



Peacebuilding like a tuner of interreligious dialogue in Colombia*

Orlando Solano Pinzón**
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Bogotá, Colombia

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Abstract

This paper seeks to propose the peacebuilding as an activity that favors and facilitates interreligious dialogue in Colombia. The eradication of symbolic violence requires the collaborative work of all citizens and institutions, particularly the religious institution. Religions and their organizations have legal constitutional conditions, which recognize, respect and promote freedom of religion and worship, against which they are expected to continue making a significant contribution to peacebuilding. The golden rule, which is part of the reservation of meaning, present in each of them, can serve as an inspiration to take decisions that lead to the social transformation that peacebuilding requires.

Keywords

Peacebuilding, Interreligious dialogue, Religion, The golden rule, Colombia.

La construcción de la paz como un sintonizador de diálogo interreligioso en Colombia

Resumen

Este artículo busca proponer la consolidación de la paz como una actividad que favorece y facilita el diálogo interreligioso en Colombia. La erradicación de la violencia simbólica requiere el trabajo colaborativo de todos los ciudadanos e instituciones, particularmente la institución religiosa. Las religiones y sus organizaciones tienen condiciones constitucionales legales que reconocen, respetan y promueven la libertad de religión y culto, contra las cuales se espera que continúen haciendo una contribución significativa a la construcción de la paz. La regla de oro, que es parte de la reserva de significado, presente en cada uno de ellos, puede

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** College degree in Philosophy of the Sant Thomas University, Bogota, College degree, Postgraduate degree and Doctoral degree in Theology of Javeriana University. Full-time professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Javeriana University. Member of the academy research group. Orcid: 0000-0003-4446-626X. E-mail o.solano@javeriana.edu.co.





servir de inspiración para tomar decisiones que conduzcan a la transformación social que requiere la construcción de la paz.

Palabras clave

Consolidación de la paz, diálogo interreligioso, religión, regla de oro, Colombia.

Introduction

The theme that seeks to develop the present writing is inspired by the article by Sarah Bernstein entitled: «Is “interreligious” synonymous with “interfaith”? The roles of dialogue in peacebuilding». When Bernstein explains her understanding of interreligious dialogue, establishes two modes by which it is carried out, one that calls interfaith dialogue that takes place between leaders of the different confessions whose emphasis revolves around doctrines and theology, not on relationships¹; and another that denominates interreligious dialogue, which:

take place between people of different religions whose aim is to build relationships in order to improve inter-communal relations and work together for social change and justice. Taking place mainly at grassroots level, this dialogue can take many different forms, the emphasis being on the fostering of relationships².

This second way of understanding the interreligious dialogue, given its novelty for a Latin American context, is very inspiring in the face of the real possibilities of making it possible. Another source of inspiration is the contribution made by Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish, founder of the ICCI (Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel), who from his experience has understood that peacebuilding requires, among other things: Personal growth, group learning, the resolution of controversial problems and action³. These ideas that may well give way to a methodology assume the role of inspiration or lines of action so that the construction of peace does not result in a discourse loaded only with good intentions⁴.

¹ For more information see, Sarah Bernstein, «Is “interreligious” synonymous with “interfaith”? The roles of dialogue in peacebuilding», in *Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: Contemporary Themes and Challenges*, ed Marwan Darweish, Carol Rank and Sarah Giles (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 113-114.

² Sarah Bernstein, «Is “interreligious” synonymous with “interfaith”? The roles of dialogue in peacebuilding», 108. According to Bernstein «Whereas interreligious dialogue occurs between individuals, participants in interfaith dialogue represent their faiths and speak on behalf of their faiths (...) Interfaith dialogue is therefore about theology, not about relationships». Sarah Bernstein, «Is “interreligious” synonymous with “interfaith”? The roles of dialogue in peacebuilding», 113-114.

³ For more information on the mission of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), see, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/israel-palestine/peacebuilding-organisations/icci/>

⁴ Dr. Kronish expresses his understanding of the importance of dialogue between Abrahamic religions in Jerusalem in the following terms: «Judaism, Christianity and Islam all preach peace. Too often, however, they are corrupted to fuel hatred and violence. In Israel today, growing numbers in all three faith communities are coming to see that their beliefs must contribute to the solution, not to the problem. They understand that faith has an active role in building a civil, tolerant society and in marginalizing those who would destroy it». Ron Kronish, «Interreligious Dialogue in the Service of Peace», *Cross Currents* 58, no. 2 (2008): 224.





Faced with the question of the possibility of applying the aforementioned inspirational references, it was considered opportune to focus attention on the issue of peacebuilding, because it is an important problem that Colombia is facing. Specifically, it is pertinent to remember that on September 26, 2016, at the Colón Theater in Bogotá, the signing of the «Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a stable and lasting Peace» was signed between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - FARC. This firm closed a process that took more than five years of dialogues, first in a reserved manner and then through a public phase, with the support of two guarantor countries (Norway and Cuba) and two accompanying countries (Venezuela and Chile)⁵.

This signing meant the close of the «end of the conflict» phase and the opening of a new phase that aims to build a stable and lasting peace in Colombia. To carry out this objective requires the participation of all citizens, communities and different social and cultural institutions, particularly religions, around their construction. From this brief frame of reference, the contribution of this article consists in raising the challenge of Peacebuilding as activity around which interreligious dialogue in Colombia can be stimulated. To give an account of this, at first an approach will be made to the peacebuilding category and the implications it assumes in a secular state in relation to interreligious dialogue, later it will be referred to the importance of the contribution of religions to the peacebuilding, to end will be evoke the golden rule present in religions as a source of inspiration for actions of reconciliation, coexistence and solidarity, that help the peacebuilding.

1. Peacebuilding and the implications in a secular state in relation to interreligious dialogue

If we do not have peace,
it is because we have forgotten
that we belong to each other.
Mother Teresa⁶

To give an account of the meaning of the category «peacebuilding», it is necessary to clarify first that the basis for peace negotiations with the FARC-EP is the understanding of violence coined by Johan Galtung, who establishes three forms of violence, namely: direct, structural and cultural or symbolic violence. In relation to direct violence, it affirms that it is «physical and/or verbal, it is visible in the form of behaviors»⁷. «Direct violence is an event; structural

⁵ For more information see, Jorge Orlando Melo, «Resumen Del Acuerdo de Paz», *Revista de Economía Institucional* 18, 35 (2016): 319-337.

⁶ Costello Gwen, *Spiritual Gems from Mother Teresa* (London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008), 10.

⁷ Jhon Galtung, *Tras la violencia, 3R reconstrucción, reconciliación, resolución: afrontando los efectos visibles e invisibles de la guerra y la violencia* (Bilbao: Gernika Gogoratuz, 1998), 15.





violence is a process with its ups and downs, and cultural violence is a constant, a permanence»⁸.

Structural violence is intrinsic to the social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world. According to Galtung, this type of violence

it comes from the social structure itself: between human beings, between groups of human beings (societies), between groups of societies (alliances, regions) in the world. And within human beings there is indirect, unintentional, internal violence that emanates from the structure of the personality. The two main forms of external structural violence are well known from politics and economics: repression and exploitation. Both acts on the body and the mind, but they are not necessarily intentional⁹.

Regarding the cultural or symbolic violence, the author explains it as «those aspects of culture, the symbolic scope of our existence (materialized in religion and ideology, language and art, empirical sciences and formal sciences –logical, mathematics–), which can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence»¹⁰.

With the signing of the peace agreements, direct violence was ended and now it is necessary to overcome the structural and cultural or symbolic violence that requires reconciliation as a fundamental step for peacebuilding. Up to this moment, within the searching of the peace, the Peacekeeping helped to separate the belligerent forces in conflict, later the effort peacemaking it led to the formalization and signature of the agreements. At this moment, peacebuilding involves of overcoming the cultural or symbolic violence, starting the path of reconciliation from the knowledge of the other, the recognition of their condition and the possibility of building dialogue for the action of forgiveness. In addition, overcome the contradictions that are at the root of the conflict, addressing the structural and long-term problems with appropriate public policies that allow the eradication of structural violence.

In this order of ideas, when addressing the understanding of peacebuilding, the first thing is to assume it as a dynamic process that gathers and manages all proposals and processes that aim to strengthen the capacity for dialogue, tolerance, prevention and resolution of conflicts without resort to any type of violence, so that the conditions for healthy coexistence, stability and human fulfillment can be given.

This first approach is complemented by the definition of peace construction developed by Diana Francis, who conceives the construction of peace as understood in the transformation of conflicts,

⁸ Jhon Galtung, *Violencia cultural* (Bilbao: Gernika Gogoratuz, 2003), 12.

⁹ Galtung, Jhon, *Paz por medios pacíficos. Paz y conflicto, desarrollo y civilización* (Bilbao: Gernika Gogoratuz, 2003), 20.

¹⁰ Jhon Galtung, *Violencia cultural*, 7.





begins from the worldview in which interdependence is the point of departure, orientating people and institutions towards peacebuilding as cooperation (...) An orientation to life that is grounded in the notion of interdependence will lead to the values of respect and care for all (...) If one's understanding of relationships is based on a sense of interdependence, and one's primary goal is the well-being of all, power will be conceived chiefly in terms of the ability to achieve that goal cooperatively, through the pooling of resources¹¹.

This understanding of peacebuilding in terms of dynamic process and with a character of interdependence favors that all the actions that are carried out promote, as Kronish pointed out, personal growth, group learning and the resolution of controversial problems that will always be present in the process. So far in the process of building peace since the signing of agreements, one of the issues that has generated most controversy has been «transitional justice», whose aim is to find a middle ground between the requirement of punishment for members of the FARC and the need to grant a broad amnesty in exchange for the renunciation of armed struggle. According to Melo, this application of justice

seeks to meet the minimum requirements provided by international bodies and courts, which reiterate the need to give the victims of war or conflict a minimum satisfaction in three aspects: that they know what happened (truth), that there is a minimum acceptable punishment (justice) and that there are forms of compensation, moral or material, for the victims (reparation)¹².

It is very likely that the underlying problem is not justice itself, nor concern for the victims that constitute the central axis of transitional justice processes and post-conflict policies, but rather that the application of justice demand to know the truth, against which there are people who have political and economic power who do not want to be known. In spite of this, the process advances and the need spiritual strength to heal and make possible reconciliation between the citizens of the country. As Murithi points out, «There are some things that only governments can do, such as negotiating binding agreements. But there are some things that only citizens outside government can do, such as changing human relationships»¹³.

Faced with the challenge of peacebuilding, John Paul Lederach, a prominent professor at the University of Notre Dame, highlights two principles:

(1) increasing the participation of people affected by the conflict, placing a high value on the local people to create momentum, and not relying on people in political positions; and (2) a notion of responsibility –that we are all responsible, not just leaders for the structure they create– and that all people need to see themselves as actors. The challenge,

¹¹ Diana Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding. A call to global transformation* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 73-74.

¹² Jorge Orlando Melo, «Resumen Del Acuerdo de Paz»: 321.

¹³ Tim Murithi, *The ethics of peacebuilding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3.





as he outlines it, is how to link these grassroots efforts to high level efforts, so one doesn't just end up with nice programs with no broad impact¹⁴.

To facilitate participation and awareness of responsibility in peacebuilding, it is necessary for the government to strive to defend the freedoms and rights of the people. Particularly, as Durham and Clark point out,

Freedom of religion or belief is fundamental to the structure of peacebuilding. Without it, no society can be fully just, and processes aimed at achieving stable and lasting peace are necessarily incomplete¹⁵.

Although religious freedom is only one part of the implications of the construction of just and lasting peace, it is central to the intention of this writing. Moreover, when in the whole peace process the religions present in the country have sought to make their contribution. Colombia is a secular state, but since 1991 the right to freedom of religion and worship has been present in article 19 of the National Constitution, which was subsequently regulated by Statutory Law 133 of 1994. In 2018 came to the public light the technical document of Integral Public Policy of Religious Freedom and of Religious, that requires a strong work of diffusion in all the country. Among other contributions, the document formally recognizes religions and their organizations as managers of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation, moreover,

addresses the recognition of social work and contribution to forgiveness, reconciliation and peace that religious entities, their organizations and religious leaders develop throughout the national territory, as well as their legitimate participation in official peacebuilding bodies; Similarly, it seeks to make visible the violations of their rights with a view to recognition as victims of armed conflicts in Colombia¹⁶.

As an additional contribution, on February 14 of this year a meeting with more than 300 religious leaders took place in the Governorate of Bolívar, where the signature of Decree 23 was formalized, by means of which the departmental freedom table was created. religious and cult¹⁷. This legal framework that seeks to guarantee religious freedom, in turn, is giving an orientation to what is expected of all the religions that are found throughout the national geography to contribute to peacebuilding. In this sense, religions are expected to be

¹⁴ Quoted by Judy Kuriansky, *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians* (Praeger: Westport Conn, 2007), 239.

¹⁵ Cole Durham Jr. and Elizabeth Clark, «The place of religious freedom in the structure of peacebuilding», In *Religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, ed Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby and David Little (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 281.

¹⁶ Ministerio del Interior. Asuntos religiosos. Política Pública Integral de libertad religiosa y de cultos. Documento técnico, Decreto 437 del 2018, accessed February 27, 2019, https://asuntosreligiosos.mininterior.gov.co/sites/default/files/cartilla_politica_publica_integral_de_libertad_religiosa_y_de_cultos.pdf.

¹⁷ For more information on this news see, Sala de prensa del Ministerio del Interior, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://asuntosreligiosos.mininterior.gov.co/sala-de-prensa/noticias/con-nuevo-decreto-bolivar-avanza-por-la-libertad-religiosa-y-de-cultos>.





promoters of forgiveness, reconciliation and develop actions that, from their own point of view, guarantee the just and lasting peacebuilding.

The Integral Public Policy of Religious Freedom and Religion by focusing the contribution of religions present in the country in terms of peacebuilding, makes possible what Bernstein mentioned at the beginning of this paper in relation to the second way of understanding and doing the interreligious dialogue, in terms of to helping to build relationships to make work together based on social changes, which in the case of Colombia corresponds to peacebuilding.

To close this section it is worth remembering that, although it is clear that the construction of peace requires the respect of freedoms, among which is religious freedom, in the case of Colombia it has a space in the National Constitution and has been reflected in a comprehensive public policy of religious freedom and worship. This legal framework is important to promote the recognition and equity of all religious groups and movements in the governmental sphere. But to facilitate interreligious dialogue, other references are required that allow not only state recognition, but also recognition among different religions as valid interlocutors to make such dialogue viable. The above, with the aim of avoiding any outbreak of violence, which ends up being contrary to the peaceful spirit that is at the base of all religions and which, according to Gopin, has led a good number of professionals, academics and peace activists to consider that «religion is the problem from which they try to help people escape»¹⁸.

For this reason, it is pertinent to refer to the «Declaration Nostra Aetate» of the Second Vatican Council. The reason is due to the fact that in a country where 90% of the population is Christian, the contributions given in this declaration encourage the willingness to recognize religions as valid interlocutors against the possibility of contributing significantly to peacebuilding. It is not about making to analyze the document but simply to evoke the most important statements:

(1) Men expect from different religions the answer to the hidden enigmas of the human condition, which today, like yesterday, intimately touch their hearts (...) (2) Thus, in Hinduism, men investigate the divine mystery and express it through the inexhaustible fecundity of myths and with the penetrating efforts of philosophy seek they liberation of the anguish through the modalities of ascetic life, through deep meditation, or seeking refuge in God with love and trust. In Buddhism, according to its various forms, the radical insufficiency of this changing world is recognized and the way is taught by which men, with devout and trusting spirit, can acquire the state of perfect liberation or supreme enlightenment. So also, the other religions that are in the world, strive to respond in various ways to the restlessness of the human heart, proposing ways, that is, doctrines, norms of life and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. Consider with sincere respect the ways of working and living,

¹⁸ Marc Gopin, «Negotiating Secular and Religious Contributions to Social Change and Peacebuilding», in *Religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, 356.





the precepts and doctrines that, however much they disagree with what she professes and teaches, not infrequently reflect a glimpse of that truth that enlightens all men. (3) If in the course of the centuries there have been many disagreements and enmities between Christians and Muslims, the Sacred Council exhorts everyone that, forgetting the past, seek and promote united social justice, moral goods, peace and justice, freedom for all men (...) 5. We cannot invoke God, Father of all, if we refuse to conduct ourselves fraternally with some men, created in the image of God. The relationship of man to God the Father and to other men his brothers are so united, as the Scripture says: «He who does not love has not known God» (1 Jn 4,8)¹⁹.

The aforementioned text integrates very well in the logic of the ideas that have been presented so far. It is important to emphasize the clarity of the statement in relation to the contribution expected from religions in order to respond to the enigmas inherent in the human condition. In religions, there is a reserve of sense capable of guiding and inspiring the processes of human search and fulfillment, which in the global and particularly Colombian context, goes through ensuring the common good, recovering the values that allow us to live authentically human, ensure justice social and peacebuilding.

2. Contribution of religion to the peace process in Colombia

Whoever saves another human being,
It is as if he had saved the whole world.
From the Talmud²⁰ and the Koran²¹

The way in which the Integral Public Policy of Religious Freedom and Worship understands the contribution of religion to the construction of peace, did not arise from a theoretical abstraction but the result of the silent and sometimes invisible work of the different groups and religious movements, which in the different regions of the country have gone from words to actions conducive to making peace possible. Actions have taken many forms and at

¹⁹ Conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate*, accessed February 21, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_sp.html. Pope Francis at the hearing on the occasion of the celebration of the fifty years of promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* affirmed the following: «The dialogue we need can only be open and respectful, and then it is fruitful. Reciprocal respect is a condition and, at the same time, the end of interreligious dialogue: respecting the right of others to life, to physical integrity, to fundamental freedoms, that is to say, freedom of conscience, thought, expression and religion. The world looks at us believers, exhorts us to collaborate with each other and with men and women of goodwill who do not profess any religion, asks us for effective answers on numerous topics: peace, hunger, misery that afflicts millions of people, the environmental crisis, violence, in particular the one committed in the name of religion, corruption, moral degradation, the crisis of the family, of the economy, of finance and especially of hope». Francisco. The interreligious general audience on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the conciliar declaration «*Nostra Aetate*». St. Peter's Square Wednesday, October 28, 2015, accessed March 2, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151028_udienza-generale.html.

²⁰ Abraham Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: Dutton & Co, 1949), 222.

²¹ Quran 5, 32, in Quran in English, accessed on March 17, 2019, <https://www.clearquran.com/005.html>.





different levels, both at the level of the hierarchies and at the level of the bases²². Next, we will indicate some examples of the actions that accompanied the peace process until the signing of the agreements (Peacekeeping - Peacemaking), which marks the beginning of peacebuilding²³.

The first example corresponds to an investigation carried out by Randy Sánchez entitled «The Spirit of resistance: religion and peacebuilding in the Association of rural workers of Carare (ATCC)»²⁴. This research gathers the experience of resistance of a group of peasants, Afro-descendants and churches: Catholic, Pentecostal, Adventist and Evangelical, whose region was hit by violence and found in the shared reading of the Bible a source of inspiration to assume a behavior of resistance oriented to make possible the right to life, peace and work.

The nonviolent resistance of this association was articulated from five key positions: 1. Rejection of armed actors, 2. Respect for life, 3. Respect for peasant autonomy against the control exercised by armed actors, 4. No enemies are recognized and 5. Renunciation of any action that generates violence²⁵.

Another example is the Bible, Forgiveness and Reconciliation Project, which brings together grassroots communities of different Christian groups, who in 2015 at a meeting to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Dei Verbum Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, agreed to prepare themselves to the action of the Spirit in function of the conjuncture of the peace process, from the reading of the Word.

Among the actions carried out are indicated:

During 2016 the communities deepened biblically the sense of forgiveness and reconciliation through meetings, workshops, schools, retreats, celebrations, readings, etc. At the end of the year and taking into account what was learned in the community, a one-week course was held in Bogotá to share, study, reflect, celebrate and project towards concrete processes in each of the communities. It was a question of assuming in

²² Joan Hernández Serret mentions three phases in the participation of religious communities in the Peace Accords: the first corresponds to the moment prior to the signing of the agreements, the second in the process of the peace agreements, and the last, after the signing of the peace accords. For more information on the description of the phases, see, Joan Hernández Serret, «La contribución social de las comunidades religiosas en los procesos de pacificación: el caso de Colombia y la firma de los acuerdos de paz», en *Religión, libertad y seguridad*, coord Francisca Pérez-Madrid (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2017), 253-257.

²³ The testimonies to which mention will be made can be found within the contributions of religious peacebuilding described by Montserrat Gas-Aixendri, in terms of guidelines for action, leadership, and promotion of social justice. For more information on the description of guidelines for action, see, Montserrat Gas-Aixendri, «Libertad religiosa y peacebuilding. El papel de las religiones en la consolidación de la paz», en *Religión, libertad y seguridad*, 221-247.

²⁴ Randy Sánchez, *El Espíritu de la resistencia: religión y construcción de paz en la Asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare (ATCC)*, (Trabajo de Grado para optar por el título de Politólogo (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2016), 1-53.

²⁵ For more information, see Randy Sánchez, *El Espíritu de la resistencia: religión y construcción de paz en la Asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare (ATCC)*, 40-49.





each one of them the service of reconciliation as Paul proposes in the second letter to the Corinthians - 2Co 5, 18.

In this perspective, progress was made during 2017. Each community made its own way to take actions itself as helpful of reconciliation. In addition to the text to the Corinthians, they were supported by complementary texts that gave them more tools for the reconciling work that was concretized in «processes» within themselves, with the participating individuals and families, with the neighborhoods, churches and local organizations²⁶.

The following example corresponds to an investigation carried out by William Elvis Plata Quezada and Jhon Janer Vega Rincón, published in 2015 whose title is «Religion, Colombian armed conflict and resistance: a bibliographical analysis». In the second part of the conclusions of the investigation, it addresses the issue of religion as a promoter of social change, peace and resistance to violence. According to Plata y Vega, «The lines of work on this subject in Colombia can be classified as follows: Religion, development and social change; religion and revolution; Religion, peacebuilding and resistance to violence»²⁷.

Within the varied description that is made of the different publications on the aforementioned topics, due to the limited space it will only mention one related to the work done by the Mennonites, who have been precursors in issues of pacification and resistance to violence in Colombia. In the description, Plata and Vega point out:

It is a Protestant church characterized by its historic and determined commitment to the practice of active nonviolence. In Colombia, they are a small group within the universe of believers, but they have manifested themselves very active and visible in recent decades, especially through actions carried out by their NGOs such as Justapaz or World Vision. The first is precisely the author of a series of texts that reflect on experiences of peace carried out by Protestant groups on the Caribbean Coast, which have followed an ingenious program for nonviolent resistance called Churches Sanctuaries of Peace. They offer a biblical-theological preparation for those who wish to follow this program and this line of action. In general, the books insist, initially, on exposing the framework of violence in Colombia and its impact on non-Catholic Christian churches. The idea is to argue among believers the construction of peace as a mission and duty of every Christian and seek to diminish the resistance that is generated among these churches, around active socio-political commitment. The texts systematize the lessons derived from the «Sanctuaries of peace» model that has led to peace dialogues with armed actors²⁸.

Among the people who have excelled in the country for their tireless work in favor of peace is the Jesuit priest Francisco de Roux Rengifo, who founded and directed the Magdalena

²⁶ Fernando Torres Millán, *Proceso biblia, perdón y reconciliación 2015-2017*, accessed February 28, 2019, <https://kaired.org.co/archivo/3528>.

²⁷ William Elvis Plata Quezada y Jhon Janer Vega Rincón, «Religión, Conflicto Armado Colombiano y Resistencia: Un Análisis Bibliográfico», *Revista Anuario de Historia Regional y de Las Fronteras* 20, 2 (2015): 132.

²⁸ William Elvis Plata Quezada y Jhon Janer Vega Rincón, «Religión, Conflicto Armado Colombiano y Resistencia: Un Análisis Bibliográfico», 146.





Medio Development and Peace Program, and is one of the most respected in peasant issues and peacebuilding in the country²⁹. In an-interview with him, when asked how to apply the concepts of peace, truth and reconciliation from the individual, his response was:

Social peace begins with ourselves. Having a heart in peace is possible if we first understand that we have to dedicate ourselves a few days to silence, so that we can listen to the deepest inside of us. This helps us to accept ourselves as we are and invites us to be compassionate to others, allows us to understand our fragility and vulnerability, and helps us to understand that others are also fragile and vulnerable.

In the inner silence deep peace begins. But this year, above all, going after the truth is absolutely important. First the truth of ourselves (...) and then be able to look at the history of Colombia, especially in the last 50 years. I think that only from there, when you have the courage to see painful things and happy things, bad things and good things, can you build something different³⁰.

These brief examples of the incidence of religion in the promotion of actions of pacification and resistance to violence are in line with the approach of Carter and Smith for whom «Making peace constitutes one of the greatest leadership challenges of the new millennium. The world's religions have the potential to make a unique and substantial contribution to that great goal. They all advocate peace»³¹. In addition, these examples that account for the incidence of religion in the peace process in Colombia, allow for a better understanding of the role assigned to it in the Integral Public Policy of Religious Freedom and Worship, as an important social actor for the building a just and lasting peace. As Kalayjian and Paloutzian point out, «Forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult. However, they may be the keys to peace and our survival»³². In this task, the contribution of religion can help make a difference.

3. The golden rule «Do to others what you would like them to do with you», «Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you», like a tuner element of interreligious dialogue based on peacebuilding

Religious peacebuilding is not always in tune with the broader objectives of peacebuilding.

Atalía Omer³³

²⁹ For more information about this character's profile, see lasillavacia, Francisco de Roux Rengifo, accessed February 26, 2019, <https://lasillavacia.com/quienesquien/perfilquien/francisco-de-roux>.

³⁰ Francisco de Roux, La paz viene de adentro, accessed on March 1, 2019, <https://jesuitas.co/la-paz-viene-de-adentro-p-francisco-de-roux-sj-22151>.

³¹ Judy Carter and Gordon Smith, «Religious Peacebuilding from Potential to Action», in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, ed Harold Coward, and Smith Gordon (New York: University of New York Press, 2004), 99.

³² Ani Kalayjian and Paloutzian Raymond, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Psychological pathways to Conflict Transformation and Peace Building* (New York: Springer, 2009), VII.

³³ Atalía Omer, «Religious Peacebuilding. The Exotic, the Good, and the Theatrical», in *Religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, 4.





The ideas that will be presented below are not intended to offer a comprehensive analysis of the understanding of the golden rule in different religions. The intention is to show that this rule is present in them and has a direct reference to reciprocity, which could be a principle according to which interreligious actions can be measured for peacebuilding. Also, the Golden Rule can help to see others not as rivals but as other fragile human beings, called to building relations ship of coexistence. NGOs and organizations of different religions can find in the Golden Rule a bridge that allows joining forces and takes advantage of differences to take on from broader perspective actions aimed at promoting, social justice, reconciliation and forgiveness in function of peacebuilding.

The sources that will be cited will allow those interested to go into the more detailed analyses, which account for the variety of approaches and comprehensions about the Golden Rule.

3.1. Judaism

The Jewish religious system established in the Israelite Scriptures as interpreted by the rabbinical sages of the first six centuries C.E. gives an account of the reference to the golden rule in moral and ethical terms. Mention in moral terms is found in the Torah, particularly in the book of Leviticus, as follows: «Love your neighbor as yourself» (Lev.19.18). Levine in his study on the golden rule points out that chapter 19 of this book begins with the words «You will be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy», with which «This mandate is addressed to the entire community of Israel, and expresses what in theological circles is known as imitatio dei “emulation of God”»³⁴. That the golden rule is a few verses later, allows us to understand it as a possibility to participate in the holiness of God, which is proper to the search of all believer. Moreover, according to Neusner, «Classical Judaism holds that the biblical commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18), defines the heart of the Torah, that is, what we should call the essence of Judaism: its ethics and its theology»³⁵.

Regarding the ethical understanding of the golden rule, the example refers to the rabbinical interpretation. Neusner refers to the first-century sage, Hillel, who addresses the Golden Rule in terms of: «What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the totality of the Torah; Everything else is elaboration»³⁶. Both the positive version of Leviticus and Hillel's refusal refer to the dynamic of reciprocity, which is essential for the purposes of interreligious dialogue and the peacebuilding. Levine, referring to reciprocity, points out that «in biblical literature can be traced in several ways, both as regards relations on the human level, and as a factor in the humandivine encounter»³⁷. To account for this, it refers to biblical passages such as: the story of Joseph Gn 37-50, the story of Ruth (Rt 1-4), the wise counsel of Proverbs (Pr 3, 27-34), some sections of the History of Job (Jb 34, 10-12) and Psalm 15.

³⁴ Baruch Levine, «The Golden rule in Ancient Israelite Scripture», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, ed Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton (London: Continuum, 2008), 12.

³⁵ Jacob Neusner, «The Golden Rule in classical Judaism», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, 57.

³⁶ Jacob Neusner, «The Golden Rule in classical Judaism», }, 57.

³⁷ Baruch Levine, «The Golden rule in Ancient Israelite Scripture», 14.





3.2. Christianity

As Joshua Schwartz points out, «The material life of Jesus and his early followers was the material life of a Jew, and mostly a rural Jew. For the most part there was nothing unique in this and the everyday life of the Jews was not that different than that of their non-Jewish neighbors»³⁸. For this reason, when approaching the understanding of the golden rule in Christianity, it is opportune to evoke the relation it keeps with Judaism as the Torah is part of the canonical literature of Christianity.

The Gospels present Jesus emphasizing the commandment of love, not only to the neighbor (Mt 22.34-40; Mk 12.38-34; Lk 10.27-28), but also to the enemies (Mt 5.43-48; Lk 6, 27-36), doing to everyone, what we would like them to do to us (Mt 7.12, Lk 6.31). The enunciation is the following:

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, you also do to them; because this is the Law and the Prophets. Mt 7.12.

«Teacher, what is the greatest commandment of the Law?» He said to him: «You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is similar to this one: You will love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets». Mt 22.37-40.³⁹

The two references quoted from the Gospels give an account of the relationship of Jesus as a Jew, with the enunciation that was already made of the book of Leviticus, on the love of God and love of neighbor as himself. According to Chilton,

Jesus innovation lay in his claim that the two were indivisible. Love of God was love of neighbor, and vice versa. Because, according to Jesus, God's love was transforming the world –thereby manifesting «the kingdom of God» (malkutha' d'Elaha') in Jesus' Aramaic language– and every person, friendly or not, needs to be seen in the context of God's presence⁴⁰.

3.3. Islam

In the Qur'an, the reference to compassion and mercy of God for humanity is very recurrent. According to Homerun,

Every human being has a covenant with God to believe in Him and to do what is right, and God has sent prophets and scripture to guide humanity to correct belief and proper

³⁸ Joshua Schwartz, «Jesus the “Material Jew”», in *The Jewish Jesus Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed Zev Garber (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2011), 61.

³⁹ Bible of Jerusalem, Desclée de Brouwer, 2009, accessed March 2, 2019, <http://www.pastoral-biblica.org/biblia-de-jerusalen-consulta-en-linea.html>.

⁴⁰ Bruce Chilton, «Jesus, the Golden rule, and its application», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, 78-79.





behavior. Therefore, the Qur'an urges people to be mindful of the fact that while they are free to believe and do as they like, the standards of judgment belong to God⁴¹.

The enunciation of the golden rule varies, but basically the same intentionality of care for the other is maintained. The following text of the Qur'an quoted by Homerin, gives an account of it:

Righteousness is from believing in God, the last day, the angels, the scriptures and the prophets, and from giving, out of love for Him, to one's relatives, orphans, the wretched, travelers, and beggars, and [righteousness is] from freeing slaves, undertaking prayers, giving alms, fulfilling covenants that were pledged, and from patience in adversity. (Q. 2.177)⁴².

The previous text in the list of actions that points allows to identify a particularity in the reference to the golden rule in Islam, in terms of calling for self-examination and religious transformation, which requires humility to favor the recognition of the humanity of other Humans⁴³. This particularity that assumes the form of enunciating the golden rule, apart a new element to the attitude of reciprocity that is part of the Jewish and Christian formulation, humility to recognize the humanity of other human beings. Humility, understood in this way together with reciprocity, serves as a foundation for making interreligious dialogue possible in terms of peacebuilding.

3.4. Buddhism

The golden rule in Buddhism is found in the Dhammapada, which is a book that contains an anthology of verses attributed to Buddha and preserved by the Theravada traditions of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia⁴⁴. The rule is enunciated in two ways: the first in a conditional and relative manner, which Hallisey cites in the following terms:

'All are frightened of the rod. Of death all are afraid. Having made oneself the example, One should neither slay nor cause to slay. Dhammapada X.1, vs. 129⁴⁵.

The second is enunciated in positive terms from a practical perspective of moral appropriation and is found in the Visuddhimagga, a fifth-century manual for monks. Said manual was composed by the renowned Theravadin thinker, Buddhaghosa. The example that Hallisey cites is the following:

⁴¹ Th. Emil Homerin, «The Golden rule in Islam», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, 100.

⁴² Th. Emil Homerin, «The Golden rule in Islam», 101.

⁴³ For more information see, Th. Emil Homerin, «The Golden rule in Islam», 104.

⁴⁴ For more information see, Kristin Scheible, «The formulation and significance of the Golden rule in Buddhism», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, 116-128.

⁴⁵ Charles Hallisey, «The Golden Rule in Buddhism», in *The Golden Rule. The ethics of reciprocity in world religions*, 136.





«I am happy,» and «just as I desire to be happy, just as I am averse to suffering, just as I desire to live, as I desire not to die, so do other beings». So having made himself into the example, a mind that has happiness and concern for other beings arises. This method is made clear by the following statement by the Lord: Having gone all around the world with the mind, No one more dear than myself was ever found. It's the same for others, the self is dear, that's why anyone who loves himself will not harm another. Visuddhimagga IX.10⁴⁶.

The two emphases that has the golden rule in Buddhism, expand the spectrum of the elements that come into play in the enunciation of it. The conditional emphasis that refers to becoming an example and the practical one of moral appropriation that is linked to the experience of loving oneself. These two emphases further qualify the possibility of establishing an interreligious dialogue, which in addition to requiring humility, reciprocity, requires the willingness to become an example by loving oneself to make it possible and not affect the lives of others.

Conclusions

After the ideas exposed, it is worth taking up again the sources that served as inspiration for this reflecting, since it is clear that in all religions there is clear intentionality in favor of peace. This affirmation does not deny the ideological tendency of manipulation of religions by different selfish interest that promote violence, division among peoples and legitimization of the indiscriminate use of power.

From Bernstein's approach over interreligious dialogue in the second mode, it was possible to identify the contribution of religions to the peace process in Colombia, and together with the reference to the Integral Public Policy of Religious Freedom and Worship, to establish peacebuilding as a tuner element of interreligious dialogue in the country. There is a previous experience, a road routed that must be optimized by improving relations to continue advancing. This new stage should be promoted from the collaborative search of peacebuilding between the members of the different religions accompanied by justice and social changes that eradicate the cultural or symbolic violence that, according to Bernstein, constitute the ultimate goal of the interreligious dialogue.

Religions have a reserve of sense capable of inspiring and transforming the lives of people in terms of humanization. The methodological postulates mentioned by Kronish for the construction of peace, are connected with this humanizing capacity of religions, particularly in the Abrahamic religions present in Jerusalem. The peace process that takes place in Colombia needs to be consolidated from the inner transformation of people, that is, from the religious/spiritual dimension. Forgiveness, reconciliation and peace cannot be realized if personal growth is not promoted from an experience of interiority, that gives sense to a new project of collective construction of peace and social coexistence.

⁴⁶ Charles Hallisey, «The Golden Rule in Buddhism», 141.





The reference to the golden rule present in religions, from its different formulations, constitutes a clear source of inspiration to facilitate interreligious dialogue in function of the eradication of cultural or symbolic violence and in favor of the construction of peace in Colombia. In the proper interpretation of these sources, it is pertinent to evoke some words of David Little and Scott Appleby regarding the responsibility of the experts in the knowledge of sacred literature and of all those who fulfill an educational function to use them properly: «the obligation of scholars and educators to discriminate between the zeal that compels true believers to violate the rights of others, and the zeal that compels them to defend those rights at any cost»⁴⁷. Over this particular theme, it is important to congratulate the Swedish Institute of Jerusalem and its directives, for the firm commitment to promote actions that facilitate interreligious dialogue, not only from the formality of the rigorous academic approach but also from the concrete interaction with members of the Abrahamic religions present in Jerusalem.

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⁴⁷ David Little and Scott Appleby, «A Moment of opportunity? The promise of religious peacebuilding in an era of religious and ethnic conflict», in *Religion and peacebuilding*, 2.





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