (and from 2008 also about nonreligious convictions) in public schools across Europe. The earlier practice of excluding the study of religions in state education - because religion was felt to belong only to the private sphere - was reconsidered. The events of September 11, 2001, in the USA were an impetus for change.

In this process, it proved especially challenging to make clear that in the field of values and religious education more is needed than cognitive orientation - and that the treasures of religious traditions can really help with life orientation and identity building (“learning from religion”).

In this context, the REDCo Research Project “Religion in Education: A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries?” has been a valuable step forward. It was carried out in eight European countries: England, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain. The following features have been found in all these countries:¹¹¹

1. For those pupils who have no ties to organized religions, the school forms the main forum for learning about religion and the religious perceptions of other pupils.
2. For those pupils who belong to a religion, the school provides the main opportunity to come into contact with other religions.
3. Many of the pupils are prejudiced towards the religions of others, but at the same time are prepared to enter into dialogue with others whom they regard as interesting. The school provides a unique forum for them.

¹¹¹ W. Weiße: Religions in education - REDCo. In Lähnemann, Schreiner, Interreligious and values education in Europe. (2009) 82-83.

4. Almost all pupils regard teaching an interreligious understanding at both the personal and the societal level as a necessity and possibility. School offers possibilities to promote this opportunity.

The most ambitious overview is given by the project “Religious Education at Schools in Europe” (REL-EDU) at the University of Vienna carried out since 2013, with six volumes published on RE in Central Europe, Northern Europe, Western Europe, Southern Europe, Southeast Europe and Eastern Europe.¹¹²

A summary about the developments of RE in Europe can be found in the Council of Europe’s book “Signposts - Policy and Practice for Teaching About Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education”, with recommendations for the policies in the member states. A chapter of special interest is how to link schools to wider communities and organizations. Jackson gives a brief description:¹¹³

Signposts illustrates a number of themes, such as providing examples of how schools can build educational links with religious and other communities, including the organization of visits to religious buildings, and of the role of members of religious and belief groups in giving moderated talks about their communities in schools, in which the role of the speaker is to inform (often through personal stories) and not to proselytize. The use of visitors from various communities as speakers in schools is discussed, including an example of partnerships between secondary schools and primary schools, in which older secondary students are trained to give information about their own faith or world view. An account of the use of ethnographic methods on outside visits in order to maximize students’ understanding of others’ religious language, symbols and experiences is given.

As an example of this, the author referred to the interreligious work on the ground as carried out by *Religions for Peace Nuremberg* since 1988:

In our city of Nuremberg, an interreligious infrastructure has been developed which has an intense impact on the teaching and situation in schools: The local Religions for Peace (RfP) group has edited a brochure *Offene Türen. Religionsgemeinschaften in Nürnberg und Umgebung* (Open Doors. Religious Communities in Nürnberg and its Environs). In this booklet, 50 different religious communities give brief information about the principles of their belief, the structures of spiritual life and their social and educational activities - including addresses, e-mail addresses of contact persons and presence on the internet. The brochure has been distributed in the religious communities, the educational institutions and especially in the schools of the city.

¹¹² M. Rothgangel, M. Jäggle et al. (ed.): Religious education at schools in Europe. Göttingen 2016ff.

¹¹³ R. Jackson: Inclusive study of religions and world views in schools: Signposts from the Council of Europe. Strassbourg 2016, 12-13.

Besides Religions for Peace there is the Society for Christian-Jewish Co-operation, a Christian institution for the encounter with Muslims (“Die Brücke” - “The Bridge”) and a Muslim institution for the encounter with Christians and people of other beliefs (“Begegnungsstube Medina” - “Meeting Room Medina”). There is the annual “Week of Brother- and Sisterhood” for Christians and Jews and the “Week for Christian - Muslim dialogue”.

As a summary, it can be stated that it proves to be fruitful to look at resources and possibilities of cooperation between religious communities, schools, scientific pedagogical institutions and other educational agencies for the development of more sensitivity, respect and dialogue in the public sphere of a multicultural society. There is an increasing need for exchange, for learning from each other and for networking on the local, the national and the international level.

In his contribution “Public Religious Pedagogy - An Emerging New Paradigm?”, Manfred Pirner went a step further. Following on from the work of Bernhard Grümme and Bernd Schröder, he was particularly concerned that non-religious and non-faith-based pupils should be taken into account in public religious pedagogy, because religious, philosophical and ethical offers of orientation can also be of great importance to them. In five points, he developed how religious education could be conceived in a new way from the perspective of public religious education (somewhat abbreviated here):¹¹⁴

1. It should be made clearer that (Christian) RE is seen by the churches not as an opportunity to proselytize or socialize pupils into the church or any religion but rather as a diaconical service to all pupils and thus to the common good of society. Its major aim is to help young people find orientation and develop competence in matters of religion, worldview, and ethics - irrespective of their own present belief or disbelief.
2. It should be made clearer that (Christian) RE does not just foster particularistic religious perspectives and values, but shows how religious perspectives and values can be linked with basic general principles and values of our (secular) liberal democratic and human rights centered society and thus promote social cohesion. It should be more emphasized conceptually as well as in public discourse that thus, RE contributes significantly to democratic, citizenship, and human rights education in a specific way that cannot be simply substituted by general (secular) moral education.
3. RE should concentrate on dialogical approaches, in which (diverse) religious and (diverse) nonreligious pupils can exchange their views and learn from one another as well as from theological and (secular) philosophical perspectives.

¹¹⁴ According to Pirner, Lähnemann, Haußmann, Schwarz,,: Public Theology (2019, Vol. 2), 49f.

4. While fostering dialogical approaches, the internal (theological or philosophical) perspectives of each religion or worldview should not be marginalized. Rather, learning programs should be offered to help pupils to deepen and reflect on their own religious or secular views and practices.
5. It is not enough to take better account of the nonreligious pupils in RE classes, but the diaconical thrust as well as the dialogical, complementary learning processes between religious and nonreligious actors should also be mirrored in the contents of RE:
 - In biblical units, it can be shown how the Bible shaped Western culture far beyond the church walls, and how Greek philosophy and critical secular scholarship have interacted with theological hermeneutics in a fruitful and challenging way.
 - In historical units, it can be shown how Christianity contributed, however ambivalently, to many social and cultural developments in Western countries, and how religious and secular traditions have mostly been intertwined, have supported and criticized each other and by doing so benefitted from one another.
 - In ethical units, the diverse processes of translation from Christian values into general values and, vice versa, the influence of secular principles - such as those of human rights - on Christian ethics can be demonstrated in order to prevent exclusivist and arrogant attitudes from either side.
 - In interreligious units and dimensions, the secular should not be forgotten or marginalized but included in what could better be called interreligious and inter-worldview education. I have recently elaborated this point and developed a competence model of inter-religious and inter-worldview competence which tries to avoid the 'blind spots' that are usually associated with what we call "interreligious learning" in RE.¹¹⁵

As his overall concern, Pirner emphasized how linking discourses on public theology with public education in general and with religious education in particular under the title of a public religious education contains great potential for all sides. He hopes that young people can benefit from this and that this approach can foster cooperative efforts for more humanity in our societies.

With this contribution, Pirner gave, as it were, the starting signal for the opening of the Research Unit for Public Religion and Education (RUPRE).

He himself writes that the previous focal points of his research and thinking in religious education could be brought together in "public religious education" based on public theology:

¹¹⁵ M.L. Pirner: 'The Blind Spots of Interreligious Competence Education. Stocktaking and Consequences for a Model of Interreligious and Interworldly Competence in the Horizon of Public Religious Education.' In T. Heller (ed.), *Religion and education - interdisciplinary*. Leipzig 2018, 497-513.

“...popular media culture, interfaith education, and human rights education. Based on this conviction, I founded the Research Unit for Public Religion and Education (RUPRE, www.rupre.uni-erlangen.org) in 2016. Since then, a number of research projects have been located within its framework, e.g. an empirical study funded by the Staedtler Foundation, in which we investigated the religiosity of young people who fled.¹¹⁶ Currently, two doctoral projects on children’s rights and religious education are underway ... Since 2019, RUPRE is also a member of the Global Network of Public Theology (GNPT).”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Cf. M. L. Pirner: Religion as Resource and Risk. The religiosity of refugee youth in Germany - empirical insights. [Theo-Web](#). Journal of Religious Education, 16(2), 2017, 153-180.; M. L. Pirner & J. Bradtke: Religion and Education as Resources for Young Refugees. Preliminary Results from an Empirical Mixed-Methods Study. In E. Aslan (ed.), Religion(s) @ school. Münster 2021.

¹¹⁷ M.L. Pirner: ‘The Research Center for Public Religious Pedagogy (RUPRE) and recent basic work in religious education’, in J. Lähnemann: Interreligious Understanding and Education 1980-2020. Berlin 2021, 213-218, 214. See also the [RUPRE-YouTube-presentations](#).

13. “Caring for our Common Future: Advancing Shared Well-being”. The 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace and the 2020-2025 Peace Program

What was discussed at the Nuremberg Forums has always had its correspondence at the global level. In this respect, it was a special signal that the 10th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*, as the most representative coalition of religious communities on peace issues, was held in Germany for the first time in 2019.¹¹⁸



Ill. 15 Youth and delegates together with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm of the Protestant Church of Germany at the 10th World Assembly 2019 in Lindau/Germany at Lake Contance

Despite all international interreligious efforts and initiatives, it had to and still has to be stated that the global situation with regard to conflicts in which religious-ideological components repeatedly play a role has not fundamentally eased in the years since the 9th World Assembly in Vienna in 2013. The conflicts in the Middle East, especially through the so-called Islamic State and the war in Syria, fighting in several African states, the expulsion of the Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, the refugee problem, and, not least, the climate issue, such as the threat to the rain-forest in Latin America, can be cited as examples of this.

When the General Secretariat of *Religions for Peace* in New York was deliberating where a 10th World Assembly could be held, two offers emerged: one from Dubai and one from Germany. The offer from Germany ultimately proved to be more sound and more promising than the one from Dubai. The decisive factor for Germany's commitment was that a working group on the “Responsibility of the World's Religions for Peace” was set up in the Foreign Ministry - initiated by Frank-Walter Steinmeier during his time as Foreign Minister and then carried out under Sigmar Gabriel. It was

¹¹⁸ The following includes elements from J. Lähnemann: ‘*Religions for Peace* 50 years - a balance after the 10th World Assembly 2019 in Lindau/Lake Constance.’ Handbook of Religions Nr. 68/June 2021. Martin Affolderbach (2020) also offers a constructively critical presentation and analysis in his article “Religions as Civic Actors” 89-122.

a pragmatic political consideration that, after all, 80% of the world's population has religious ties and that the leading figures of religions in most countries have an important influence in their societies, and are thus a factor that must also be kept in mind in foreign policy. Another factor was that the city of Lindau, on Lake Constance, made a strong case for hosting the World Assembly. A conference center for the annual meetings of Nobel laureates had been built in Lindau through which the city became internationally known. In connection with the preparations for the World Assembly, the foundation "Ring for Peace - Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society" was established.

So the 10th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* was the first to be held in Germany under the overall theme "Caring for our Common Future: Advancing Shared Well-being". In a time of growing tensions in different regions of the world, a time threatened by extremism, populism, climate change and the emergence of fake news. Religions can throw fuel on the fire in conflicts, but they can also promote peace and play preventative, conflict minimizing and reconciliatory roles.

The Assembly has worked in 5 Commissions:

1. A Multi-religious Vision of Positive Peace
2. Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts
3. Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies
4. Advancing Sustainable and Integral Human development
5. Protecting the Earth

The task of Peace Education has been treated in Commission 3 under the subtitle: Religious Values and Peace Education - a practical approach.

13.1 Religious Values and Peace Education. A Practical Approach

The working group on Peace Education gathered with activists in the field of religious and interreligious Education from 10 countries and different religious and educational contexts in America (North and South), Africa, Asia and Europe against the backdrop of the experience that in many social, cultural and religious contexts a decline of values can be found as a source of conflict, intolerance and misbehavior. Education on the other hand is one of the most important factors for breaking down ignorance and prejudices, which are the dangerous preconditions for violent conflict. In Lindau, the main issue has been to explain the specific religious assets for Peace Education which can be gained out of the spiritual sources of the religions. These are values which go beyond what states and politics can regulate. They can be promoted within the religious communities and by interreligious cooperation and can also inspire Public Education.

This was explained in 4 paragraphs:

1. Fundamental Convictions

Religions have - each in a specific way - a conviction of the fundamental unity of mankind and of the interrelationship of all living and existing beings.

Believing in God in the monotheistic religions includes the traditions of creation. This has as consequence to be thankful for creation and being responsible for it, to act in solidarity with all creatures, living apart from selfish egoism, experiencing security out of the belief in God, being critical of idolizing selfish aims, being engaged for the weak and for an inclusive life with the handicapped. Believers are connected in consciousness for the integrity of creation.

In the tradition of non-theistic religions - for example in specific branches of Buddhism - it is the interdependence of everything living and existing, which shall lead away from all selfish world views to a comprehensive consciousness of sensitivity and responsibility.

These convictions imply a fundamental pedagogical perspective: Only if members of the rising generation have respect for their fellow human beings, feel responsibility for all creation, animate and inanimate, and are sensitive to hatred, violence and all developments which are hostile to life and society, will they be equipped for a life in community which opens up a future for our planet.

2. Fundamental Values

In the letter of 138 leading Muslim personalities to the representatives of Christianity from 2007, the "Common Word" (www.acommonword.com), it is highlighted that Islam, Judaism and Christianity have a common heritage in the double commandment "Love God and love your neighbor". In the Bible as well as in the Qur'an this is explained in many ways for many specific situations and challenges: in the Torah for example concerning the dignity and the well-being of the stranger, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus extending to "love your enemy", in the Qur'an referring to a society living in solidarity.

In the Buddhist tradition the spiritual "awakening" and the liberation from suffering are closely related with the ability of empathy with all that lives and exists, a readiness for ways from a concern with the self and entanglement in the self to a selflessness which makes free for an all-embracing compassion.

Love, compassion, tolerance, ability to forgive, truthfulness, hope are values which cannot be imposed by law but which are inherent in religious traditions and which are necessary for a real well being in society. They can be experienced and trained with the adolescents in religious communities. In the guidelines of the "Birmingham Syllabus" (2007), formulated by members of the different religions of the city, 24

Spiritual and Moral Dispositions are explained in relation to the religious convictions from which they are derived.

3. Common Obligations

As guideline for educational tasks, central elements can be taken from the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic” which was signed by more than 200 leading religious personalities at the World Parliament of Religions 1993 in Chicago. It has been endorsed at the World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* 2006 in Kyoto. The declaration can serve as a key for peace education in a comprehensive sense.¹¹⁹

The principles of the declaration consist of the Golden Rule:

What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.

Or in positive terms:

What you wish done to yourself, do to others!

It is unfolded in 4 Irrevocable Directives which are taken from the ethical commandments of the Decalogue and from the self-obligations of a lay Buddhist. The commandments are explained in positive terms - not as a law, but to be developed as a “culture”. Each of the directives is not only valid for the personal level but also for society and for the ecological challenges:

- I. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life (not only: You shall not kill)
- II. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order (not only: You shall not steal)
- III. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness (not only: You shall not lie).
- IV. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women (not only: You shall not commit sexual immorality).

In 2018 a 5th Commitment was adopted by the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions:

- V. Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth.

¹¹⁹ The preparation of the ‘Declaration toward a Global Ethic’ is described in chapter 4.1 of this book.



Ill. 16 Prayer of Religions in the St. Clara-Church Nürnberg: "Lets shelter the earth" 2008

It is explained that the principles expressed in the Global Ethic can be affirmed by all persons with ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not. But "As religious and spiritual persons we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in word or silence have a special responsibility for the welfare of all humanity and care for the planet Earth. We do not consider ourselves better than other women and men, but we trust that the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way for the future."

For each of the directives the pedagogical tasks are named which should be learned and trained in the family, school, in religious communities and in all public educational institutions.

4. Levels of Learning

Peace education in and with religions can be explained in the levels of cognitive, emotional and practical learning:

1) Religious education plays an essential part in cognitive learning.

When people are well informed, use their knowledge critically and are able to question and analyze, they are less likely to be deceived. Pure ignorance, deliberate distortion and disinformation are all too often the stuff of politics today and, even

in matters of religion, are used to create barriers and for defamatory purposes. When people understand the ways in which religious faiths relate to life and meaning, they are able to empathize with others' views and see through the mechanisms that cause ethnic and religious discord and fanaticism.

2) Religious education can help with living with personal values:

It teaches about the sources of life and of values that transcend superficial pleasures. It teaches how all living things are related and mutually interdependent. Religious education can give strength, support, comfort and courage.

It can promote values by

- learning to sustain a global order in which respect for human dignity comes first
- learning to empathize with others
- learning to express feelings and to discuss them in dialogue with one's opposite number
- learning to resolve conflicts constructively and to deal with aggression in a non-violent way

3) Religious education can help for responsible action: Religious communities can offer examples of living together in solidarity, living for one another, speaking up for the weak and disadvantaged - teaching us to cope with the problems of life with a sense of mutual responsibility.

Example: Educational Activities of the Global Ethic Foundation (GEF)¹²⁰

Basically, there are two intertwined tasks for an education based on a global ethic: acquiring knowledge (about the "other" culture or religion) and communicating values (in order to change awareness and attitudes). Both should help to learn to live together with mutual respect in pluralistic and multicultural societies. In the Global Ethic Project, we avoid speaking of "religious values". We would argue that there are just shared human values. Religious believers may relate them to an Ultimate Reality, but others anchor them in humanistic convictions.

For 20 years, the GEF has developed a range of classroom materials for all kinds of schools, including kindergarten, as well as online learning material and the highly successful exhibition "World Religions - Universal Peace - Global Ethic" (available in English and German). The GEF offers training sessions and courses for teachers both in intercultural and interreligious learning and in ethics education. The demand for material and training based on the Global Ethic is constantly increasing from teachers and educators, but also from educational administrations and authorities. A

¹²⁰ Described by Dr. Günther Gebhardt, Tübingen/Germany, Head of Interreligious Affairs Emeritus, Global Ethic Foundation (for more information: www.global-ethic.org).

recent example: in 2017 and 2018 the GEF was mandated by the State Institute for Teachers Training of Luxembourg to offer a training course on world religions and a global ethic for those 2,000 elementary school teachers in the country who teach the newly introduced school subject “Life and Society”.

A Global Ethic offers itself not only as a classroom topic in religious education or ethics education but can also become the basis or guideline for an ethical consensus of a school as a whole. At the End of 2019, the GEF program *Global Ethic Schools* includes 19 schools in Germany and Luxembourg. Other schools have started the process towards receiving this designation. Schools in the (German-speaking) region of Eastern Belgium may also join the program. Eligible are schools that include the idea of a Global Ethic in a significant way in their programs and activities.

The GEF’s educational material is being used not only in the German-speaking countries. The GEF has been carrying out cooperative school projects with partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Columbia, Hong Kong, and India. In these countries, the learning material was translated and adapted to the local needs, often with support from the State or regional educational authorities. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the ETOS initiative is currently working on a concept how to establish Global Ethic Schools in their country.

Finally, recent developments in Germany show that the GEF has become an appreciated partner of Ministries of Education in some programs of civic education for youngsters: Global Ethic is considered especially useful in programs to prevent (right-wing or Islamist) radicalization of young people and in programs to strengthen democratic awareness and commitment of youngsters. Such programs serve very well the overall aim of the Global Ethic and of the educational work of the GEF: learning to live together.

For more information: www.global-ethic.org Dr. Guenther Gebhardt Tübingen, Germany, Head of Interreligious Affairs Emeritus, Global Ethic Foundation.

The important task of peace education was also included in the final declaration of the World Assembly and related to the areas of conflict that were present in Lindau:

We commit to preventing violent conflicts by advancing peace education - from early childhood to adults across our religious communities - focusing on shared values, religious literacy, and narratives of peace. We will build skills in conflict management that address the drivers of conflict non-violently. Our commitments to transforming violent conflicts are actualized in our Assembly by the religious leaders from Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and South Sudan. Our commitment is also expressed in the religious women represented by those from the Middle East and North African Region in the Assembly plenary. Here, also, religious persons from North and South Korea have worked to construct conditions for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

13.2 Peace Education in the Follow-up from the World Assembly in Lindau

In the World Assembly follow-up process, a Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 was developed, articulating the following as the proven and sustainable mission of Religions for Peace:

Multi-religious cooperation for peace and shared well-being is the hallmark of RfP. This cooperation includes but also goes beyond dialogue and bears fruit in common concrete action. Through RfP, diverse religious communities discern “deeply held and widely shared” moral concerns, such as violent conflict; gender inequality; environmental degradation; threats for freedom of thought, conscience and religion; lack of interreligious understanding; and the shrinking space for civil society and multilateralism. RfP translates these shared concerns into concrete multi-religious action.

Strategic goals have been formulated for this purpose:

RfP has set six strategic goals for the period of 2020-2025. Each of the goals advance RfP’s multi-religious vision of peace, build on RfP’s past work and align with one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). RfP’s strategic goals are interdependent; progress towards one goal contributes to progress towards the others.

- Promote Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies
- Advance Gender Equality
- Nurture a Sustainable Environment
- Champion Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion
- Strengthen Interreligious Education
- Foster Multi-Religious Collaboration and Global Partnerships

These strategic goals began to be practically implemented from 2020. Looking back on the pilot phase, it was possible to formulate the following in February 2021:

Five Standing Commissions - corresponding to the first five Strategic Goals - were established to serve as advisory bodies for Religions for Peace’s work in those respective areas. These Standing Commissions are the mechanism by which Religions for Peace leadership may directly collaborate on and guide the future of RfP programs in their respective areas of focus. The shared vision of the Standing Commission is as a space of knowledge, information, co-creation, persistent guidance, and reflection. Each Standing Commission has representation of leaders with long-standing interest, engagement, and championship in the topic of this space. The Commission acts as the ‘group of elders’ to guide Religions for Peace’s work in this space. This Standing Commission works towards the goal of Strengthening Interreligious Education. The composition of this Standing Commission considered different areas of

expertise, as well as different regions and religions. (Minutes of the Zoom meeting of the Standing Commission for Interreligious Education, 03.02.2021).

In our commission we work together with educational experts of different faiths and from different countries - ranging from the Philippines over the Middle East to Europe and North America. Each of our zoom meetings is an adventure around the globe.

In the Zoom meetings, we have at first asked for theological and spiritual foundations which inspire and encourage us for the necessary learning processes. We have worked on a book titled “Faithful Peace: Why the Journey to build resilience is multi-religious”. It was launched in September 2022. It is the outcome of the first phase of the Standing Commission on Interreligious Education established in the follow up of the 10th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* in Lindau, Germany in 2019 - according to the RfP Strategic Plan 2020-25

This book should be the first in a series of envisaged publications with which *Religions for Peace (RfP)* intends to inspire dialogue and exchange on principles and ways of interreligious learning and education in cooperation of different religions. Dr. Karen Leslie Hernandez leads the commission’s work and is responsible editor of the volume. In her introduction, titled “Forward: To serve, Together, is to Live, Together, in Peace,” Prof. Azza Karam, at that time General Secretary of Religions for Peace, explains the interreligious developments which have led to the formation of the commission. The commission’s work is guided by a vision of positive peace which is far more than the absence of war; it includes justice, welfare and responsibility for all that lives and exists. Looking at the theological and spiritual foundations which inspire and encourage us for the necessary learning processes can be characterized as “Bird’s Eye”. The commission members share the rich and specific sources of the religious communities when asked what - from their spiritual experience - they can contribute to interreligious dialogue and learning. The key question was: “Why do we do what we do?” Most of the articles combine it with reflecting actual challenges and showing concrete examples of interreligious cooperation. All authors use clear language which can be understood without prior specialized scholarly knowledge - acknowledging the very different religious backgrounds and contexts. Of course, the book cannot cover the whole and complex field of the world’s religions. But it marks a starting point, giving authentic insights of personalities living in different religious traditions with their specific contexts and their specific engagement.

Some central observations:

Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota/USA, is active in Interreligious Dialogue agencies for over 40 years. His article “The Political and the Theological. Hindu Justification for Interreligious

Engagement” is full of strong arguments for interreligious learning, for working together and profiting from each other. Reflecting the Hindu traditions beginning with the Vedas and explaining the Ahimsa-principle of Mahatma Gandhi he shows the religious assets which go beyond the political arguments for a peaceful living together in a pluralistic society. Being aware of God / the infinite means for religiously convinced people, humbleness and a life of responsibility and openness: “If our theologies cannot limit the limitless, we can all learn and be enriched by the ways in which others have experienced and apprehended the absolute by the ways derived from such encounters and experiences.” This goes against all narrowness which can be found too often in religions. The example of the Shanti Ashram in Coimbatore/India with the International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH) established by the Aram family (and Kezevinu Aram as president) is a convincing practical example of what he has in mind.

Lilian J. Sison is a professor at the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas in Manila/Philippines. She gives a clear overview of the developments to dialogue, acknowledging other religions and interfaith cooperation in the Roman Catholic Church in her article “The Church in Dialogue: From ‘Nostra Aetate’ to ‘Fratelli Tutti’”. She starts with the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*. It is a breakthrough for the Roman Catholic view of the world’s religions and world views. She describes the long way from there to the present efforts with remarkable steps such as the invitation of Pope John Paul II for the interreligious prayer meeting in Assisi in 1986. It has been a far-reaching inspiration for spiritual encounter, enrichment and common obligations. She refers to the communication on the “common word” by Muslim leaders addressing Christian leaders in 2007, the meeting of Pope Francis with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyeb in 2019 and the encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* in 2020. Lilian J. Sison explains the biblical foundations for this development - with Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan as a central text. Finally, she shows practical interfaith work in the Philippines in different fields of global and local humanitarian, social and ecological challenges which there, as in other parts of the world, are a burning issue.

Professor Nayla Tabbara is an Islamic theologian and director of the international Adyan Foundation for diversity, solidarity and human dignity located in Beirut in Lebanon. Her paper on “Working multireligiously for the common good: An Islamic Perspective” is a convincing example for cooperative learning and acting of religious communities on the basis of fundamental Islamic convictions. She shows the motivations to celebrate diverse ways of vice versa acknowledgment and dialogue which are laid down in the Qur’an. They urge us “to spend our time on this earth in inspiring each other to do good deeds”. Like Lilian J. Sison she refers to the “Common Word” of Muslim Leaders (2007) and the Human Fraternity Declaration of Pope Francis and Ahmad al-Tayyeb (2019). She gives rich examples of concrete working together in

schools, universities and the general public which are initiated by the Adyan Foundation. They are of high relevance in areas of tension as at present also in Lebanon. She highlights the possibility of being part of the worldwide endeavors of Religions for Peace.

The author - as professor emeritus of Religious Education at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg in Germany - has been chairman of the Peace Education Standing Commission of *Religions for Peace* for more than 20 years. His article "Jesus opening limits. The Relevance of the Gospel for Religious and Interreligious Learning," comes from his background as Protestant/Lutheran theologian and religious educator engaged in interreligious work since the 1970s. His intention is to show that from the very heart of Christian belief - the Gospel of Jesus Christ - we can find a strong impetus for interfaith dialogue, cooperation and learning. The examples of how Jesus himself gives the love of God which he is representing and realizing to people who are neglected and in special need lead to a fundamental openness to new horizons. His own way at the side of suffering people and helping them - including his passion, crucifixion and resurrection - contains a global message for salvation and peace, inviting Openness for new horizons. The article ends with reflections on "Teaching the Gospel in the framework of an open Religions Education," in which the author is explaining the consequences for different levels of interreligious teaching and learning.

Pascale Frémond is an interreligious activist with an indigenous background and President of *Religions for Peace* Canada. She writes on "Indigenous Spiritualities. Theological and Spiritual Foundation of First Peoples' Engagement in Interfaith Cooperation." It is important that the traditions of indigenous spiritualities are taken seriously for the inspiration of interreligious dialogue and learning - after having been neglected for a long time. They provide support for the necessary new thinking addressing the survival crisis of our planet with their holistic view of humans and nature. Pascale Frémond presents a helpful vocabulary showing the interconnectedness of all life. She offers images which illustrate the complex and diverse ways in which the "First People's" religions see "social and cultural customs with reference to the sacred and the supranatural." Their conviction of the deep interconnection and sacredness of all that lives and exists should be acknowledged as a major challenge to the theologies of other religions.

Dr. Luigi de Salvia is a medical doctor and mediator. He graduated with a degree in Roman Catholic Theological Culture. His contribution "Interfaith Experience and Personal Religious Identity" can be read as a personal testimony about how he is taking part in the developments of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the general development of religions nationally and globally. He describes his learning path from starting as an agnostic to the meeting with the new interfaith dynamics and finally accepting the responsibility of serving as President of Religions for Peace Italy and

Europe. His article can be seen as complementary to Lilian Sison's paper as a testimony of finding an enlarged religious identity in the framework of Religions for Peace in our publication.

Dr. Pritpal Kaur Ahluwalia has worked as a religious educator in institutions of the Sikh religious community in the United States and now in England. In her article "Equality and Compassion: Reflections on Foundational Principles for Multi-Religious Engagement, from a Sikh *Dharam* Perspective," she argues that the Sikh religion from its origin has multifaith sources - bringing together Hindu as well as Muslim traditions. In the holy scripture - the Guru Granth Sahib - the Oneness of Creation is a leading conviction - as God himself is one. God is present as creative light in all human beings: One God - one humanity. God is in the temple as well as in the mosque. This is the fundamental message of Guru Nanak and also of the other Gurus: "Throughout their lives, the Gurus not only espoused the importance of equality, but demonstrated the importance of it being put into practice." For Sikh believers this means to further common goals for humanity and to be active for them. As an example, Pritpal Kaur illustrates the project of Langar vegetarian food distributed worldwide. She explains that it is a challenge to realize it as a gift at festivals of other religions as well, as done in Birmingham. The self-centered thinking of conservatively oriented believers threatened to make this impossible - and it needed Sikh interfaith religious leaders like Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh to advocate for it and to realize it.

Rabbi Burton I. Visotzky is Professor Emeritus of Midrash and interreligious studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. In his article "For my sake the World was created," he establishes a compelling foundation for openness and far-reaching social and environmental responsibility based on the Tanach/Hebrew Bible and the rabbinic traditions. He starts with explaining the comprehensive meaning of creation in Genesis 1: When man and woman are created in the "image of God." this includes all human beings. He describes how the central commandment "love your neighbor" in the Torah is combined with acceptance and care for the stranger and help also for the personal enemy. He underlines the fruitfulness of the interreligious dialogue in which he has been engaged for decades and offers examples of active care and environmental efforts by Jewish organizations.

It is a fundamental problem that the manifold motivations for an open interreligious encounter, for learning together and from each other and for fruitful cooperation are confronted with narrow minded thinking and strategies in all religions. At present, as in the past, borders are erected and religions and world views of the other are devalued. It is therefore crucial to outline the principles and motivations for openness, tolerance and solidarity at the heart of the religious traditions, in their Holy Scriptures, in spirituality, their cultural, ritual and social life - with arguments as well as with practical encounters, dialogue and cooperation. The contribution of

the Commission members are convincing examples of this future oriented thinking and acting.

At the same time, Martin Affolderbach, as advisor to the board of *Religions for Peace Germany*, asked the author to set up a working group “Interreligious Learning - Peace Pedagogics” which brings together scholars and teaching experts from universities, cities and foundations in order to document their initiatives and projects and to further the exchange on the national level but also in view of the international developments. The group meets 4 times during the year by online video conference. Each time, 2 future-oriented projects were presented and discussed.

As an example which is of high relevance for the national as well as for the international work, the Manuel “Peace Education meets Religion” shall be explained.¹²¹

The subtitle characterizes it as a “Manual for Multipliers”.

The basis for this project is an International Series of Workshops and Qualification Courses, carried out by the Berghof Foundation located in Berlin and Tübingen. The courses were funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and its Department for Religion and Foreign Policy from April 2020 to September 2021. It aims to strengthen the peace education skills and competencies of religious or religiously motivated multipliers working in the formal and non-formal education sector. There have been cooperation partners in several countries - in Israel, Cameroon, Nigeria, France, Germany - as for example the Muslim Scouts or the university of Augsburg in South Germany.

The manual sharpens the view and the sensitivity for conflicts, their sources and their possible solutions - especially if there are religious implications. It works with communication trainings, with pictures and helpful stories and contains a toolbox of methods. A special asset is how the treasure of religious values serves as guidance for the code of conduct and for the training sessions.

This can be illustrated with the worksheet “My guiding values”:

“Take a moment of silence to reflect on your guiding values:

- What are your core values?
- How do you apply them in your daily life?
- What role does religion play in your core values?”

Participants can illustrate this with pictures which are shared with partners, and they can explain to each other what the values mean for their daily life.

¹²¹ C. Bless, D. Nolden: Peace Education meets Religion. Manual for Multipliers. Berghof Foundation. Tübingen 2021. Developed together with Uli Jäger and Elisabeth Naurath.

Another example is the Material: Peace Counts story:

A Muslim and a Christian, both wounded in the civil war in Nigeria, visit the places of damage and explore what it means that peace is divine.

These are just two examples of a rich and manifold book - theoretically and practically, fundamentally and concretely for linking peace education and religion with each other.

14. The Future of Interfaith Peace Education in the Face of Current Global Crises

Since interreligious understanding and education are always also concerned with global dimensions, the current challenges and their future perspectives still need to be considered here.

14.1 Wars and Conflicts as an Enduring Challenge

In recent years, global development has unfortunately been accompanied time and again by violent and unrelenting conflicts, despite all the efforts of the United Nations and many peace movements and interreligious efforts. The fact that patterns of thought and action that were thought to have been overcome in religious and ideological terms have revived and aggravated conflicts has been made particularly visible by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Thus, from the first minutes of the invasion of Ukraine, Patriarch Cyril I, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, positioned himself as an ideological ally of the Kremlin. He described Russia as the "defender of divine right" and the war's opponents as "forces of evil." Cyril I has long viewed President Putin's illiberal, autocratic model of the state as a "miracle of God" that gives the Kremlin a kind of divine-spiritual mandate.

The underlying doctrine of the "Russian World" (Russki Mir) was condemned as heresy by Orthodox theologians worldwide just a few weeks after the outbreak of the war. Konrad Raiser, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, writes on this: ¹²²

On March 13, renowned Orthodox theologians from many countries published a statement on the doctrine of the "Russian World" (Russkii Mir). This day, the 'Sunday of Orthodoxy' and the beginning of Great Lent, was probably chosen very deliberately: Here the Church celebrates the triumph of the true faith over heresies. The declaration, which has already been signed by over 1100 Orthodox theologians, accuses the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church of having developed and spread the false and destructive ideology of the 'Russian World.' It has thus provided President Vladimir Putin with a 'blank check for his nefarious invasion of Ukraine.'¹²³

¹²² https://jungekirche.de/2022/0222/2022_02_33.pdf.

¹²³ The document was signed by Eastern Orthodox theologians and clerics from Greece, Russia, Georgia, Romania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, France, the Czech Republic, US, Lebanon, Germany, Belgium, and from Canada, as well as some theologians from India and Serbia. A few hundred signatories are

This statement declares, among other things:¹²⁴

- The support of many of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate for President Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine is rooted in a form of Orthodox ethno-phyletist religious fundamentalism, totalitarian in character, called *Russkii mir* or the Russian world, a false teaching which is attracting many in the Orthodox Church and has even been taken up by the Far Right and Roman Catholic and Protestant fundamentalists. ...
- The principle of the ethnic organization of the Church was condemned at the Orthodox Council of Constantinople in 1872. The false teaching of ethno-phyletism is the basis for “Russian world” ideology. If we hold such false principles as valid, then the Orthodox Church ceases to be the Church of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Ecumenical Councils, and the Fathers of the Church. Unity becomes intrinsically impossible.
- Therefore, we reject the “Russian world” heresy and the shameful actions of the Government of Russia in unleashing war against Ukraine which flows from this vile and indefensible teaching with the connivance of the Russian Orthodox Church, as profoundly un-Orthodox, un-Christian and against humanity ...

In this form, this declaration deliberately borrows from the Barmen Theological Declaration, which the Confessing Church in Germany adopted in 1934 in opposition to the ideology of National Socialism: In six theses, on the basis of central quotations from the New Testament, the fundamentals of the Christ-centered gospel as a message of salvation that is valid worldwide and overcomes enmity are articulated.

Religions for Peace spoke out in a similarly forceful manner immediately after the Russian aggression. In its declaration of February 28, 2022, it denounces the senselessness of the military use of force as well as the suffering caused by it and calls for assistance and help for all those who have to endure this suffering. At the same time, the movement is trying not to break off the thread of dialogue with Russian Orthodoxy, similar to what the World Council of Churches - in which Russian Orthodoxy is the largest church - has continuously tried to do. Sadly, to date, this has not been successful.

In this context, *Religions for Peace* can point to the fact that, for decades, there have been repeated efforts to have a calming and reconciliatory effect on conflicts across religions, and that there have also been successes - for example, in South Africa, in Sierra Leone, in the former Yugoslavia, and in Mozambique.

members of the Russian Orthodox Church, or from the Russian Orthodox tradition, in particular theologians from Saint Vladimir’s Seminary in New York City or the Lossky family in France.

¹²⁴ <https://publicorthodoxy.org/a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching/>

However, the war in Ukraine, which is often spoken of as a “turning point in time,” now once again raises questions that need to be considered in view of the concerns of non-violent conflict resolution, especially: Do pacifist positions need to be questioned? How can we deal with religious-ideological justification of war and violence? Is there an ethics of military engagement? What does the defense of freedom and independence require? What options remain for negotiation and compromise? What are the tasks for pedagogical prevention? For example, we need to think about the recurrent virulence of anti-Semitism and widespread Islamophobia. What are the specifics for learning in and out of school?

It is obvious that peace education and values education are once again proving their central importance in the current contexts of conflict, which must be considered in all their differentiated aspects. The close connection with the other global challenges - education, economic justice and especially the environmental crisis - must be kept in mind.

14.2 Fridays for Future, Preservation of Livelihoods and the Efforts of Religions

The “Fridays for Future” movement, initiated by Greta Thunberg in Sweden, represents a revolt by the younger generation against the widespread political lethargy that characterizes the commitment to saving the earth’s ecosystem. The movement has subsequently taken hold of people of all generations and cultural and religious persuasions.

In addition to the political Green movement, the topic is also rooted in religious history: the conciliar process brought the churches together in their commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation as a global necessity. The Declaration on Global Ethics also addresses the environmental perspective in the first of the “Four Immutable Directives” - “Commitment to a culture of non-violence and reverence for life.” Additionally, the environmental theme has found its way into schools, curricula and textbooks, including religious education.

However, it was the “Fridays for Future” movement that made the climate crisis a global issue in 2019. The fact that the South Sea islands face the threat of being submerged, that the ice at the poles and on the glaciers is melting, that the oceans are becoming increasingly polluted, that the rainforests - the “lungs of the earth” - continue to be cut down, that drought catastrophes and forest fires alternate, that the forests in the German low mountain ranges are dying, and that fossil fuels continue to be the main source of CO₂ emissions: All of this is presented to politicians and economists with prophetic directness.

How the movement can be accompanied and supported by the religions will be shown by three documents: 1) the encyclical “Laudato si” issued by Pope Francis, 2) the new 5th “Unalterable Directive” of the Declaration on Global Ethics and 3) the environmental initiatives of *Religions for Peace*.

1) The Encyclical “Laudato si” of Pope Francis

The 2015 encyclical “Laudato si”¹²⁵ could be understood as a papal outcry, a prophetic call that exposes the wounds from which the earth, creatures and humanity suffer and at the same time develops visions inspired by Francis of Assisi and his famous Canticle of the Sun. Factually sound and scientifically validated, it analyzes the very predominantly man-made constellations of problems in which trajectories of economic profit, environmental catastrophes and global social injustices are intertwined.

It articulates the alternative sources of faith by which a responsible Christian ethos is fed. It speaks of a “gospel of creation,” of the wisdom of the biblical stories, of God’s fatherly goodness - even in the face of human fallibility, which is not glossed over. Faith is developed as a positive force for responsible life and action. The focus is on the figure of Jesus - how he instructs to respect the beauty of the world and to perceive in everything that exists the reflection of God, who establishes a universal community. The comprehensive hope in life reflected in the message of Jesus’ resurrection, the conviction of a cosmic reconciliation given in him - all these dimensions of faith are commended as spiritual sources of strength for Christians to have a basis for life even in adversity and challenge.¹²⁶ Human beings are called to be the protectors of God’s work.

Against a cover-up of environmental issues driven by profit-oriented egotism, the image of a holistic ecology is sketched, which corresponds to the principles of the common good and an option for the poor. Progress is defined in terms of commitment to a better world and higher quality of life, nourished not least by wonder in the face of the mysteries of creation. Spirituality and ecological education belong close together here. Environmental education should prepare to make the leap towards the mystery that is given in creation and from which an ecological ethic acquires its deepest meaning. The Pope’s invitation to dialogue about the shaping of

¹²⁵ Available via <https://www.dbk.de>. English version on <https://www.vatican.va>

¹²⁶ This is also grounded in Trinitarian reflections and thus in the center of Christian doctrine: The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. Consequently, “when we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity” (Section 238).

the future of our planet is also a didactic challenge that requires implementation in the various fields of education. The children's missionary organization "Die Sternsinger" (The Star Singers) has taken this up in a comprehensive teaching aid for elementary and lower secondary schools¹²⁷ in which children start out from the question "What makes life good and meaningful?" and go on their own journey of discovery for an ecologically responsible way of life. Spiritual exercises can also help along this path:

The series of lessons ends with a meditative element: If we can help Sister Earth, think of the poorest of the poor, become more mindful and frugal, it does us good ourselves: 'My heart warms up' - 'A heart full of joy' ... The students become aware that even small steps and actions can change the world. In a small worship service, they express their trust that God will stand by us and also take pleasure in our good ideas."¹²⁸

The encyclical also focuses on the family: as the place of a holistic education that also includes the dimensions of the aesthetic and beauty.

The interreligious impulse of the encyclical becomes visible not least by the fact that, at its conclusion, there is not only a "Christian Prayer with Creation", but before that also a "Prayer for our Earth" which can thus also be shared by believers of other, primarily monotheistic religions: ¹²⁹

A prayer for our earth

*All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts of*

¹²⁷<https://www.sternsinger.de>

¹²⁸ Sternsinger, 11.

¹²⁹ Laudato Si, Ssection 246.

*those who look only for gain at
the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for
justice, love and peace.*

2) The New 5th “Unalterable Directive” of the Declaration on Global Ethics

Reference has already been made to the ecological impulse in the first of the four “irrevocable directives” in the Declaration on Global Ethics. The urgent development of the environmental question, however, has led to work towards a fifth “irrevocable directive”. It was formulated in a lengthy discussion process and placed under the heading Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth. In 2018, it was adopted by the Parliament of the World’s Religions as a supplement to the Global Ethic Declaration.¹³⁰ As such, it is supported by a broad range of religious communities worldwide. Like the other directives, it is structured in such a way that it begins with a description of the situation, outlines the directive itself (negative - positive) (a), then follows a description of the basic constellation and the basic task for this directive (b), names the pedagogical task (c) and identifies the structural task as well as the required basic ethical attitude towards the respective directive (d).

Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth.

Countless men and women of all regions and religions strive to lead lives in a spirit of mutual harmony, interdependence, and respect for the Earth, its living beings and ecosystems. Nevertheless, in most parts of the world, pollution contaminates the soil, air and water; deforestation and over-reliance on fossil fuels contribute to climate change; habitats are destroyed and species are fished or hunted to extinction. Over-exploitation and unjust use of natural resources increases conflict and poverty among people and harms other forms of life. Too often, the poorest populations, though they have the smallest impact, bear the brunt of the damage done to the planet’s atmosphere, land and oceans.

a. In the religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions of humankind we find the directive: You shall not be greedy! Or in positive terms: Remember the good of all!

¹³⁰ <https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/global-ethic/fifth-directive>.

Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this directive: We should help provide - to the best of our ability - for the needs and well-being of others, including of today's and tomorrow's children. The Earth, with its finite resources, is shared by our one human family. It sustains us and many forms of life, and calls for our respect and care. Many religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions place us within the interdependent web of life; at the same time, they accord us a distinctive role and affirm that our gifts of knowledge and of craft place upon us the obligation to use these gifts wisely to foster the common good.

b. All of us have the responsibility to minimize, as much as we can, our impact on the Earth, to refrain from treating living beings and the environment as mere things for personal use and enjoyment, and to consider the effects of our actions on future generations. Caring and prudent use of resources is based on fairness in consumption and takes into account limits on what ecosystems can bear. Wherever heedless domination by human beings over the Earth and other living beings is taught, wherever abuse of the environment is tolerated, and wherever development surpasses sustainable limits, we have the duty to speak up, to change our practices, and to moderate our lifestyles.

c. Young people should be encouraged to appreciate that a good life is not a life of outsized consumption or amassing material possessions. A good life strikes a balance between one's needs, the needs of others, and the health of the planet. Education about the environment and sustainable living should become part of the school curricula in every country of the world.

d. To be authentically human in the spirit of our religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions, means the following: Our relationship with each other and with the larger living world should be based on respect, care and gratitude. All traditions teach that the Earth is a source of wonder and wisdom. Its vitality, diversity, and beauty are held in trust for everyone including those who will come after us. The global environmental crisis is urgent and is deepening. The planet and its countless forms of life are in danger. Time is running out. We must act with love and compassion, and for justice and fairness - for the flourishing of the whole Earth community.

3) The Environmental Initiatives of *Religions for Peace*

"Protecting the Earth" was one of the five commission areas at the 2019 *Religions for Peace* World Assembly in Lindau. "A religion that is not committed to protecting the environment does not deserve the name" - this is how Rabbi David Rosen put it in his contribution to the plenary session on the conference theme "Caring for our Common Future by Protecting the Earth", elaborating that the biblical commandment to love God obviously also includes love and thus care for the whole of

creation.¹³¹ In a literal sense, the debates about this were fueled by the news of the rampant fires in the Amazon rainforests which went around the world exactly in the days of the World Assembly. This was also made palpable by the representatives of the indigenous religions and peoples of Latin America who attended the World Assembly and spoke to the delegates. There was great unanimity among the conference participants, both representatives of Western religions, Asian religions and indigenous traditions, that creation - our “Mother Earth” - must be seen as something sacred, and thus human beings (and their religious communities) have the important task of acting as guardians and protectors of the earth and of all life in its diversity. The need for sustained commitment in this regard was included in the final declaration of the World Assembly in the form of a self-commitment:¹³²

Sustainable and Integral Human Development and Protecting the Earth: We commit ourselves to human development as set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will foster sustainable and integral human development by promoting justice, inclusive citizenship, and equal opportunities interwoven through the SDGs. We will champion personal accountability for sustainable consumption, the dignity of labor and equitable distribution of wealth. We will honor the insights of science and steward progress in digital technology toward the good of all. We will advance universal access to education. We will continue to promote the role of women and youth in society and their leadership in institutions at the local, national, regional, and global levels. We commit to urgent action against the climate crisis. We will mobilize religious communities to protect the earth - including the promotion of “green congregations”. Leaders and partners in the fight against environmental degradation, our Indigenous brothers and sisters remind us, “when Mother Earth suffers, human beings suffer; when human beings suffer, Mother Earth suffers.” We, guardians and caretakers of earth, endorse the Faiths for Forests Declaration. We commit to raise awareness about tropical deforestation and to educate our religious communities about the dire spiritual and sustainability crisis. We will take action to live ecologically balanced and sustainable lifestyles and advocate for government policies to protect rainforests, defend the rights of Indigenous peoples, and fulfill their pledges to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

This commitment is included in the *Religions for Peace* Strategic Plan 2020-2025 through the establishment of a permanent commission entitled “Nurture a Sustainable Environment” with the following terms of reference:¹³³

¹³¹ This and the following according to G. Hartjen: ‘Der Schutz unserer Erde - eine Aufgabe (nicht nur) für die Religionen.’ RfP Informationen 101/2019, 30-34.

¹³² Declaration on <https://www.partner-religion-development.org>

¹³³ Strategic Plan 15.

Religious communities recognize the dynamic interrelationship and dependency between all forms of life, which has also been substantiated by modern science. RfP will work to ensure that multi-religious collaboration is geared towards nurturing a sustainable environment for all living species.

Activities

1. Support and promote the development of international and/or multi-faith alliances that aim to protect and restore the planet's vital ecosystems and have a meaningful and lasting impact on the health of our global environment and the achievement of sustainable development. Raise public awareness, promote policies and forge partnership between religious and indigenous communities through the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative to protect the world's remaining rainforests and the indigenous peoples serve as their guardians.
2. Mobilize RfP movement to campaign for lifestyle changes to reduce consumption and energy use
3. Deepen engagement with indigenous communities and their elders to learn from and disseminate traditional knowledge and wisdom
4. Educate community leaders and advocate to policymakers on issues of the environment and climate change
5. Utilize data and analysis from research institutions to challenge global financial systems/ major institutions that support environment degradations

The idea and initiative to not only leave it at declarations and individual actions, but to continuously work systematically on globally challenging issues over a longer period of time, which was already in the background of the work of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC), is taken up here and is to be implemented as a guideline for action. This includes the considerations that religions have a transnational presence, that they confront the climate issue in a wide variety of contexts, and that the spirituality of life that is anchored in their traditions can lend a special power to the effort. Without massive advocacy, as in the "Fridays for Future" movement, against one-sided economic interests as well as half-hearted or even denialist politicians, the shift to a consistently environmental course of action will hardly receive the impetus it needs. But this movement is also dependent on the scientific work and the targeted context-related work of civic society groups, which include the religious communities.

This is the occasion to take up this challenge in a major international interfaith conference planned in the tradition of the Nuremberg Forums for the Fall of 2024:

14.3 “Education for Sustainable Development - Spiritual Dimensions. An International, Interdisciplinary, and Interreligious Conference. The 13th Nuremberg Forum 2024

Manfred Pirner introduces the project:

It is a widely shared insight that sustainability implies spiritual dimensions. This is so, because issues of sustainability touch on the fundamental questions of who we are as human beings, how our relationship with nature can be understood, how we want to live, what makes life worth living and how a life worth living can be achieved for all humans on our planet. To put it in another way, the global ecological crises that we are facing today are so dramatic that they require in-depth transformations of individual and collective mind-sets in order to bring about those profound changes that are urgently needed to prevent severest catastrophes. Not least, they require a sense of hope, confidence and solidarity that can support the motivation and endurance in addressing the huge challenges. In this situation, it makes sense to use all cultural sources available that could facilitate such transformations and such motivation - which brings the spiritual (including indigenous) and religious traditions as particularly promising sources into view.

Interestingly, spiritual dimensions of sustainability have been discussed, analyzed and researched by diverse scholars, activists, politicians, business managers as well as cultural and religious leaders from a variety of different disciplinary, cultural or worldview backgrounds. In this wide-ranging discourse, education has repeatedly emerged as a major aspect and important approach, especially concerning the question of how the widely deplored mind-behavior gap can be overcome. Moreover, “Quality Education” is No. 4 of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are intended to be closely interrelated with each other. At the same time, it seems that up to now in the extensive treatment of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in educational science and public discourse the spiritual dimension has not yet received the attention it deserves, especially when it comes to public education at schools or institutions of higher education.

The major aim of the Nuremberg Forum 2024 therefore, is to explore possible intersections between spirituality, sustainability and education. Thus, it wants to promote the integration of spiritual dimensions into ESD as well as the integration of sustainability perspectives into diverse forms of religious education or instruction. In order to achieve this aim, theoretical perspectives and academic research shall be brought into conversation with concepts and experiences from good educational practice.

Epilogue

The global problems have not diminished in the period since this book went to press. In addition to the war in Ukraine and the unresolved conflicts in many countries, refugee flows and the stagnation in climate rescue efforts, there has been the murderous attack by Hamas on Israel with disregard for all humanity and Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip with many thousands of civilian casualties. The hatred stirred up by hardliners on both sides is endangering the security of the entire region and is also leading to divisions in societies in other countries, to a resurgence of anti-Semitism and increased Islamophobia. Right-wing political slogans are booming. What is worse is that hatred is also being nurtured and fueled by various religious leaders.

Where is the power of religions to bring peace? Despite everything, it is alive in many places on earth, often in secret, but also through the visible appearance of coalitions of people of good will within and outside religious communities.

The experiences and stories of successful conflict resolution must be kept alive. Interreligious learning and peace education remain an indispensable contribution to ensuring that the vision of "swords into plowshares" remains the guiding principle.

When "Rabbis for Human Rights" travel to the West Bank to help Palestinian farmers with the olive harvest and protect them from attacks by Israeli settlers, when Muslim and Christian children learn and experience peace between the religions in Schneller schools in Amman and in Khirbet Kanafar in Lebanon, when "Grannies against the Right" demonstrate in German cities, when interfaith teams go into schools to combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, the motto of the Apostle Paul remains unchanged: "Hope does not disappoint. " (Romans 5:5)



Ill. 17 Singing together at the World Assembly in Lindau 2019.



*Ill. 18 German participants at the World Assembly in Lindau 2019.
Peter Bender (Kassel), Inan Aykan (Munich), Johannes Lähnemann (Nuremberg),
Elisabeth Naurath (Augsburg), Gehrt Hartjen (Aachen), Reinhold Mokrosch (Osnabrück),
Christine Herrmann-Wielsch (Nuremberg), Franz Brendle (Stuttgart),
Nicola Towfigh (Münster), Holger Wielsch (Nuremberg) (f.l.t.r.).*

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