

**THE COMMON SEARCH FOR JUSTICE
AND PEACE – A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE
ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE MUSLIM
THINKER ABDULLAH SAEED**

Katja Voges ♦

Pontifical Mission Society, Germany

Abstract

Many Muslim reform thinkers who ground universal human rights in Islamic traditions address questions about the nature and interpretation of the Qur'an and rethink the traditional Islamic understanding of revelation. So does Abdullah Saeed, a Muslim theologian who teaches in Australia. His contextual approach can offer resources for peacebuilding, because it encourages Muslims to develop a dialogue-oriented attitude based on their faith and to stand up for the dignity of every human being without distinction of any kind. In his writings and in his faith, diverse search processes can be discovered. Christians can recognise these processes as valuable and develop common perspectives for dialogue. Abdullah Saeed's theological quest also provides impulses for common human rights engagement. This practical engagement is also to be understood as an ongoing search process. The Christian-Muslim perspective developed in this article encourages us to find and use positive potential for peacebuilding, especially in situations of process and imperfection.

♦ **Katja Voges** studied French, Catholic Theology and Sport at the University of Münster in Germany, and taught at a grammar school until 2015. Later she completed a course on intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Rabat and obtained a licentiate at the Institut Catholique de Paris with a focus on interreligious dialogue and the theology of religions (2015–2016). Since December 2016 Katja Voges has been desk officer for Human Rights and Freedom of Religion at the Pontifical Mission Society missio in Aachen. Her theology dissertation is on Freedom of religion in Christian-Muslim dialogue: *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog. Optionen für ein christlich motiviertes und dialogorientiertes Engagement*, Zurich: TVZ 2021.

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If the role of religion is considered in the context of global wars and conflicts, it becomes obvious that religions can either be sources of conflict or be agents for peace. On the one hand, a lot of violence happens worldwide in the name of religions. Extremist interpretations of religious traditions can violate human dignity. On the other hand, many religions are explicitly based on promoting a message of peace. Both Christian and Islamic traditions speak of the equal dignity of every human being and thus lay the foundation for sincere dialogue, peaceful coexistence and respect for universal human rights. This positive potential of religions must be recognised and used for the benefit of humankind.

The Muslim theologian Abdullah Saeed, whose thinking is presented in this article, pursues this path of dialogue. Based on the resources that exist within Islamic tradition he establishes universal human rights from within Islam by adopting a contextual approach to Qur'anic hermeneutics and by advocating a dynamic understanding of revelation. For him, the recognition of the equal dignity of all people and the sincere dialogue between religions are prerequisites for peaceful coexistence. He develops his approach against the background of his search for a peaceful, just world. From a Christian-theological perspective, this approach includes a special potential for Christian-Muslim dialogue and joint commitment to human rights based on human dignity.¹

Abdullah Saeed

Abdullah Saeed was born into a traditional Muslim family in the Maldives in 1960. At the age of 16, he began his studies in a religious school in Faisalabad in Pakistan, which belonged to the Islamic movement Ahl-i-Ḥadīth that had emerged in northern India. Because he received a scholarship, he subsequently completed a bachelor's degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. In 1986, after nine years in Saudi-Arabia, Saeed continued his studies in Melbourne, Australia, because it was possible for him to combine an academic career with earning a living. He obtained degrees in Middle Eastern Studies, Applied Linguistics and became a Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Studies. Saeed worked

¹This article is based on the doctoral thesis: Katja Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog. Optionen für ein christlich motiviertes und dialogorientiertes Engagement*, Zurich: TVZ, 2021.

as a lecturer and held senior positions in various university institutions. Since 2004, he has held an endowed professorship at the Sultan of Oman Chair in Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne. Saeed is particularly concerned with the relationship between Islam and human rights, with religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Time and again, his research focuses on Islamic law, taking into account the situation of Muslim minorities in Western countries. His concern is to remain faithful to the Qur'anic revelation and at the same time to take into account the needs and living conditions of today's Muslims. His guiding principle is the search for justice and peace. If Muslims want to establish human rights from their faith, then according to Saeed, ethical-legal contents of the Qur'anic revelation in particular must be made accessible to a contextual interpretation.² Saeed counts himself among those he calls "new ijtihadis" or "progressive ijtihadis." These Muslim thinkers emphasise the need for *iğtihād*, the effort of reflection in interpreting the foundational texts of Islam.

Abdullah Saeed publishes mainly in English and rarely in Arabic. According to his own statements, he does receive feedback from Arabic-speaking scholars; however, most of them are based in Western countries. Abdullah Saeed also describes the situation of those who want to show new paths in Islamic thought that is similar to his own thinking. According to Saeed, such authors often publish and work outside the Islamic world, where they enjoy intellectual freedom. They do not enter into a direct exchange with the scholars of the Arab world and rather write for an international audience: "Thus the impact of their work on the Islamic world remains limited."³

Contextual Hermeneutics

According to Abdullah Saeed, only a contextual approach is able to do justice to the message of the Qur'an, which refers repeatedly refers to the realities and circumstances of the tribal, nomadic population of the Arabian Peninsula in the first half of the 7th century. If the Qur'anic message is understood as closely linked to context, as an act of communication addressed to people in a very specific time, then the process of contextualisation must continue in history in order to point out the relevance of the message in changing circumstances and social, political and cultural conditions. Such a

²Cf. Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an. Towards a Contemporary Approach*, Abingdon, Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2005, 147-149.

³Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, 147.

contextual reading of the Qur'an is firmly rooted in the Islamic tradition. According to Saeed, the *maqāṣid al-šarī'a* (aims/purposes of the Sharia), a basic idea of Islamic legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), serves as a theoretical basis for contextual approaches. This principle is based on the conviction that God-given norms change because the meaning and purpose of the legislation is paramount and general utility guides interpretation. In this sense, modern Muslim authors in particular distinguish between the foundations of the Sharia, which are eternally valid, and context-bound individual regulations.⁴

Abdullah Saeed's contextual interpretation of the Qur'an is also based on this idea. He develops a hierarchy of values in the Qur'an and argues for a high flexibility with respect to the interpretation of ethico-legal texts.⁵ According to him, the conclusions of jurists from the first centuries of Islam often remain the standard, even though they do not correspond to the contemporary significance of the Qur'anic texts and to its emphasis on fairness, justice and equity. The hierarchy of values allows for continuity and stability of Islamic traditions while at the same time adapting religiously based instructions for action and regulations to the respective social conditions.

Hierarchy of Values

The theologian recognises fundamental values in the Qur'an such as the protection of life, property and the family. According to Saeed, there is textual evidence for them and they form the basis of universal human rights. So-called protectional values are also among the unchanging foundations. But they are inevitably linked to efforts of interpretation. The focus here is on the need to protect fundamental values through prohibitions, which means giving indications and specific instructions on how to implement these prohibitions legally. Saeed gives the example that theft is prohibited to guarantee the protection of property. In this context, the theologians who work contextually are not least interested in questions of definition, for

⁴Cf. Matthias Rohe, *Das islamische Recht, Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed., revised and enlarged, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011, 17.

⁵Cf. Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, 128-143. Abdullah Saeed does not explain in detail how he develops his hierarchy of values. The Qur'anic principle of good actions (*al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ*) is the basis of his reflections. In the tradition, too, laws were elaborated on the basis of this principle. Thinkers who call for a reinterpretation of the Qur'an take the principle of good actions as a basis and ask which reinterpretations are compatible with it. Abdullah Saeed examines the Qur'an and elaborates categories that correspond to the principle of good actions and do not violate the fundamental principles of the Qur'an.

example, those concerning new forms of theft. The Qur'an only offers individual references to these instructions for the protection of fundamental values.⁶

This does not reduce the importance given to it in the Qur'an, since the strength of the protectional value is largely derived from the fundamental value and the specific command relating to the protectional value itself. Since protectional values are essential to the maintenance of the fundamental values, universality can also be extended to the protectional value.⁷

According to Saeed, other values are highly contextual, such as the implementational values. They include concrete measures to enforce the prohibitions formulated as protectional values in society and thus to protect fundamental values as best as possible. Here, the primary objective is not punishment itself, but the prevention of a certain act that is harmful to the person. For example, punishments that violate human rights can be replaced by other measures that meet the requirements of the integrity of the person or the protection of life.

Other values mentioned and analysed in detail by Saeed are obligatory values. These are fundamental beliefs, similar to the six pillars of faith (*imān*), and essential practices of faith (*'ibādāt*) emphasised by the Qur'an. However, only specifications that are based on the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet without ambiguity are included. These statements are not to be confused with prohibitions that have no Qur'anic basis, such as detailed lists from Islamic legal texts that represent themselves interpretations. Furthermore, Abdullah Saeed lists instructional values that occur in many places in the Qur'an. They are instructions, suggestions, advice and exhortations in very specific situations. In order to define whether such values depend on place, time and circumstances, or whether they are universally applicable, some additional research is needed, which Abdullah Saeed introduces.

The hierarchy of values outlined allows not only for the introduction of new freedoms, but also for the modification and adaptation of already existing rights and duties in accordance with their underlying principles. The contextual approach to Qur'anic hermeneutics encourages Muslims to stand up for the dignity of every human being—regardless of their religious affiliation. It is important to use this potential for peace, especially since, according

⁶Cf. Abdullah Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-first Century*, London: Routledge, 66–67, 91–92.

⁷Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-first Century*, 67.

to the political scientist Mahmoud Bassiouni, a society should have both religious and secular justification structures for a commitment to human rights, peace and justice. In Islamic countries in particular, where religion is a resource of legitimacy and plays a central role in forming identity, a religious justification is important to ensure that social changes meet with acceptance on the part of the faithful.⁸

Dynamic Understanding of Revelation

Abdullah Saeed's understanding of revelation is dynamic and historical, in line with his contextual approach, without questioning the Qur'an as the direct word of God transmitted in Arabic and thus the traditional doctrine. Here the author takes a different approach than reform thinkers who emphasise the prophetic office and the active role of the Prophet in the process of revelation. For Saeed, the process of revelation remains a mystery in the realm of the Unseen (*al-ġayb*), it is beyond human understanding or comprehension; rather, he focuses on the period that begins with the Qur'an being uttered by the Prophet for the first time in Arabic in a human context:

At the time of the Prophet's utterance of revelation in Arabic it begins to function in history. It was spoken by the Prophet to a community who were subject to various social and historical conditions. God's Word was thus revealed to the heart of the Prophet and then made directly relevant to what was happening in the immediate context. Thus, it addressed initially the concerns, norms, values, customs, and institutions of a specific society. More importantly, it was also communicated using a human language, namely, Arabic.⁹

On the one hand, it is important for Abdullah Saeed how Muhammad and the first generation of Muslims understood the revelation and continued to interpret it. He speaks of a text "expanded" by the practice and interpretations of the Prophet and the first companions. On the other hand, he is also concerned about the time afterwards: With the Prophet's death, additions and changes to the Qur'anic text came to an end. However, more and more Muslim communities emerged that did not understand the Qur'an as an abstract message and interpreted it. They incorporated what they understood as the meaning of revelation in their lives and in their specific environment. For Abdullah Saeed, this means that the Qur'anic message must continue to be translated for each context so

⁸Cf. Mahmoud Bassiouni, *Menschenrechte zwischen Universalität und islamischer Legitimität*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2014, 136; Katja Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog. Optionen für ein christlich motiviertes und dialogorientiertes Engagement*, Zurich: TVZ, 2021, 143-144.

⁹Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-first Century*, 57.

that its relevance can be understood. At the same time, certain aspects of revelation are indirectly continued: Those who seek to implement God's Word in their lives are guided and inspired by God in their interaction with the text. "This amounts to a form of 'inspiration' that continues; it is non-prophetic and non-linguistic."¹⁰ In particular, if the Qur'an is understood as an act of communication between God and human beings in which meaning is formed, then the principles and objectives underlying this message must be analysed in detail in order to lead to an actualisation of the message.¹¹ Thus, Saeed's dynamic understanding of revelation provides the basis for his contextual Qur'anic hermeneutics, in which revelation is interpreted anew and in terms of human-friendly and peace-promoting values.

Relationship with Non-Muslims

Abdullah Saeed places a special focus on the relationship between non-Muslims and Muslims as part of his theological reflections. He refers to the theological interpretations of diversity in the Qur'an and argues in terms of a positive recognition of diversity and human freedom. Thus he underlines the importance of a common humanity and a common path to God. In all their diversity, human beings share the same origin and the same search for God: "O people, observe your Lord; the One who created you from one being" (Sura 4:1).¹² The common and the specific are part of God's plan: "If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made humankind one people" (Sura 11:118).

Other verses emphasise the dignity of every human being and the divine spirit that animates all. Biblically described by the idea of the image of God, the Qur'an justifies the special relationship of man to God differently. So God says to the angels with regard to Adam: "'I have to place a vicegerent [*ḥalīfa*] on earth'" (Sura 2:30).

Abdullah Saeed not only highlights the need for appropriate interpretations of religious traditions in order to preserve and defend human dignity as an absolute value, but also believes that the fundamental values of the Qur'an apply equally to all people.¹³ For

¹⁰Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, 41.

¹¹Cf. Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the twenty-first century*, 53–63.

¹²The Qur'anic quotations follow the translations given by Abdullah Saeed.

¹³Cf. Abdullah Saeed, "Creating a Culture of Human Rights from a Muslim Perspective," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium Cultivating Wisdom, Harvesting Peace. Education for a Culture of Peace through Values, Virtues, and Spirituality of Diverse Cultures, Faiths, and Civilizations*, ed. Swee-Hin Toh/Virginia F. Cawagas, Brisbane: Multi-Faith Centre, 2006, 123–127, at 124–125.

Saeed, freedom in religious matters is rooted in respect for the human search for religious truth and promotes the protection of human dignity and just coexistence in a society.

Saeed thus argues for an inclusive view of members of other faith communities—even if he does not justify it theologically in detail. Rather, he refers to the necessity of dialogue in order to enable peaceful coexistence in a globalised world and in plural societies. He understands inclusivism as an attitude of openness that recognises the equality of all people, regardless of their beliefs, and that puts aside any claim to superiority. Moreover, in this perspective every human being is a creature of God and has access to God and to his truth.¹⁴ In contrast, he is critical of exclusivist tendencies: “I argue that such exclusivist views are highly problematic from a Qur’anic and prophetic perspective. They are equally problematic when looked at from the perspective of contemporary concerns and needs.”¹⁵

Corresponding positions had emerged in times when competition and polemics dominated and the political-religious community was threatened. Today, religious freedom must apply to all, because nation states are not based any more on religious identification and citizens can benefit from equality of rights regardless of their religious affiliation.¹⁶

In this sense, Abdullah Saeed also rejects Islamic positions regarding the corruption of previous religions and their “abrogation” by Islam. He insists on an acceptance of the integrity and authenticity of the faith of others in order to enter into dialogue and to listen to the other without being on the defensive.¹⁷ Crucial for this inclusive attitude, according to Saeed, is the changed context, which offers many opportunities to get to know the other, for example due to intellectual and religious freedom, through interreligious dialogue in

¹⁴Cf. Abdullah Saeed, “Making the Islamic Case for Religious Liberty,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 21 (2017) 24–37, at 25.

¹⁵Abdullah Saeed, *Towards a more Inclusive View of the Religious “Other”*. A Muslim Perspective, Annual Peace Lecture of the Dunedin Abrahamic Interfaith Group and the Otago University Chaplaincy, 05 September 2007, accessed 20 April 2022, <<https://www.dunedininterfaith.net.nz/lecture07.php>>.

¹⁶Cf. Abdullah Saeed, “Muslim Debates on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion,” in *Human Rights in Asia*, ed. Thomas W.D. Davis/Brian Galligan, Cheltenham 2011, 25–37, at 35.

¹⁷Cf. Abdullah Saeed, “How Muslims View the Scriptures of the People of the Book: Towards a Reassessment?,” in: *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World. Conflict, Dialogue, and Transformation*, ed. Luca Anceschi et al., New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011, 191–210, 203–206.

increasingly multicultural and multireligious societies, as well as through greater acceptance of individual methods and approaches with regard to religions, texts and interpretations.¹⁸

In some statements, Abdullah Saeed explicitly refrains from a theological interpretation of the terms inclusivist and exclusivist and points out that he distinguishes between attitudes and theological positions. In his argumentation, it is not a matter of clarifying the question of salvation or working out the truth value of other religious traditions. For him, an inclusivist attitude means recognising the equal dignity of all human beings and acting accordingly.¹⁹

The interpretations of the “progressive ijihadis” contribute to such an attitude. They are guided by the fundamental values of Islam, but also by what Muslims and the wider human community consider to be fair, good and reasonable today and in their context.²⁰

Towards the aims of pluralism and living in peace in a pluralist world, the progressive ijihadis believe that Muslims deserve an interpretation of Islam that enables them to restore and in some areas maintain their compassionate, humane, selfless and generous selves in interpersonal relations and exchanges with others.²¹

A Common Search

Those who, from a Christian point of view, reflect on Abdullah Saeed’s Qur’anic hermeneutics, his understanding of revelation and his remarks on the significance of religious diversity will find diverse starting points and impulses for a common search for what strengthens human freedom and dignity. Such a focus on common search processes is obvious on the one hand because Saeed’s theological reflections are in themselves bound to a dynamic of search. On the other hand, search processes are also of particular importance for the Christian understanding of dialogue and for the relation to other religious communities.

The Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* on Religious Freedom of the Second Vatican Council, for example, links the individual right to freedom to the human duty to seek the truth (DH 1-3). The

¹⁸Cf. Abdullah Saeed, “Theological and Cultural Foundations for an Inclusivist View of the Religious ‘Other’ in Islamic Tradition,” in *Religious Peace. A Precious Treasure*, ed. Salim Mohamed Nasir/ M. Nirmala, Singapore, 2015, 42-57, at 47-50; Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog*, 223-225.

¹⁹Cf. Saeed, “Theological and Cultural Foundations for an Inclusivist View of the Religious ‘Other’ in Islamic Tradition,” 42.

²⁰Cf. Saeed, *Reading the Qur’an in the Twenty-first Century*, 71-72.

²¹Saeed, *Towards a more Inclusive View*.

declaration *Nostra aetate* on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions shows that existential questions and search movements unite the community of mankind (NA 1). Those who go one step further and regard the faith of the other as authentic and are convinced that the Holy Spirit works in their own as well as in other religions (NA 2) will feel the need to enter into dialogue with the other and to make their own search for truth a common concern, without relativising their own beliefs. Such a search for truth is not exhausted in the search for faith content, just as, from a Christian perspective, revelation is not exhausted in the transmission of truths of faith, but represents a process of communication. Rather, the search for truth is realised in listening to one's conscience and in common action. This is based on an understanding of revelation as participatory and communicative on both sides, which makes a dialogical relationship possible. At the same time, the search for truth is linked to an impulse for action: Part of this search, which takes place within different religious traditions, is to strive for what puts the protection of human dignity at the centre. Truth then occurs in joint action on the basis of shared ethics, in which both dialogue partners listen to their conscience—and thus, from a Christian perspective, to God (LG 16).²²

Abdullah Saeed's Qur'anic hermeneutics and his understanding of revelation can be connected to these common search processes in many ways. His approach is linked to the claim to recognise the will of God in the respective context. Saeed advocates a dynamic and communicative understanding of revelation that calls for the message of God to be interpreted in light of people's current needs. The fact that a Muslim theologian such as Saeed designates the sense of justice of all people as a central criterion for the interpretation of religious sources is a special encouragement for any interreligious commitment to peace, justice and freedom. His theological-anthropological reflections on the relationship with non-Muslims also lay the foundation for a common search in terms of a common orientation towards values such as justice and peace.

Christians can be inspired by the unconditional search for God's will that shapes Abdullah Saeed's thinking. Saeed's theology encourages us to trace God and his promise for us and our lives in faith and practically in prayer. This search can become a spiritual attitude in which our everyday life is permeated by the question of how we can live as followers of Jesus. Knowing that this search has a

²²Cf. Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog*, 251–261.

unifying dimension, it can become a source of strength and inspiration for interreligious dialogue and for the commitment to peaceful coexistence.²³

A Common Commitment

From a Christian perspective, man's search, guided in the end by God, must always be characterised as an incomplete and provisional one, and also sometimes in need of revision. The theological recognition of search processes can provide the motivation to valorise the search movements and negotiation processes in society.²⁴ Looking at these processes means not only naming and fighting violations of human dignity, but also focusing especially on the situations in which people struggle to defend human dignity. Ultimately, joint human rights engagement is an ongoing search process involving different actors within society. Of course, the Christian perspective aims at a comprehensive safeguarding of human rights. At the same time, however, it is about living with human incompleteness and taking people seriously even in moments of failure and struggle.

Thus, the situation of those who harass and hurt should not be disregarded. This includes analysing factors that prevent people from learning and embracing the values of peace and freedom. In this context, the need for education plays an important role. This includes the question to what extent injustice is done to children by teaching them positions hostile to freedom in their school and religious institutions, and what opportunities the education system offers children to reflect on other views and learn to deal with such differences positively. Finding solutions to these issues and taking initiatives that broaden children's views and enable them to hear other voices and act in a way that leads to peace, justice and dialogue is for the responsibility of members of different religious traditions.²⁵

For the practical commitment to human rights, the process described so far means that all developments on the way to respecting human rights must be taken into account. Processes and transitional phases are to be appreciated – even if they do not yet lead to the comprehensive protection of human rights. Religious views that seek small – perhaps only pragmatic – changes should also be appreciated. In practice, these points of view can also contribute to dignified living conditions and solutions for living together that are

²³Cf. Katja Voges, "Im Dialog mit Abdullah Saeed. Wahrheitssuche als Basis interreligiöser Begegnung," in *Geist & Leben* 1 (2022) 50–55, at 53–55.

²⁴Cf. Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog*, 220–223.

²⁵Cf. Voges, *Religionsfreiheit im christlich-muslimischen Dialog*, 318.

suitable for everyday life. An interreligious human rights discourse that is not built on full consensus can lead to important insights and stimulate developments in religious traditions:

This dialogue has different dimensions. It refers to philosophical justifications, to theological formulations as well as to the practical level of realisations and violations of human rights. Such a dialogue looks at different learning opportunities, contexts and speeds in the appropriation of human rights in a culturally sensitive way and without a sense of arrogance.²⁶

For this reason, it is important to become involved regularly in interreligious cooperation and appreciate it—despite all its shortcomings—as a joint search process. At the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace in August 2019, around 900 religious representatives from all over the world came together in Lindau on Lake Constance in Germany to strengthen interreligious cooperation and to discuss the resolution of current conflicts. In past decades, members of this multi-religious network have mediated in violent conflicts worldwide and initiated peace processes. Many participants felt enriched by their exposure to the different religious backgrounds of those taking part in the Lindau congress and felt empowered to see issues from various angles and to encourage one another in a common commitment to peace and understanding in their respective countries. However, the World Assembly was limited in its ability to convince Muslim religious leaders, for example, to commit themselves directly to far-reaching reform processes in favour of human rights. The Assembly's working paper emphasised the importance of universal human rights based on the recognition of equal human dignity, and suggested ways in which religious communities could contribute to developing the modern doctrine of human rights.²⁷ However, in working groups during the congress, Muslim women in particular expressed their impatience and disappointment with the way Muslim authorities—and to some extent those who were present in Lindau—were showing reluctance for theological reform. Even if these issues could not be solved at the World Assembly, the participants were able to learn from each other by means of interreligious discussion about these points of frustration. The participants were also inspired by certain initiatives

²⁶Hansjörg Schmid, "Menschenrechte als Grundlage interreligiöser Sozialethik. Philosophische, katholisch-theologische und islamische Positionen im Dialog," *Amosinternational* 7, 2 (2013) 3–12, 9–10, English translation K.V.

²⁷ Cf. Religions For Peace: Workbook, 10th World Assembly, Lindau (20–23 August 2019), 18, accessed 30 April 2022, < https://ringforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/rfp_lindau-assembly-workbook.pdf>.

taken by members of other religions to hasten the implementation of their own interreligious projects. Honouring processes does not mean refraining from criticism. It means finding and using positive potential in a situation of imperfection. This is how a report on the World Assembly aptly puts it:

In fact, Religions for Peace cannot do everything at the same time. To make peace between believers, to use the common grounds of religions politically – and to advance the internal modernisation process of the faith communities. The method is: Approach the religious leaders where they are approachable, formulate what they have in common, work together practically – more mutual tolerance will then result by itself.²⁸

²⁸Evelyn Finger, “Zum Frieden kann man konvertieren,” *Time Online*, 28 August 2019, accessed 30 April 2022, < <https://www.zeit.de/2019/36/religions-for-peace-lindau-treffen-religionsfuehrer-frieden-toleranz/komplettansicht>>, English translation K.V.