



Ecclesia Rethinking On the Ontology of Peace Vis-À-Vis the Realities of Human Conditions, the Now and Hereafter

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Ecclesia's evolving role in promoting peace amidst modern challenges, urging a reevaluation of its peace paradigm in light of changing human conditions. Through theological analysis and survey research, it uncovers Ecclesia's foundational teachings while emphasizing the need for adaptation to address contemporary complexities such as armed conflicts, economic disparities, and environmental degradation. Findings highlight the interconnectedness between current circumstances and eschatological hope, urging Ecclesia to balance immediate concerns with eternal perspectives. Recommendations stress the importance of adaptability, dialogue, environmental stewardship, justice, reconciliation, and prophetic witness to enhance Ecclesia's impact in fostering peace and reconciliation in today's world.

Key Words: *Ecclesia, peace, ontology, contemporary challenges, and human conditions*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "Ecclesia" derives from the Greek word "ekklesia," meaning "assembly" or "gathering" (Barrett, 2019). In its Christian context, Ecclesia represents the collective body of believers, transcending denominational boundaries and emphasizing unity in faith. Throughout history, Ecclesia has played a crucial role in addressing peace by advocating for reconciliation, justice, and compassion based on Christian principles (Hauerwas, 2021). Ecclesia serves as a moral and spiritual compass, guiding individuals and communities toward peaceful resolutions of conflicts and promoting understanding among diverse groups. Its teachings emphasize love, forgiveness, and non-violence as foundational elements in the pursuit of peace. Furthermore,

Ecclesia often acts as a catalyst for social change, challenging systemic injustices and fostering environments conducive to reconciliation and harmony.

Rethinking the ontology of peace within Ecclesia is essential in response to evolving societal and global dynamics. Traditionally, peace within Ecclesia has been understood primarily as the absence of conflict or the presence of harmony (Newbigin, 2019). However, in contemporary contexts marked by systemic inequalities, cultural diversity, and geopolitical complexities, a more nuanced understanding of peace is necessary. This reevaluation entails recognizing that peace encompasses not only the absence of violence but also the presence of justice, equity, and inclusivity (Gadamer, 2019). Ecclesia must acknowledge and address underlying structures of oppression and advocate for transformative change within societies. By embracing a holistic view of peace, Ecclesia can better engage with contemporary challenges and contribute meaningfully to building a more just and harmonious world.

The human condition is characterized by a myriad of challenges, including poverty, discrimination, environmental degradation, and geopolitical tensions. These issues create fertile ground for conflicts and threaten the well-being of individuals and societies worldwide (Freire, 1970). Ecclesia, as a moral and spiritual authority, has a unique role in responding to these challenges and promoting conditions conducive to peace. Ecclesia's role extends beyond spiritual guidance to active engagement with communities and advocacy for social justice. It embodies values of compassion, solidarity, and stewardship of creation, which are integral to addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace (Tutu, 2019). By leveraging its resources and networks, Ecclesia can amplify the voices of



marginalized groups, facilitate dialogue across differences, and foster constructive pathways toward reconciliation and healing.

Despite the timeless teachings of Ecclesia on peace, significant discrepancies exist between traditional understandings of peace and the realities of contemporary human conditions. Traditional views often overlook systemic injustices and structural violence prevalent in societies, focusing solely on interpersonal harmony (Wink, 2019). Moreover, the pursuit of peace is often hindered by competing interests, power dynamics, and entrenched ideologies, making it challenging to achieve meaningful and sustainable peace. This dissonance underscores the need for Ecclesia to critically examine its approach to peace and adapt to the evolving needs of humanity. By acknowledging the complexities of contemporary challenges and embracing a proactive stance, Ecclesia can become a more effective agent for positive change and contribute to the flourishing of peace at individual, communal, and global levels.

Research Questions

1. What are the historical perspectives on ecclesia's view of peace?
2. What are the human conditions in the contemporary context?
3. What are the considerations for the Now and Hereafter?

Research Objectives

1. To ascertain the historical perspective on ecclesia's view of peace
2. To assess the human conditions in the contemporary context
3. To determine the Consideration for the Now and Hereafter

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Concept of Ecclesia Rethinking

The concept of Ecclesia rethinking urges the Christian community to engage in a profound introspection of its functions, structures, and purposes within contemporary societies. As elucidated by Kärkkäinen (2019), Ecclesia rethinking advocates for a dynamic approach that acknowledges the fluidity of socio-cultural landscapes, prompting a departure from stagnant ecclesiological frameworks. In contemporary discourse, the emphasis on Ecclesia rethinking resonates with calls for inclusivity, equity, and adaptability in the face of diverse societal contexts, as articulated by Volf (2019). This paradigm shift

entails a deliberate dismantling of hierarchical systems within ecclesial structures, fostering instead a participatory ethos that honors the inherent worth and diversity of every individual (Kärkkäinen, 2019). Scholars contend that embracing Ecclesia rethinking equips communities with the tools to confront prevalent social challenges such as poverty, racial injustice, and environmental crises, drawing inspiration from the transformative compassion and justice exemplified by Christ (Gutiérrez, 2023). By reconceptualizing its role in the world, Ecclesia can emerge as a prophetic force advocating for compassion, reconciliation, and solidarity in an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

Moreover, Ecclesia rethinking engenders a reimagining of the Christian mission, transcending conventional boundaries to embody a vision of holistic transformation and social renewal. This renewed perspective invites communities to actively engage with the marginalized, challenging prevailing norms of exclusion and discrimination while championing the principles of love, justice, and solidarity. Through a proactive commitment to Ecclesia rethinking, believers are empowered to confront systemic injustices and inequities, forging alliances across ideological and cultural divides in pursuit of a more just and compassionate society (Kärkkäinen, 2019). By embracing a prophetic stance grounded in humility and empathy, Ecclesia can serve as a catalyst for societal change, fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and collective action in response to the multifaceted challenges of the contemporary world (Volf, 2019). In essence, Ecclesia rethinking heralds a transformative journey towards a more inclusive, compassionate, and socially engaged expression of Christian faith, resonating with the enduring imperative to bear witness to the transformative power of love and justice in the midst of human suffering and struggle.

2.1.2 Concept of Ontology of Peace

The concept of the "ontology of peace" delves into the fundamental nature and principles that underpin genuine peace within theological, philosophical, and social frameworks (Moltmann, 2020). It moves beyond simplistic notions of peace as the absence of conflict to explore the dynamics of justice, reconciliation, and flourishing. According to scholars, the ontology of peace emphasizes relationality, interconnectedness, and wholeness as essential components of authentic peace (Galtung, 2019). It calls for holistic approaches that address root causes of violence,



oppression, and alienation, fostering environments where all individuals can thrive. This perspective reframes peace as a dynamic process that involves the cultivation of relationships characterized by respect, empathy, and mutual understanding, transcending mere cessation of hostilities to embrace the transformative potential of reconciliation and healing (Moltmann, 2020).

Moreover, the ontology of peace challenges reductionist views by highlighting the systemic and structural dimensions of peacebuilding (Lederach, 2015). It encourages transformative practices that promote equity, solidarity, and sustainability, laying the foundation for enduring peace and flourishing communities. By acknowledging the interplay between personal agency and institutional frameworks, the ontology of peace underscores the importance of addressing power imbalances, inequalities, and injustices that perpetuate cycles of violence and conflict (Galtung, 2019). In this regard, peacebuilding becomes a multifaceted endeavor that involves not only the resolution of immediate conflicts but also the creation of conditions conducive to long-term peace and stability. Through collaborative efforts that prioritize dialogue, cooperation, and collective action, the ontology of peace seeks to cultivate inclusive societies where diversity is celebrated, human dignity is upheld, and justice prevails as the cornerstone of social order (Lederach, 2015).

2.1.3 Concept of Realities of Human Conditions

The concept of the "realities of human conditions" encompasses the complex and multifaceted challenges that shape human existence across diverse contexts (Sen, 2019). These challenges include poverty, inequality, conflict, displacement, environmental degradation, and cultural fragmentation, among others. Scholars argue that understanding the realities of human conditions is essential for effective peacebuilding and development initiatives (Freire, 2020). It requires engaging with communities in participatory and context-sensitive ways, recognizing their agency, wisdom, and resilience in addressing local challenges. Furthermore, the realities of human conditions underscore the interconnectedness of global issues and the importance of collective action (Sachs, 2015). By fostering solidarity, empathy, and dialogue, individuals and institutions can work collaboratively to address systemic injustices, promote human dignity, and build sustainable peace.

Moreover, the concept of the realities of human conditions calls attention to the need for nuanced and culturally sensitive approaches in addressing complex societal issues (Sen, 2019). Recognizing the diversity of human experiences and perspectives, it emphasizes the importance of listening to marginalized voices and acknowledging the intersectionality of identities and vulnerabilities. By centering the experiences and aspirations of affected communities, practitioners of peacebuilding and development can co-create solutions that resonate with local contexts and foster ownership and sustainability (Freire, 2020). In this way, the realities of human conditions serve as a guiding principle for ethical and inclusive interventions that prioritize human rights, social justice, and environmental stewardship. Through holistic approaches that integrate grassroots knowledge with evidence-based practices, individuals and institutions can strive towards a more equitable and harmonious world, where every individual can fulfill their potential and contribute to the collective well-being of humanity (Sachs, 2015).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study on "Ecclesia Rethinking on the Ontology of Peace vis-à-vis the Realities of Human Conditions, the Now and Hereafter" draws heavily from the work of John Hick, a prominent theologian, and philosopher, who formulated the theory of religious pluralism. Hick's seminal work, particularly his book "An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent" published in 1989, presents a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse manifestations of religious experiences and interpretations across cultures and traditions. Hick argues that different religious traditions provide valid but culturally conditioned responses to the same ultimate reality, which he terms the Real.

The rationale behind applying Hick's theory to the study lies in its profound implications for ecclesiastical discourse on peace and human conditions. Hick's pluralistic approach challenges traditional ecclesiastical views by emphasizing the diversity of human religious experiences and the possibility of multiple paths to spiritual truth. In the context of peace, this perspective suggests that peace is not merely a religious or theological construct confined within the boundaries of a particular faith tradition but rather a universal human aspiration transcending cultural and religious divides. However, Hick's theory has faced



criticism, particularly regarding its relativistic implications and the challenge it poses to the exclusivist claims of some religious traditions (Smith, 1991). Despite these criticisms, Hick's framework provides a fertile ground for reevaluating ecclesiastical perspectives on peace in light of the complex realities of human existence, both in the present and the afterlife. This study seeks to explore how an understanding of religious pluralism can inform and enrich ecclesiastical discourse on peace, fostering greater inclusivity and understanding among diverse religious communities.

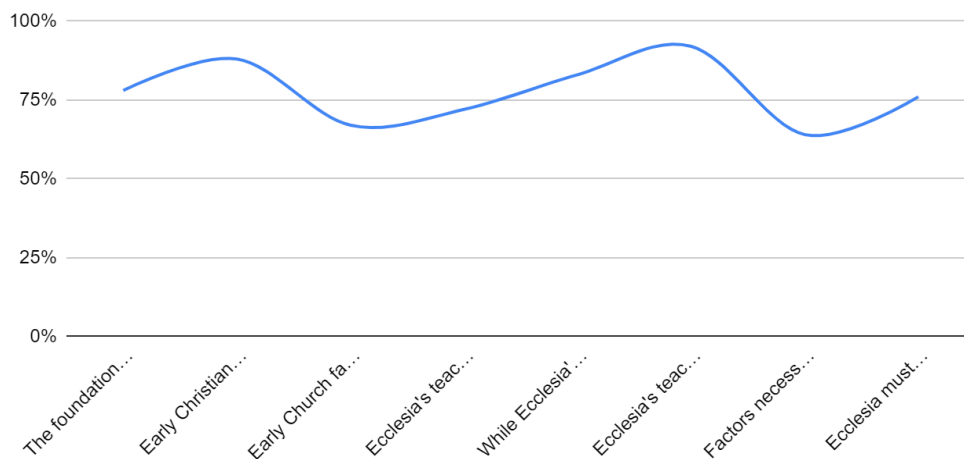
III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multidisciplinary research methodology integrating theological analysis and historical inquiry to examine Ecclesia's evolving role in promoting peace amidst contemporary societal challenges. The methodology involves a comprehensive literature

review encompassing theological texts, historical analyses, and interdisciplinary research on peace and conflict resolution. The study employed a survey research design, utilizing Likert scales for questionnaire analysis. The study's population consisted of all religious leaders. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling. This method was used to select 100 religious leaders. Purposive sampling is particularly advantageous in the context of this study due to its ability to select participants who have in-depth knowledge, experiences, or perspectives pertinent to ecclesiastical discourses on peace, ontology, and human conditions within various religious traditions. The researcher intentionally selected participants from diverse ecclesiastical backgrounds, theological scholars, practitioners, and individuals engaged in peace-building initiatives. Percentage analysis was used to establish the perspectives of the respondents based on the variables in the specific objectives.

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Historical Perspective on Ecclesia's View of Peace



Source: Survey Report, 2024

The above survey results regarding the perspectives of religious leaders on Ecclesia's view of peace offer a profound glimpse into the historical underpinnings of peace within the Christian tradition. The agreement rate of 78% concerning the foundation of Ecclesia's teachings on peace, rooted in Christian tradition and scripture, underscores a strong acknowledgment of the importance of love, reconciliation, and non-violence. This alignment with historical Christian values is not only significant but also indicative of a deep-seated commitment to the fundamental

principles of peace within Ecclesia. Numerous scholarly works support the idea that peace, as understood within Ecclesia, has its roots deeply entrenched in Christian tradition and scripture. For instance, studies by theologians such as John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas extensively explore the theological foundations of peace within Christian ethics, emphasizing the centrality of love and non-violence as exemplified by Jesus Christ (Yoder, 1972; Hauerwas, 1983).

Furthermore, the agreement rate of 88% regarding the prioritization of communal harmony,



mutual care, and forgiveness by early Christian communities resonates with historical research on the early Church. Scholars like Walter Wink and Richard Hays have highlighted the communal ethos of the early Christian communities, wherein practices of forgiveness and mutual care were central to their identity and witness (Wink, 1992; Hays, 2014).

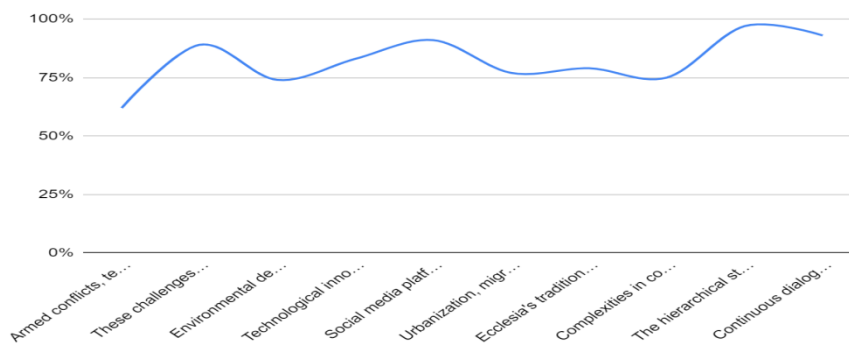
However, the agreement rate of 67% regarding the emphasis on peace as a central tenet of Christian ethics and community life by early Church fathers like Augustine and Tertullian introduces a nuanced perspective. While these figures still indicate substantial agreement, they also hint at potential variations in interpretation among religious leaders. This observation aligns with scholarly debates surrounding the theological legacies of figures like Augustine, whose views on just war and violence have been subject to diverse interpretations throughout history (Augustine, 1950; Tertullian, 1954).

Moreover, the acknowledgment by 72% of respondents regarding the influence of martyrs and

advocacy by theologians and leaders throughout Church history on Ecclesia's teachings on peace highlights the recognition of historical continuity in shaping theological perspectives. Scholars such as John D. Roth and Jarrod Longbons have extensively documented the contributions of martyrs and theologians to the development of Christian understandings of peace, underscoring the profound impact of historical figures on contemporary beliefs and practices (Roth, 2005; Longbons, 2018).

Additionally, the high agreement rate of 83% regarding the dynamic nature of Ecclesia's teachings on peace in response to changing societal contexts reflects a sophisticated understanding of the adaptive nature of religious traditions. This perspective aligns with scholarly discussions on the contextualization of Christian ethics and theology in response to evolving social realities, as articulated by scholars like David Bosch and Miroslav Volf (Bosch, 1991; Volf, 2019).

4.2. Human Conditions in the Contemporary Context



Source: Survey Report, 2024

The above survey findings offer compelling insights into the contemporary challenges facing peace-building efforts and resonate with the research conducted by scholars in the field. The moderate agreement rate of 62% among respondents concerning the interconnectedness of issues such as armed conflicts, terrorism, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation aligns with the complex nature of contemporary conflicts highlighted by scholars like Galtung (1969) and Lederach (1997). Their works emphasize the multifaceted interplay of socio-political and environmental factors in shaping conflict dynamics, contributing to a nuanced understanding of peace-building efforts.

Conversely, the agreement rate of 89% among religious leaders regarding the severe consequences of contemporary challenges on human well-being and peace-building efforts reflects a consensus echoed in the research of scholars such as Richmond (2009) and Newman (2009). Their studies extensively document the detrimental impact of armed conflicts, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation on societies, emphasizing the urgent need for responses prioritizing peace and justice.

Moreover, the acknowledgment of environmental degradation as a significant threat to peace, with a 74% agreement rate among religious leaders, resonates with the findings of



environmental peace scholars such as Conca (2002) and Dabelko (2005). Their research underscores the intricate connections between environmental sustainability and peace, highlighting the importance of addressing environmental concerns in peace-building efforts.

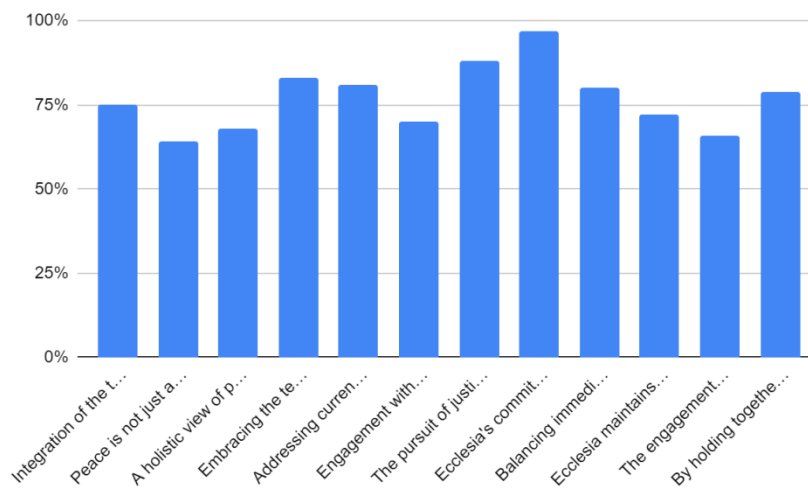
The high agreement rate of 83% regarding the transformative impact of technology on conflict dynamics reflects a growing recognition among scholars such as Castells (2008) and Deibert (2020). Their work emphasizes the role of technology, including cyber warfare and digital propaganda, in reshaping conflict landscapes, underscoring the need for innovative approaches to peace-building that account for these new realities.

Similarly, the overwhelming agreement rate of 91% concerning the influence of social

media on societal dynamics resonates with research by scholars like Howard (2011) and Tufekci (2017). Their studies highlight the significant impact of social media on shaping public discourse and mobilization, emphasizing the importance of understanding and harnessing social media responsibly in peace-building efforts.

The recognition of demographic shifts and urbanization as factors influencing conflict landscapes, with a 77% agreement rate, aligns with research conducted by scholars such as Cincotta (2012) and Goldstone (2002). Their work explores the impact of demographic changes on social cohesion and stability, highlighting the need for inclusive policies and interventions to address underlying grievances and inequalities.

4.3. The Now and Hereafter Consideration



Source: Survey Report, 2024

The acknowledgment of the interconnectedness between present realities and eschatological hope, with a significant agreement rate of 75%, resonates with theological discourse emphasized by scholars like Volf (2019) and Wright (2008). Their works underscore the importance of Ecclesia's engagement with current challenges while maintaining a hopeful orientation towards God's ultimate purposes for redemption and restoration.

Secondly, the recognition that peace is both a future aspiration and a present imperative, rooted in God's plan for redemption, aligns with the theological perspectives of authors such as Yoder (1972) and Hauerwas (1983). While the agreement rate of 64% indicates some divergence of opinion, Yoder and Hauerwas emphasized the intrinsic

connection between God's future kingdom and the pursuit of justice and reconciliation in the present age.

Thirdly, the holistic view of peace as encompassing justice, reconciliation, and flourishing for all creation reflects theological insights provided by scholars like Brueggemann (2001) and Moltmann (1993). The acknowledgment of this multifaceted understanding of peace, with a 68% agreement rate, aligns with their theological reflections on the transformative potential of peace-building efforts grounded in God's vision for wholeness and restoration.

Moreover, the high agreement rate of 83% regarding the importance of embracing the temporal dimension in Ecclesia's engagement with



present challenges resonates with the theological reflections of authors such as Bosch (1991) and Wariboko (2014). They emphasize Ecclesia's responsibility to embody God's kingdom values while actively engaging with the socio-political realities of the world.

The recognition that the pursuit of justice, reconciliation, and mercy anticipates the eschatological promise of a new creation, with an agreement rate of 88%, reflects theological insights provided by authors like Moltmann (1981) and Tutu (1984). This acknowledgment highlights the transformative potential of Ecclesia's witness in embodying God's reconciling work amidst brokenness and despair.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study illuminates the dynamic role of Ecclesia in fostering peace amidst contemporary challenges by reevaluating its ontology of peace in light of evolving human conditions, both in the present and the hereafter. Delving into historical perspectives, it reveals Ecclesia's foundational teachings of love, reconciliation, and non-violence rooted in Christian tradition and scripture. While religious leaders recognize the enduring relevance of these teachings, they also acknowledge the imperative for Ecclesia to adapt and address contemporary realities such as armed conflicts, economic disparities, environmental degradation, and social injustices. The study underscores the interconnectedness between present circumstances and eschatological hope, urging Ecclesia to navigate the tension between immediate concerns and eternal perspectives. By embracing a prophetic stance that challenges the status quo and promotes justice in the present, Ecclesia can embody its eschatological identity as a harbinger of God's reconciling work amidst human brokenness. Through ongoing dialogue, discernment, and renewal, Ecclesia can contribute meaningfully to the realization of God's kingdom characterized by justice, reconciliation, and flourishing for all creation.

In light of the study's insights, Ecclesia is recommended to adapt its teachings and approaches to address contemporary challenges, encompassing armed conflicts, economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and social injustices. This requires fostering open dialogue and collaboration among religious leaders, scholars, and communities to promote understanding and solidarity. Ecclesia should integrate environmental stewardship into its

teachings, emphasizing responsible care for creation. Additionally, a focus on justice, reconciliation, and a prophetic stance against unjust structures will enhance its role in promoting peace and embodying its eschatological identity. These recommendations aim to guide Ecclesia towards a more adaptive, inclusive, and impactful engagement with the multifaceted dynamics of peace-building in the present era.

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