


## Islamic Theology and Religious Education: An Islamic Perspective on Pacifism – Jawdat Said

Author

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### Abstract

In this seminar unit, students engage with the pacifist approach of contemporary Islamic thinker Jawdat Said (1931-2022). Said advocates absolute non-violence, the renunciation of retaliation, and the transformation of the hatred that a Muslim may experience into love through "defense with good" (Qur'an 41:34). Said's position is that a legitimate and peaceful society cannot be created by resorting to violence. Countering violence with violence would result in a spiral of violence that would encourage the emergence of dictatorships. He bases his approach on Islamic sources. The story of the two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, in the Koran is a central aspect of his approach.

Based on different methods, students engage with Said's approach, understand it and discuss its potentials and limitations. Finally, they reflect on pacifism as a possible approach for establishing sustainable world peace and discuss its preconditions, possibilities and challenges.

### Timescale

One lecture (approximately 90 minutes)

### Key Terms

Jawdat Said, nonviolence, pacifism, peacebuilding.

### Key competences / Learning outcomes

- Understanding of Jawdat Said's theory of Islamic pacifism
- Understanding, Discussion and critical reflection of the possibilities and limits of his approach
- Discussion of pacifism as a possible approach for sustainable peace in the world



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- Murtaza, M. S. (2016). Eine Ethik der Gewaltlosigkeit – Ein Ansatz des syrischen Gelehrten Jawdat Sa'id. In J. Klusmann et al. (Eds.), *Gewaltfreiheit, Politik und Toleranz im Islam* (pp. 123-139). Springer.
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## Teaching Steps

Teaching Steps			
Phase/Time	Approach	Method	Social Form/ Tasks for students
Introduction (5 min)	Introduction, presentation of the procedure and task.	Presentation by lecturer	Plenary
Reading, Thinking & Exchange (35 min)	<p>The students are divided into small groups. In the group work they reflect on Jawdat Said's pacifist approach based on the texts they have already read at home. In particular, the students are asked to work out his core idea, the main arguments as well as the reception in the academic literature on the basis of pro and contra arguments. They also form their own opinions about the approach. They can consult additional academic sources through internet research.</p> <p>Furthermore, they are asked to reflect on pacifism as a possible approach for the building of a sustainable world peace as well as on its preconditions, possibilities and limitations.</p>	Silent text study, research & exchange	Group work
Sharing (35 min)	<p>The results are discussed in plenary using the fishbowl method. The students are asked to form a chair circle. One person from each group is sent to the center of the chair circle. They then form a smaller chair circle in the center of the large chair circle. Two chairs are left empty in the inner circle. Students in the inner circle present their results and engage in discussion. Students in the outer circle observe the discussion and can contribute to the discussion by sitting down in the empty chair in the inner circle and joining in.</p>	Fishbowl, presentation & discussion	Plenary



Sharing (15 min)	<p>Afterwards, a second round of discussion follows using the fishbowl method. The students in the inner circle exchange their seats with the students from the outer circle. After this change, the inner circle discusses pacifism as a possible method for building sustainable world peace and discusses its prerequisites, possibilities and limitations from their own perspective. Students from the outer circle join the discussion and take seats at the empty chairs in the inner circle if they want to contribute.</p>	Fishbowl & discussion	Plenary
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## Material and Texts

- Text 1: Murtaza, M. S. (2016). Eine Ethik der Gewaltlosigkeit – Ein Ansatz des syrischen Gelehrten Jawdat Sa’id. In J. Klusmann et al. (Eds.), *Gewaltfreiheit, Politik und Toleranz im Islam* (pp. 123-139). Springer.
- Text 2: Lohlker, R. (2022). Jawdat Sa’id and the Islamic Theology and Practice of Peace. *Religions* 13(160). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020160>.
- Text 3: Said, J. (1964). *The Way of Adams’s Upright Son*. Translated into English by Abdullatif Alkhaiat (n.d.). (136 Pages) (Note: Not the entire book, but parts of it are distributed to the groups).



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### Glossary

Important terms for students

#### *Encounter learning:*

**Encounter learning** refers to the didactically guided and accompanied topic-centred exchange between participants who are as similar in status as possible in a framework that is limited in terms of content, time and space (safe space), which provides for multi-perspective reflection processes taking into account a conflict hermeneutics that lead to the initiation of content-related and process-related competences.

The project "Sharing Worldviews: Encounter Learning for common Values in Diversity" is based on a 4-phase concept of Encounter Learning: preparation, presentation, exchange and reflection.

#### *Worldviews:*

The concept of **Worldviews** has various culturally determined meanings. In our project we use it as "Worldviews" (individual or collective perspective on the world):

**World interpretation** (dt.: Weltdeutung) Refers to the fundamental anthropological existential that man brings his fellow man, his environment and himself into an explanatory and interpretive context, regardless of whether this context has religious, spiritual or secular connotations.

**World view** (dt.: Weltbild) Coherent overall conception of the whole of reality, of the development of life and the structure of the universe, of a certain image of man and history etc. from a certain theoretically underpinned (e.g. scientific or mythological etc.) perspective.

**Worldviews** (dt.: Weltsichten/ Weltansichten/ Perspektiven auf die Welt) Individual or collective perspective on the world. Worldviews as perspectives can also be shaped by influences (events, media, etc.).

5



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**Worldview** (dt.: Weltanschauung) Refers to a coherent overall conception of the whole of reality, which shapes one's perception of reality and in turn shapes that perception. Beyond 'worldviews', they are embedded in a specific framework of thought and action and thus also include evaluative statements and corresponding options for action. Worldviews unite their adherents into a secular community (e.g. humanism, atheism, materialism).

Such an understanding of worldview is shaped in Europe by the Enlightenment, which sought to free itself from traditional communities (such as religions) and grant the individual more independence from them.

