MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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"RECONCILIATION"

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Reconciliation

Editorial

The world changed Tuesday, 11 September 2001. What could not happen and what some believed happens only in movies did happen. The biggest terror attack in world history was lamentably also the most successful. The television pictures—especially those of the two towers of the World Trade Center – have been impressed on our memory never to be erased. Those who lost relatives will live the rest of the their lives grieving for their loved ones. The fight against terror and the terrorists has begun, but it is much too early to say what will be the long term effect of 11 September.

In *degree* the terror attacks on the U.S.A. were different from anything ever seen before. In *kind* they were the same as have been experienced before in other places, in Israel not the least. Through all of its history the State of Israel has had to live with the fear of terror – and often not just the fear but also the consequences: death and destruction.

A few days after the attack on the United States the chief rabbi of Denmark, Bent Lexner could celebrate his 25 years as the rabbi of Denmark. Due to the event a few days earlier the planned celebration was canceled, but in a newspaper interview Lexner said he believed that after the terror attack against the United States the world will no longer accept that our lives be determined by fanatics. He also expressed the hope that one of the results of the attack would be that "the world will better understand the problems Israel has faced all along." Very little points in the direction that this hope will become reality in the near future.

It has been shocking to be confronted with interviews in which Muslims have expressed their understanding of the need for such attacks – if not their joy and celebration – even while the terrible pictures from the catastrophe appeared on the television screen over and over again.

As believers in Jesus – Jewish or gentile – we have reasons to warn against hate towards Muslims as such. The tragedy in New York shows all too clearly that there are fanatics in the Muslim world who discard no means to advance their goal. But fanatics can be found everywhere – also among Jews and Christians. The more the fanatics set the agenda the less hope there is for peace and reconciliation. This is true anywhere, but especially so in the Middle East.

The topic for this issue of Mishkan is reconciliation. An exegetical article will deal with the Biblical mandate. Other articles will look at issues specifically related to the Middle East and Israel/Palestine, but a major article deals with the issue in general and draws on experience and examples from elsewhere in the world.

Experience shows that it is much easier to advise others on how they should live when they find it difficult to be reconciled than it is to solve one's own problems of reconciliation. Life in this world of sin – of which we ourselves are part – has taught us how easily enmity takes over and dominates our lives. This is true among believers as well.

There are no easy solutions to the problems between Israelis and Palestinians. Even though the light of reconciliation work among believing Palestinians and Israelis does twinkle, those who have experienced the brilliant love of God in Jesus, our Messiah and our Lord must radiate reconciliation.

The worst scenario I can image is one in which we, from a Christian and from a Messianic Jewish point of view, resign from the challenge of reconciliation and/or let a theology concerning Israel or more precisely the State of Israel and its borders determine our view of the importance of reconciliation and our willingness to be involved.

The determining factor must be the love of God for all people in Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

As Jesus-believing Jews as well as non-Jews we must not give up the hope of reconciliation. I recently read a very moving article which gave me hope. I came across it as I was looking through old international journals and magazines on Jewish missions. In the magazine of the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel from 1946 I found a story told by a German Jesus-believing Jew, former judge Hans Walter Hirschberg, who survived Theresienstadt. The story is a strong testimony of love and forgiveness even under such terrible conditions, something very relevant when our focus is on reconciliation.

In the article which was first published in the Romanian Jewish-Christian magazine *Prietenul*, Hirschberg tells how in Theresienstadt "the clear light of the gospel shone brightly. Of all the Jews in Theresienstadt one out of every ten belonged to a Christian denomination. Some were Protestant, some were Catholic." Hirschberg continues:

> *From spring of 1942 both the Catholic and the Protestant Jews in the camp formed their own organization, and through a miracle of God we were able to meet "in freedom" around the word of God almost all the time. Until our time came, our executioners, who had given us over to death, had no interest in whether we served God or not. Neither did they understand what strength and encouragement we gained from these meetings in the presence of God. In this way we Jewish-Christians could keep our Sundays and our holidays and on a regular basis share Bible studies, concerts and times of singing together. It was a pity that we were not able to organize a Sunday school for the children who had to work so hard.*
>
> *One of our favorite themes as Jews was "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." It was easy to understand why Jews who had suffered and endured so much, and who so often had to see their children be slaughtered, could be filled with hate and a desire for revenge. But Jesus has taught us to love and to forgive. In His name and encouraged by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we spoke against the desire for revenge and refused to let it take over our lives.*

Hirschberg continues to challenge:

The Catholic and the evangelical Jews lived together as brothers and with respect and understanding for each other. In Theresienstadt the words of Jesus regarding how we all should be one became a reality. All of us Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus were one body even though we were of different opinions and our worship services were not the same.

The Hebrew Christian Johan Friedländer, a former general in the Austrian army, was a Catholic but he often preached in our "evangelical" church in Theresienstadt. He was a pious man of God. Our evangelical church was led by pastor Enker, a Jewish-Christian from Holland and a man with a deep and profound faith in Christ. One day right before the Catholic general Friedländer was to preach to us he was informed that his name was on the list of those who were to be taken to Poland to a "Vernichtungslager" (extermination camp). But as if nothing had happened he quietly preached his sermon and ended with a pleading prayer which none of us would ever forget. The next day he was taken to Auschwitz where he was killed. The peace and calmness in Jesus which he showed, together with other things helped us tear down all the confessional walls. All we Jews who believed in Jesus were one. Also our British deacon Fritz Poskauer did his service in the church till the end. He found death together with Friedländer.

In the church in Theresienstadt nobody tried to hide their light under a bushel. We were to die – even without confessing Christ – so if we confessed Christ and testified to him what did we have to lose? More than die we could not and to die we had been determined – regardless of our confession to Christ.

So we preached "all the council of Christ" and we openly prayed for pastor Niemöller and other believers in the concentration camps. I believe we were the only ones who were really free. Nobody could take away our freedom by sending us to the camp. We were already there.

For many of our "congregation members" baptism had been only a formality. They had never really considered being followers of Christ until they came to Theresienstadt. But here under the influence of the word of God they were converted. Jews who had until then been only Christians by name became real Christians. Many orthodox Jews, but also Jews who were atheists, found Jesus and were saved in Theresienstadt.

I am one of the few survivors from the concentration camp in Theresienstadt. Most of my brothers went to be with the Lord but my Savior saved me from the camp in order that I should proclaim the wonderful things the Lord has done among those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death.

What a testimony! This testimony speaks to us forcefully as we ourselves talk about living out the challenge of reconciliation.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

Interpersonal Reconciliation in Scripture

Ray Pritz*

It would not be difficult to defend the proposition that the entire Bible message can be summed up in the one word – Reconciliation. Man, created in God's image, chose to pursue a system of works and self-exaltation by which "you will be like God." In so doing, mankind lost some of the divine image and was alienated from the presence of God, symbolized by banishment from the garden of Eden. The remaining 1186 chapters of the Bible tell how the situation was reversed, how God initiated the way for mankind to return to his presence. The narrative peaks with the restoration of mankind to the very image of the Creator with the words (Rev 22:4) "They shall see his face," completing the process spoken of by John (1 John 3:2), "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Complete reconciliation.

"God was in the Messiah reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). Reconciliation is indeed "what it's all about" in Christian understanding of biblical revelation. It is all the more surprising then that the Bible has relatively little to say on the subject of reconciliation between people. What we might call vertical reconciliation (between God and man) is the essence of Scripture, but horizontal reconciliation (between human beings) receives at best minor attention there.

So, while the subject of this paper is reconciliation between people according to Scripture, a caveat is in order. If reconciliation between God and man is really the essence of the biblical message, it would be an abuse of Scripture to try to isolate inter-human reconciliation in the Bible or even to claim, as some have, that the Bible is primarily about social relations. It is my working assumption that the Bible's teaching on reconciliation between people is of little value apart from its central message of man's need to be reconciled to God. The second greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," should never be separated from the greatest commandment, "Love the Lord your God." Indeed, the second commandment is only a corollary of the first. "The

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one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

What exactly do we mean by the term "reconciliation?" We are not talking here of generally being at peace with the other. Reconciliation implies a former alienation. Two parties were once together, in a more or less proper relationship, and then something happened to cause a break of more than passing duration. This is not simply a minor spat followed by an "I'm sorry." Reconciliation follows a serious split; it is putting back together something that was broken. It is precisely this sort of reconciliation that is infrequently commanded or illustrated in the Bible.

Of course, there is no lack of scriptural directives to get along with people. One need only cite Psalms 34:14, "Seek peace and pursue it," Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men," or Hebrews 12:14, "Pursue peace with all men." These imperatives and others like them in fact imply reconciliation: there is no need to command a person to get along with someone he is already at peace with; the command first of all obligates action toward those with whom we are not at peace.

Biblical Examples

The classic example of reconciliation between two people (and the one cited in all the literature, because there is not much else to cite) is the story of Jacob and Esau (Gen 32-33).

> *Jacob sent messengers on ahead to his brother Esau at Sde Edom in the land of Seir. He gave them these instructions: "This is how you should address my master Esau. 'Your servant Jacob says he has been living with Laban and has remained with him until recently. He has acquired cattle, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants. He has sent us to tell you all this, Sir, and he hopes that you will be pleased.'"* (Gen 32:3-5)

The contact is initiated by Jacob. While there is no clear statement in the story that Jacob ever apologized in words for anything in the past, it may be implied from the manner in which Jacob addresses Esau, repeatedly calling him "my lord" (a phrase never used by Esau toward Jacob), and from the large peace offering sent ahead of him. One comes away from the story with the sense that Esau was somehow more gracious and easily ready to forget the past.

But the Jacob and Esau narrative leaves the reader with the sense that reconciliation has only been partially achieved. Jacob makes excuses not to accompany Esau, promising to join him later. It was a promise he would never keep.

Another example of reconciliation within a family comes in the Joseph cycle (Gen 37-50). Joseph has been badly mistreated by his brothers, and indeed he himself has not been entirely blameless in the way he has flaunted his dreams before them. In human conflict it is rare that the blame for the alienation lies

with only one party. The story ends well for the family, as Joseph forgives his brothers and is in a position to ensure that they will have to accept him. Even in this story, with its happy ending, there is an undercurrent of incompleteness. Long after Joseph has "kissed all his brothers and wept over them" (Gen 45:15), they are still afraid of his retribution.

> *Seeing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers talked together. "What if Joseph is still holding against us all the bad things we did to him and is determined to pay us back?" So they sent a message to Joseph: "Before he died, your father gave these instructions: Tell Joseph, Please forgive the wrong, the sin your brothers have done. They really did treat you badly, but now please forgive the wrong done by the servants of the God of your father."*
>
> *When they said these things to Joseph, it made him cry. Then they themselves went humbly to him and said, "We come as your servants." Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me as if I were in God's place. Even if you intended to do me wrong, God intended to make good come from it by today preserving the lives of many. So don't be afraid any more; I myself will take care of you and your children." In this way he reassured them and won them over.* (Gen 50:15-21)

Joseph's conduct here is exemplary, and rightly is it often brought forward as an example of how we should be reconciled to those from whom we are estranged. But it is only an example, in the old definition, "descriptive but not prescriptive." One might have hoped to find an editorial comment that this is the way we should all behave. Of course, such a comment would be out of place in Genesis, but surely we should expect to find it in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament or even in the Torah or the Prophets. Surprisingly, we do not find any such command until we come to the New Testament.

Biblical Injunctions To Be Reconciled

> *Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way.* (*Matt 5:23-25)*

Jesus, who was God's incarnation of reconciliation, leaves no doubt about the importance of our getting right with those from whom we have been separated. So essential is it for Jesus that he would even put it ahead of the performance of an act of worship. Moreover, it is immaterial if you are the injured party or the one who has committed the wrong: in either case you are the one who should take the initiative to effect reconciliation (see Matt 18:15).

The parable of the lost son graphically illustrates this movement toward the other. The son who has wronged his father gets up to go home to ask forgiveness. Granted, his motives are pretty self-centered, but his actions are right. The father, who has done no wrong, "ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). When his elder son then becomes offended (it is, after all, his calf that is being slaughtered in honor of his

wayward brother), the father again takes the initiative and goes out to bring him in (v. 28).

One New Testament passage looks particularly attractive when discussing the subject of reconciliation. In the last half of 2 Corinthians 5 Paul says that we have been given the "ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18) and the "message of reconciliation" (v. 19). A closer look at the entire passage, however, shows that Paul is not talking about believers going out as peacemakers between people. His focus is on the vertical reconciliation that God has accomplished through the sacrifice of his son. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ … we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (vv. 18, 20).

Here again we must beware of an artificial compartmentalization that tries to keep separate the reconciliation that God has brought in Jesus and the consequent reconciling activity of redeemed people called to be children who imitate their father in heaven. This is in fact exactly what Jesus was talking about when he called the peacemakers "children of God" (Matt 5:9). First of all, then, we are assigned the task of taking the message of reconciliation with God through Jesus. Once we are engaged in that calling, it should follow inevitably that we find ourselves working for reconciliation also on the horizontal plane.

The Mediator, Caught in the Middle

Scripture also presents us with situations where two estranged parties need the involvement of a third, neutral party to help bring about reconciliation. In Philippians 4:2-3, to take a minor example, Paul himself pleads with two women to settle their differences, and then he asks someone closer to the two to do this work for him.

The Old Testament, too, provides us with some insights into the ministry and pitfalls of the mediator. When David refused to let Absalom back into his presence after Absalom had killed his brother Amnon, Joab took on the role of mediator. Joab is not known for his refinement or sensitivities, but he proved to be a successful (albeit sneaky) mediator (2 Sam 14). It is interesting to note Joab's motivation in this story: "Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom." His starting point was seeking the good of the parties. Even in this story, the mediation had to go through stages until it was complete. David allowed Absalom back to court but did not want to see him personally. Joab stopped there, but Absalom pushed him until Joab convinced the king to restore Absalom completely.[7]

Joab came out of his mediating experience in the good graces of both parties. Scripture makes it clear, however, that this will often not be the case. The experience of Pharaoh's young protégé Moses provides an enlightening example.

He went out the next day and saw two Hebrew men quarreling. He said to the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your companion?" The man replied, "Who appointed you over us as ruler and judge? Are you thinking to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?" This scared Moses, as he realized that his action had been discovered. When Pharaoh heard about it, he attempted to put Moses to death, but Moses managed to escape from him…." (Exod 2:13-15)

When Stephen was on trial before the Sanhedrin, he paraphrased this story, specifically pointing out that Moses was trying to bring about reconciliation and adding that Moses tried to pacify the two men by reminding them that they were "brothers." It didn't work. In his book *Conflict Mediation across Cultures*, D.W. Augsburger quotes an apposite Scottish proverb: "The hardest blow of the fight falls on the one who steps between."

With a slightly cynical approach, one might even see in Scripture a less than enthusiastic attitude toward those who try to intervene in the disputes of others. When asked to do so on one occasion, Jesus rejected the honor: "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (Luke 12:14). Proverbs 26:17 compares the person who meddles in others' strife to one who takes a dog by the ears. Peter and Paul both warn their readers against involving themselves in the affairs of others (1 Pet 4:15; 2 Thes 3:11; 1 Tim 5:15). These last references, however, are speaking of something far less honorable than disinterested and selfless attempts to bring warring parties to the peace table.

Paul's cry to the Corinthians, "we beg you …, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20), sums up in a few words the essence of the message of every prophet. The prophets were God's ministers of reconciliation. This fact takes on special significance when we consider the fate of the prophets.

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy. (2 Chr 36:15-16)

This description undoubtedly provides the basis for Jesus' description in the Parable of the Tenants:

When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. (Matt 21:34-36)

Here, too, we are reminded that standing in the middle can be a thankless job indeed. This parable of Jesus brings us back – as we must inevitably always be brought back – to the supreme example of suffering for the sake of making peace between alienated parties.

Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:37-39)

God's Messiah, his anointed messenger and embodiment of reconciliation, has put his own indelible stamp of approval on the ministry of reconciliation. Not only has he sanctified that ministry by becoming the reconciler par excellence, he has also endorsed it for his followers. In blessing the peacemakers he has awarded them the highest title of honor that can be bestowed on human beings: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called 'Children of God.'" (Matt 5:9)

The Social Meaning of Reconciliation

Miroslav Volf

In the introduction to his widely acclaimed book *God's Long Summer* about the role of faith in the civil rights struggle, Charles Marsh notes a peculiar tension in the lives of many white southern Christians. He writes,

> *A white conservative minister could stand at the pulpit of any Baptist church in any hamlet of the deep South and preach from Paul's letter to the Corinthians that Jesus Christ reconciles all people to God and each other, and he would undoubtedly receive an enthusiastic chorus of "Amen" from the congregation; yet if the minister proceeded to explain that the Gospel message requires brother hood with black people, and justice and mercy toward them, he would be run out of town by sundown.*[1]

By singling out conservative white Christians in the South, I do not mean to deny that many of them courageously opposed racial oppression, some even at the cost of their lives. Neither do I want to suggest that their complicity is an exception to an otherwise impeccable record of Christian struggle for reconciliation. Rather, their complicity is an example of a widespread and theologically insufficiently addressed problem. Let me explain.

Elsewhere I have argued against the thesis that the Christian faith fosters violence by its very nature as a monotheistic religion. My point was not that the Christian faith has not been used to legitimize violence, or that there are no elements in the Christian faith on which such misuses build. It was rather that at the heart the Christian faith is peace creating and peace sustaining so that such misuse is less likely to happen when people have deep and informed commitments to the faith. These commitments consist of robust cognitive and moral content—at least when they stem from historic Christian beliefs rather than being recast arbitrarily by leaders of short-lived and oppressive communities. Hence, the more we nurture Christian faith as an ongoing tradition whose moral content shapes behavior and thereby touches the public sphere, the better off we will be. Inversely, the more we reduce Christian faith to vague religiosity or conceive of it as exclusively a private affair of

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[1] Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer. Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

individuals, the worse off we will be. "Thick" practice of the Christian faith will help reduce violence and shape a culture of peace.

I think this argument is correct. And yet, as the above example illustrates, many Christians seem to behave otherwise. Though they take their faith seriously and desire to follow its precepts, they sometimes turn out to be perpetrators of rather gruesome crimes or at least willing accomplices. In this essay I will explore some reasons for this kind of complicity in social strife and propose an alternative way of approaching social responsibility that could help churches function as agents of peace. Of course, many Christians in diverse contexts have not been complicit, but faithful. To them I want to offer theological resources better to equip them for the arduous and treacherous task of peacemaking.

Churches in Conflict

Why are Christians, the presumed agents of peace, at best impotent in the face of their people's conflicts and at worst perpetrators of the most heinous crimes? Often people blame the character of the Christian faith. Though I am unable to defend my position here, in my estimation a better explanation of why Christian communities are either impotent in the face of violent conflicts and even active participants in them derives from the *proclivities of its adherents* which are at odds with the character of the Christian faith. One way to describe these proclivities is to speak of an *idolatrous shift of loyalty*. Though explicitly giving ultimate allegiance to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, many Christians in fact seem to have an overriding commitment to their respective culture, ethnic group, or nation. Hence in conflict situations they tend to fight on the side of their group and are tempted to employ faith as a weapon in the struggle.

Empirical research on the churches' reaction to ethnic conflicts conducted by Ralph Premdas in a number of countries in the southern hemisphere has shown that the "inter-communal antipathies present in the society at large are reflected in the attitudes of churches and their adherents." Though the clergy are often invited to adjudicate, "the reconciling thrust quickly evaporates after the initial effort." The most important reason for failure, he notes, is the "inter-locking relations of church and cultural section which spill into partisan politics marked by the mobilization of collective hate and cultivated bigotry." Along with their parishioners, the clergy are often "trapped within the claims of their own ethnic or cultural community" and thus serve as "legitimators of ethnic conflict,"[2] despite their genuine desire to take seriously the gospel call to the ministry of reconciliation. Churches find themselves unable to act on the gospel

[2] Premdas, "The Church and Ethnic Conflicts in the Third World," *The Ecumenist* 1(1994), 53, 55, 56.

call to the ministry of reconciliation because their commitments are wrongly ordered—universal claims of the Gospel, including the call to practice self-giving love of Jesus Christ, are subordinated to the claims of particular social groups.

But why this inappropriate shift of loyalties? Many reasons can be given, ranging from simple human foibles (such as the proclivity to sin against God "so as not to turn a friend against us"[3]), to a pervasive culture of conformity and obedience to authority ("Everyone obeys; people revere power"[4]), to socially potent religious notions (such as the use of "election" to refer to a sense of religiously underwritten destiny in the corporate experience of a people). I want to explore in this essay one reason for the misdirection of loyalties that has been largely neglected but concerns the very center of the Christian tradition. It concerns the question of reconciliation.

Ralph Premdas concludes his article on religion and ethnic conflict with the following recommendation:

> *The leaders of the churches will have to take the issue of ethnic conflict more seriously. Of utmost importance is a better understanding of the social, political and theological factors involved. The churches will have to appoint committees that investigate the historical origin of the conflict, examine the social scientific literature on ethnic conflicts, study the theory and practice of conflict resolution, and devise instruments of popular education that raise people's awareness of the issues at stake and communicate the biblical message of reconciliation.*[5]

Premdas, a sociologist, rightly calls churches to take seriously the gospel call to the ministry of reconciliation by studying the nature of conflicts and the possibilities for their resolution, and by educating people about how to engage in peace-making. He simply assumes that everything is in order with the message of reconciliation itself; that message only needs to be communicated. He is too charitable with the theology of the churches, however. As a theologian, I want to suggest that the problem does not simply lie in failing to communicate and implement the message of reconciliation effectively on account of not having been trained sufficiently in peace-making; it also lies in not understanding reconciliation adequately—in particular, in downplaying its social dimensions. A more basic task than to learn how better to communicate the message of reconciliation is to explain more adequately *the inherent social meaning of reconciliation*.

Resistance to Reconciliation

There is a disturbing lack of sustained attempts to explain the social meaning of reconciliation of human beings to God and to relate the core beliefs about

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[3] Augustine, *First Meanings in Genesis*, 11.59.
[4] Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 23.
[5] Premdas, "The Church and Ethnic Conflicts," 56—underlined added.

reconciliation to the shape of Christian social responsibility.[6] In "A Theological Afterword" to *The Reconciliation of Peoples* (1997), one of its editors, Gregory Baum, notes hesitations to connect theological idea of reconciliation with the shape of social responsibility.

> *The authors [of the essays in the book] realize that the church's theological tradition offers very little wisdom on the social meaning of reconciliation. It is symptomatic that even in the most recent* Handbook of Catholic Theology*, published by Crossroad in 1995, the long, scholarly article on reconciliation makes no reference whatever to the reconciliation between peoples.* The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, published by Liturgical Press in 1994, contains no article on reconciliation. Reflection on this topic is only beginning in the church.*[7]

A Catholic theologian, Baum illustrates how limited theological reflection on social dimensions of reconciliation is by pointing to Catholic reference works. With the notable exception of the Anabaptist tradition, Protestant reference works tell the same story. More or less "mainline" *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society* has no listing under "reconciliation." Except for *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*,[8] articles on "reconciliation" found in evangelical theological and ethical dictionaries concentrate on reconciliation between human beings and God. The entry in *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*—written by a New Testament scholar—is symptomatic.[9] Toward the end the author notes:

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[6] Karl Barth is, of course, one towering example of organizing a good deal of Christian social responsibility around the theme of reconciliation (CD IV/1, 190; cf. especially George Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Non-Violent God: Reflections on Rene Girard and Karl Barth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 [1998], 61-85). More recently William C. Placher has summed up the key public significance of the inclusive substitutionary atonement in the following way: "The conviction that in Christ guilt has come to an end ought to be at the heart of any authentic Christian politics" ("Christ Takes Our Place. Rethinking Atonement," *Interpretation* 55 [1/1999], 5-20, 15). Much is right with Placher's overall argument. I would want to make sure, however, that the "coming to an end of guilt" is conceived in such a way so as not to exclude automatically the culpability entailed in not accepting oneself as deserving forgiveness and in not wanting to mend one's ways. A larger issue that lies behind my concern here is the belief that reconciliation cannot be understood as a unidirectional act, but must be perceived as a process that involves all who are mutually estranged. Reconciliation with God cannot take place above human beings, but is a way of bringing human beings into the communion with God and one another. Hence Paul both makes a claim: "God … reconciled us to himself through Christ," and issues a call: "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:18, 20).

[7] Gregory Baum, "A Theological Afterword," *The Reconciliation of Peoples. Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum (Geneva: WCC Publications, Baum, 1997), 184-192, 187.

[8] Ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

[9] Leon Morris, "Reconciliation," *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. Carl F. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 567-568.

in recent time some have thought that reconciliation ought to be seen in what we may term a horizontal rather than a vertical direction.... Reconciliation then becomes a way of enabling men to live together in meaningful community.

Tellingly, the author adds a concession that "there is, of course, some truth in this."[10] But then the text goes on to emphasize the significance of the right order between reconciliation with God and reconciliation between human beings: first vertical and then, as a consequence, horizontal. The comment on the social dimension of reconciliation was a side remark, to indicate the path not worth exploring.

In more recent past, the social agenda of the church has been isolated from the message of reconciliation in two basic ways. The first reduces the doctrine of reconciliation to the *reconciliation of an individual with God* and is favored by more pietistically oriented groups. The approach rests on the correct core belief that, being sinners before God, all persons are called to repent and are offered forgiveness and new life in Christ. The fateful move comes when this core belief is combined with an almost exclusive emphasis on private morality conceived of as the ethical consequence of the reconciliation of a person with God and with a thoroughly apolitical stance based on the persuasion that the church and the state have separate spheres of authority. Reconciliation then has a theological and personal meaning, but no wider social meaning. "Souls" get reconciled with God and individual persons get reconciled with one another, but the wider social world ridden by strife is left more or less to its own devices.

Such a retreat from public responsibility is highly problematic, however. As the sons and daughters of the Old Testament prophets, Christians must make the problems of wider society their own. Similarly, as followers of Jesus Christ they must not shy away either from taking up the concerns of "small people" nor from speaking truth to the powers. The retreat from social responsibility is, however, more than just a failure to take seriously the prophetic and jesuanic traditions. It presupposes an inadequate understanding of reconciliation. As I will show shortly, for the Apostle Paul, who is increasingly recognized as a "political" thinker,[11] reconciliation and peace have a clear social dimension. If Christians have a social responsibility and if reconciliation has a social dimension, then the two should not be kept apart.

The second way in which Christian social agenda has been isolated from the message of reconciliation was tacitly to concede the truncated understanding of reconciliation that I have just sketched, critique social withdrawal, and then to place at the center of the Christian social agenda the *pursuit of freedom and the*

[10] Morris, "Reconciliation," 568.

[11] See Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire. Religion and Power in Rome Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997); N.T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," *Reflections* 2 (1999), 42-65.

struggle for justice. This approach (which is compatible with a wide variety of political agendas, all the way from libertarianism to communism) is favored by more activistic Christian groups who wish to remain, in Nietzsche's phrase but not with his meaning, "faithful to this earth." Such groups have effectively left the message of reconciliation to the otherworldly "pietists" and taken up the pursuit of liberation as the most appropriate response to social problems. The process of reconciliation between persons and peoples, they believe, can commence only *after* liberation is accomplished; peace will be established only *after* justice is done.

The pursuit of liberation and the struggle for justice are indispensable; they are integral to Christian social responsibility. But if they are understood as tasks preceding the process of reconciliation and independent from it, rather than as indispensable aspects of a more overarching agenda of reconciliation,[12] they are beset with two major problems. First, making liberation and justice the *primary* categories of Christian social responsibility divorces the character of social engagement from the very center of the Christian faith—from the narrative of the cross of Christ which reveals the very character of the Triune God. On the cross of Jesus Christ, God is manifest as the God who, though in no way indifferent toward the distinction between good and evil, nonetheless lets the sun shine on both the good and the evil, the God of infinite and indiscriminate love who died for the ungodly in order to bring them into divine communion, the God who offers grace to the vilest evildoer and *justifies* the unjust.

Second, the primary stress on liberation is suited only to situations of manifest evil in which one side is unambiguously the victim and in the right and the other unambiguously the perpetrator and therefore in the wrong. Most situations are, however, not so clean. Especially in conflicts with longer history, each party sees itself as the victim and perceives its rival as the perpetrator, and *has good reasons for reading the situation in this way*! As a consequence, each can see itself as engaged in the struggle for liberation. If social responsibility is organized around liberation, the Christian faith ends up dangerously reducing moral complexity of the situation and feeding into the self-righteousness of each party by assuring them that God is on their side. The primary role of the Christian faith is to motivate and legitimize the struggle. Reconciliation is not even attempted—at least not until "our" side has won. And, unless reconciliation has been the horizon of the struggle for liberation from the outset —which is to say, unless liberation was integrated into the larger agenda of reconciliation—it is not clear why reconciliation should be attempted after the victory.

[12] For attempts to integrate liberation into reconciliation see Theodor Herr, *Versöhnung statt Konflikt. Sozialethische Anmerkungen zu einer Theologie der Versöhnung* (Paderborn: Creator, 1991).

These two ways of shying away from explaining the social meaning of reconciliation—two ways that partly overlap and mutually reinforce each other—have left Christians with inadequate resources in situations of conflict. They find it difficult to help foster reconciliation, even to resist being pulled into the vortex of conflict. Indeed, often they are nothing more than eager combatants on the one side with no other thought on their minds than the destruction of their enemies. This deficiency of both theology and practice underscores the need to explore in a sustained way the social meaning of reconciliation.

Such an exploration would need to have two aspects. First, one would need to show that reconciliation, as a central theological concept, has an inalienable social dimension (and not just that social implications can be drawn from it). Second, one would need to explain in social terms the relationship between grace and justice that lies at the heart of reconciliation. As a result, justice would become a subordinate rather than primary category around which Christian social engagement is organized; or rather, the struggle for justice would be understood *as a dimension of the pursuit of reconciliation whose ultimate goal is a community of love*.[13] In the remainder of the paper I will first look at some biblical resources for explaining the social meaning of reconciliation—for the claim that reconciliation has an inalienable social dimension and that it implies a particular structure of relation between grace and justice. Then, building on the experiences in South Africa, I will suggest how reconciliation ought to be related to the struggle for justice.

Paul and Reconciliation

One way to explore the social meaning of reconciliation from the New Testament perspective would be to look at the Gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. This would lead us to highlight grace and forgiveness, which are so prominent in Jesus' encounters with the sinners—grace and forgiveness, I hasten to add, which do not stand in opposition to justice and blame but affirm justice and blame in the act of transcending them. Another way would be to examine the ethical appropriation of the basic story of Christ's life, death and resurrection in the New Testament. This would lead us, as it has

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[13] In *Exclusion and Embrace* I have attempted to retrieve "embrace" as the central category for Christian social engagement and argued for justice as an essential dimension of embrace (*Exclusion and Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996]. Elsewhere I have developed Trinitarian underpinnings and sketched out the eschatological horizon for the main argument of the book ("'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology*, 14 [1998], 403-423; "The Final Reconciliation. Reflection on a Social Dimension of the Eschatological Transition," *Modern Theology* 16 [2000]).

Karl Barth,[14] to highlight the narrative of the death of Christ—the innocent "victim"—as the paradigm for the Christian life of self-donation.[15] A third way to approach the social meaning of reconciliation would be to concentrate directly on the Apostle Paul's theology of reconciliation. This is what I propose to do here.

The most notable feature of Paul's use of "reconciliation" stands in contrast to the prevalent contemporary notions of reconciliation between God and human beings. Regarding the distinctive character of Paul's use, Seyoon Kim writes,

> *Paul never says that God is reconciled (or, that God reconciles himself) to human beings, but always that God reconciles human beings to himself or that human beings are reconciled to God. It is not, in fact, God who must be reconciled to human beings, but human beings who need to be reconciled to God. Nor is it by people's repentance, prayers or other good works that reconciliation between God and human beings is accomplished, but rather by God's grace alone.*[16]

Kim has argued that the origin of Paul's distinct use of "reconciliation" lies in his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus where he was headed to persecute the early followers of Jesus Christ. "It is most likely," writes Kim in the conclusion of his essay,

> *that his [Paul's] use of the metaphor of reconciliation grew out of his own theological reflections on his Damascus road … experience … For on the Damascus road, Paul, who came to see himself as God's enemy in his activities before Damascus, experienced God's reconciling action, which brought forgiveness of sins and the making of a new creation by his grace.*[17]

Kim's claim about the origin of Paul's notion of reconciliation in the Damascus road experience may be too strong. But there is a striking fit between the key elements of his notion of reconciliation and the key features of the narrative of his encounter with the risen Christ.[18]

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[14] See Karl Barth, *CD* IV/1, 190.

[15] Luke T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

[16] Seyoon Kim, "God Reconciled His Enemy to Himself: The Origin of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation," *The Road From Damascus. The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 102-124, 103). Cf. also Stanley Porter, "Reconciliation and 2 Cor 5:18-21," *The Corinthian Correspondence*, R. Bieringer (ed.), (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 693-705, 704.

[17] Kim, "God Reconciled," 122.

[18] My argument in the following would basically stand even if, with number of New Testament scholars, one made a somewhat weaker argument that Paul's notion of the *justification of the ungodly* rather than a broader notion of reconciliation fits well with his Damascus road experience. One would only need to connect the basic intuition behind the justification of ungodly with the very early tradition that "Christ died for our sins in

Before looking first at the key features of Paul's encounter with Christ and then at the key elements of his notion of reconciliation, it is important to note the significance of the fit between the two against the background of Paul's life as a persecutor of the church. Though he was not a Zealot, he likely belonged to the more radical wing of the pharisaic movement, willing to use violence out of zeal for God. The celebrated Old Testament model of such zeal was Phinehas, who by killing an apostate fellow Israelite and his foreign wife averted God's wrath against Israel (Num 25). This deed earned Phinehas and his posterity not only a perpetual priesthood (v. 13), but, as Psalm 106 puts it, it was "reckoned to him as righteousness (v. 31). If Paul the persecutor thought along these lines, he believed that God demanded strict punishment for unfaithfulness and that the executioner of the punishment was considered "righteous." The encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus not only stopped Paul from violence against fellow-Jews, but did so by offering a radically different perspective on how God relates to God's enemies. "Grace," by which God justifies the ungodly, is the word Paul used in autobiographical passages to describe God's relation to him as God's enemy (Rom 1:5; Gal 1:15).

Consider the following two features of Paul's experience of grace on the road to Damascus. I will explain them using Luke's narrative in Acts 9. This is a controversial but, I believe, theologically justified move. I follow Martin Hengel's suggestion that at least the kernel of the Damascus vision as reported in Acts goes "back to Paul's own account of it."[19] And this kernel must have contained the two features I am about to explore, because one could easily extrapolate them from Paul's own autobiographical statements. Since I am interested primarily in theology rather than history at this point, finding these features in *Luke's story* is all the more significant.

First, *though grace is unthinkable without justice, justice is subordinate to grace.* As a persecutor of the church, Paul was an enemy of God (or, more precisely, he came to see himself in retrospect as an enemy of God). On the road to Damascus, Paul encountered the God who, though clearly opposed to Paul's intentions, did not let the demands of justice govern actions toward him but instead showed love by offering reconciliation to Paul, the enemy. Paul's transformation was not the result of the pursuit of strict justice on the part of the "victim" (the exalted Christ in self-identification with the church). Had the "victim" pursued strict justice, Paul never would have become the apostle of the very church he persecuted.

Though Paul was saved by the God who sought to reconcile the enemy, no cheap reconciliation, which closes its eyes before injustice, took place on the

accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:4) to get to the specifically Pauline notion of reconciliation.

[19] See Hengel/Schwemer, 1997, 31ff. Cf. Klaus Haacker, *Paulus. Der Werdegang eines Apostels* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1997), 104-114.

road to Damascus. The divine voice named the action by its proper name—"persecution" (Acts 9:4)—made the disapproval of the action powerfully felt—Paul "fell to the ground" (v. 4)—and asked the uncomfortable "Why?": "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (v. 4). Jesus Christ named the injustice and resisted the behavior. Significantly, however, he did so in the very act of offering reconciliation. Hence, though justice was an indispensable element of reconciliation, peace between Paul and the Speaker of the divine voice was not simply the consequence of justice carried out, but of *justice both clearly affirmed and unmistakably transcended in an act of undeserved grace*.

Second, though reconciliation of human beings to God has primacy, reconciliation between human beings is intrinsic to their reconciliation to God. If the origin of Paul's message of reconciliation was his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, then the enmity toward God does not consist in isolated attitudes, acts, or a state of enmity toward God, which then, as a consequence, result in enmity toward other human beings. In the account in Acts we read that "Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). On the road to Damascus, he was "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (9:1). At the same time, the voice from heaven identified itself explicitly as the voice of Jesus Christ: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (9:4-5). So from the start and at its heart, the enmity toward God was enmity toward human beings, and the enmity toward human beings was enmity toward God. Consequently, from the start, reconciliation does not simply have a vertical dimension but also a horizontal one; without that horizontal dimension it would simply not be what it is. Reconciliation contains a turn away from enmity toward people, not just from enmity to God, and it contains a movement toward a human community, precisely that community which was the target of enmity. Just as the persecutor was received by Christ, so the persecutor was received by the community which he had persecuted. And just as he became a "servant" of Christ, he also sought to give a gift to the community that received him; he became a builder of the very community that he sought to destroy (Acts 9:20).

Inscribed in the event that transformed Paul from persecutor to apostle was the center of the message which he came to proclaim – the message that we were reconciled to God "while we were enemies" (Rom 5:10) and that God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom 4:5). "Reconciliation of enemies" and "justification of the ungodly" in no way contradict God's "wrath" against enmity and ungodliness (Rom 1:18; 1 Thess 2:16). On the contrary, God's wrath is an indispensable presupposition of reconciliation and justification. For at the heart of reconciliation lies the twin belief that evil must be named as evil but that the restoration of the communion with the evildoer is not based (indeed, *cannot* be based!) simply on justice done. Instead, restoration of the communion rests

fundamentally on the fact that God, the injured party who rightfully passes judgment on the injuring party, has reached out in grace to the perpetrators in order to make friends out of enemies, and continues to do so despite their persisting sin and enmity. Such judgment against sin for the sake of communion was, in Paul's understanding, precisely the point of Christ's death. The Christ who knew no sin was made sin in order that by his death sin would be condemned in the flesh (Rom 8:3) and sinners restored to God. Instead of pursuing rightful claims of justice against the enemy, through Christ's death God sought to justify the unjust and overcome the opponents' enmity – not so as to condone their injustice and affirm their enmity, but to open up the possibility of doing justice and living in peace, whose ultimate shape is a community of love.

Just as grace lies at the core of Paul's message of reconciliation with God, so grace—grace, I repeat, which consists in the affirmation of justice in the act of transcending it – lies at the core of his mission to reconcile Jews and gentiles.[20] Moreover, Paul argued that the pattern of the divine reconciling movement toward estranged humanity is the model for how the followers of Christ should relate to their neighbors (see Rom 15:7).[21] This may help explain why Paul's most extensive treatment of the theme of reconciliation of human beings to God comes in an epistle directed to the church in Corinth (2 Cor 5:17-21), which was not only internally ridden with strife but whose relationship to the Apostle Paul himself was tense. And it is no accident that the circle around Paul would claim that Christ "is our peace" because he has "broken down hostility between us" (Eph 2:14). And it is in that same circle that a grand vision of the reconciliation of all things through Christ's death and resurrection was conceived: "For in him [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). According to the author of Colossians, the ultimate vision not only for the church but also for the whole of reality is a vision of the reconciliation of all things – creation of dynamic harmony in a world ravaged by life-impairing strife. To live the

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[20] James D.G. Dunn, "Paul and Justification by Faith," *The Road from Damascus. The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 85-101. Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Christ and Gender. A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal 3:28," *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift. Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums,* Christoph Landmesser (ed.), (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 439-477. The claim that grace lies at the core of Paul's mission to reconcile Jews and Gentiles holds true even apart from the question about what Paul was fundamentally after in his doctrine of justification by faith—whether he was after resolving the problem of the guilt of individual persons or after mending the relation between Jews and gentiles.

[21] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 28f.

gospel and to preach the gospel means to help make this grand vision of reconciliation a reality.

A vision of reconciliation is a vision that entails a coherent set of fundamental beliefs about the nature of God and of human beings and about the relation between justice and grace. Such a vision lies at the core of the Pauline understanding of the Christian faith. If social engagement is to be properly Christian, it ought to be governed by that vision. And only if social engagement is governed by such a vision will Christians have adequate theological resources to resist the temptation to become accomplices in strife instead of being agents of peace. To *actually* resist the temptation, however, other resources are needed, too. Courage, power, and wisdom are indispensable, for instance. Yet without the vision of reconciliation, courage, power, and wisdom would remain blind.

Reconciliation and Liberation

Many are the reasons why theologians have hesitated to let the Pauline vision of reconciliation govern Christian social thought and practice. One is certainly the dominance of the concepts of "freedom" and "justice" in the political discourse of modernity. Another is a tendency in some conservative Christian circles to embrace a vision of reconciliation as an alternative to the struggle for justice. In the remainder of this essay I want to address this second reason for hesitation about reconciliation by showing that reconciliation and liberation, love and justice are not alternatives but rather that reconciliation and love, out of their own inner logic, demand liberation and justice. We cannot *abandon the pursuit of liberation and justice*. In fact, at times the struggle for justice must be in the forefront of our attention—though never so prominent as to crowd out the "embrace" toward which justice must move if it is to be properly understood and pursued.

Consider the critique of "cheap reconciliation" contained in the well-known *Kairos Document*, written before the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa:

> *In our situation in South Africa today it would be totally unchristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. Any such plea plays into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us. That is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice.*[22]

The vision described here as "cheap reconciliation" sets "justice" and "peace" as alternatives. To pursue reconciliation here means to give up the

[22] *Challenge to the Church. A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa. The Kairos Document and Commentaries* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), art. 3.1. (p. 18).

struggle for liberation, to put up with oppression. From my perspective, this would amount to a betrayal of the oppressed as well as of the Christian faith. As I read the Christian message, a prophetic strand which denounces economic and political oppression has a prominent place in it. This prophetic strand cannot be removed without gravely distorting the message.

Having rejected with the *Kairos Document* a cheap grace of cheap reconciliation, I want to argue against the tendency of the document—a tendency that it shares with much of Christian social thinking in recent decades—either to see reconciliation and justice as alternatives (from the perspective of the process) so that you either do one or the other or to see reconciliation as subsequent to establishment of justice (from the perspective of the outcome) so that the process of reconciliation starts when justice is established). Let me explicate.

First, taken seriously, a "first justice, then reconciliation" stance is an impossibility. As Nietzsche rightly noted in *Human, All Too Human*, given the nature of human interaction all pursuit of justice not only rests and feeds on injustices but also creates new injustices.[23] Injustice is a tare that cannot be removed from the wheat of human interaction – until that eschatological Day when the wheat will be gathered up into the "barns." Moreover, all accounts of what is just are to some extent relative to a particular group and therefore invariably contested by the rival group. No peace is possible within the overarching framework of strict justice for the simple reason that no strict justice is possible. Second, "first liberation, then reconciliation" is at odds with the core Christian beliefs inscribed in the narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As I have argued earlier, the Pauline version of the Christian faith—and the same could be argued for the practice and teaching of Jesus—stands and falls with the idea that grace has priority over justice (grace, again, which does not negate justice but which *affirms* justice in the act of transcending it).

If neither "first justice, then reconciliation" nor "cheap reconciliation" is theologically appropriate, we must look for a third option. I suggest that the alternative consists in placing the struggle for justice within an overarching framework of reconciliation, as the New Testament notion of reconciliation demands. It is noteworthy that the peaceful dismantling of apartheid in South Africa did not follow the schema "first justice, then reconciliation" advocated by the *Kairos Document.* As John de Gruchy has noted, at the very time the document was being written, tentative secret talks were under way between Mandela and the South African government. It had become abundantly clear to Mandela, de Gruchy goes on to say:

[23] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. Marion Faber (University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 216.

that there was no alternative. Neither the state nor the liberation movement had the capacity to achieve a decisive victory, and the prolonging of the vicious stalemate could only spell disaster for the country as a whole. Seeking reconciliation was, paradoxically, an instrument of the struggle to end apartheid and establish a just social order. The path of reconciliation was not only the goal of liberation but a means to achieve that end. It was an instrument in which the revolutionary struggle, political realism, and moral integrity combined to produce an almost irresistible force.[24]

This account of democratic change in South Africa rightly highlights two essential elements. First, struggle for justice was indispensable. In situations of significant difference in power, as in the apartheid South Africa, the weaker party must engage in struggle to bring the stronger party to the point of wanting a just peace rather than merely a pacification of the oppressed. Second, reconciliation was not simply the result of a successful struggle for justice. Rather, the move toward reconciliation preceded the achievement of liberation and was a means toward greater justice. The rightful polemic against "cheap reconciliation" was not allowed to "undermine the potential of reconciliation as an instrument for achieving justice."[25] Apartheid was dismantled, argues de Gruchy, through "a two-pronged attack ... which may be described, in hindsight, in terms of a dialectical understanding of reconciliation,"[26] reconciliation seen both as a *result of justice* and as an *instrument of justice*.

In de Gruchy's dialectical understanding of reconciliation, *struggle for justice* is not only rightly seen as indispensable, but is also *given preeminence*; it towers over reconciliation. The search of reconciliation was initiated by the victims prior to the realization of justice not because the framework of justice was deemed inadequate in principle; rather, the move toward reconciliation was inserted into the framework of justice because no party could achieve a decisive victory. So from this perspective it was "paradoxical" that the pursuit of reconciliation functioned as an instrument of the struggle to end apartheid.

De Gruchy may be right about the actual process by which apartheid was dismantled. But is such a "dialectical understanding of reconciliation" adequate theologically? Though it represents a significant move in the right direction, I want to suggest that still another step needs to be made to relate adequately liberation and reconciliation, struggle for justice and striving after embrace. Why does another step need to be made and what is that step?

If one sets human relations primarily in the larger framework of justice, in any settlement reached one or both parties *will inescapably not have received their proper due*. Hence within the framework of justice the discourse of reconciliation

[24] John de Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation. Church and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa," *The Reconciliation of Peoples. Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 16-29, 18.

[25] De Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation," 22.

[26] De Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation," 22.

will always remain predominantly the discourse of "principled compromise," understood as "willingness to give ground on what is not essential for the sake of the greater good," as de Gruchy in fact states.[27] The need for "compromise" is understandable, and he expresses the reasons for it well. "Clearly," he writes, "it would be impossible to make adequate reparations for all the injustice and hurt caused by apartheid and the centuries of colonialism that preceded it," which is what justice would demand.[28] In addition to the call for compromise, the only thing de Gruchy can demand within his framework is that "it is essential that as much is done as possible to overcome the legacy of apartheid and redress historic wrongs."[29]

The demand is, of course, right; one would not want to demand less justice than possible. The trouble is that under the overreaching framework of justice, such a demand will necessarily keep people unreconciled *even if it is fulfilled*! Since justice will never have been completely done, not enough will have been done even when all that can be done is done. So *since justice is impossible, justification is necessary*—necessary, that is, if we are to have anything like "embrace." Hence liberation is placed within the overarching framework of reconciliation and there is a need to both affirm and transcend justice in an act of grace. Grace is a compromise of sorts, too. But it is a compromise not as a negative concession to my weakness or your incalcitrance, but compromise as a gift to you with a hope of a return in light of the impossibility of justice.

We should *invert the order of primacies between liberation and reconciliation, between justice and love*. Within a dialectical relationship between the two, reconciliation has primacy over liberation, and love over justice. It is essential to underscore both the *primacy* of reconciliation over liberation and the *dialectical* relationship between the two. Apart from the primacy of reconciliation, the pursuit of liberation will never lead to peace and love between former enemies; without the commitment to justice within the overarching framework of love, the pursuit of reconciliation will be perverted into mere pacification, which is to say into perpetuation of oppression.

Such relationship between reconciliation and justice requires of us to make four interrelated claims. First, the *will to embrace is unconditional and indiscriminate*. In the light of God's unconditional and universal love and against the backdrop of the impossibility of justice, we must insist that the will to embrace the other and the movement toward the other for the sake of reconciliation is prior to any reading of the justice of the other. The process of reconciliation should proceed under the assumption that, though the behavior of a person may be judged as deplorable, even demonic, no one should ever be

[27] De Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation," 18.

[28] De Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation," 26. Cf. also Allen, "Balancing Justice," 15-16.

[29] De Gruchy, "The Dialectic of Reconciliation," 26.

excluded from the will to embrace for the simple reason that, at the deepest level, the relationship to others does not rest on moral performance and therefore cannot be undone by the lack of it.

Second, *truth and justice are preconditions of an actual embrace*. Notice that I have described *the will* to embrace as unconditional and indiscriminate, not the embrace itself. A genuine embrace, an embrace that neither play-acts acceptance nor crushes the other, cannot take place until the truth about transgressions between people has been told and what is just established. Hence the will to embrace includes in itself the will to find what is the case and the will to determine what is just. The will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrongs that have been done and to reshape the relationship so as to correspond to what one believes to be true and just.

Third, the will to embrace is the framework for the search for justice. If it is true that justice is a precondition of the actual embrace, it is also true that the search for truth is unlikely to succeed without the will to embrace. Clenched fist as a symbol of the will to exclude and open arms as a symbol of the will to embrace are both epistemological stances; they are conditions of moral perception. The clenched fist hinders perception of the possible justness of those against whom it is directed and thereby reinforces injustice. The open arms help detect any justness behind what appears as manifest unjustness of one's opponents and thereby help establish justice. To agree on justice in situations of conflict, you must want more than justice; you must want embrace.

Fourth, *embrace is the goal of the struggle for justice*. If you struggle for justice and nothing but justice, you will inevitably get injustice. You must aim to embrace, for a world of perfect justice *is* a world of perfect love.

Such a vision of justice within the overarching framework of embrace is expressed in a compelling way by Peter Storey, past president of the Methodist Church of South Africa and of the South African Council of Churches and a member of the selection committee for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In a fine article entitled, "A Different Kind of Justice: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa," he argues that the experiences of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission point "beyond conventional retribution into a realm where justice and mercy coalesce and both victim and perpetrator must know pain if healing is to happen. It is an area more consistent with Calvary than the courtroom."[30]

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[30] Peter Storey, "A Different Kind of Justice: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa," *The Christian Century* 114 (1997), 788-793, 793.

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The Abrahamic Mandate and Faith-Based Diplomacy

Brian Cox*

The purpose of this article is to explore the nature of the Abrahamic mandate, its application to the Messianic Jewish community, its present incarnation in the form of faith-based diplomacy and the modes of intervention by faith-based intermediaries.

The Abrahamic Mandate

In Genesis 12:1-2 God spoke to Abraham (Avram):

> *Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing.*

In this revelation to Abraham God calls him forth from the security of family relationships, homeland and a collective identity to begin a new experiment which ultimately will become known as *tikkun olam* or reconciliation. As he journeys across the Fertile Crescent he holds in his bosom the kernel of a transcendent vision. He responds in faith and it becomes a defining moment of establishing the Abrahamic tradition and mandate. Three great communities of faith, over two billion people on the face of the earth, point back to this decisive revelation and wrestle with the heritage of the Abrahamic mandate. For Abraham this mandate had only the barest outline: He was to give birth to a nation that would bless all the nations of the earth.

This Abrahamic mandate was further refined through God's revelation to Moses who, with the liberated Hebrew slaves, was given a covenant and a moral law by God. It became the basis for a new society to be formed in the wilderness. The five books of the Torah were meant to be more than the basis of a private relationship with God. The Torah was to be the core of a moral vision for society. It formed the basis of cultural values, institutions and presuppositions within the new society that became known as Israel.

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Through the Torah, the Writings and the Prophets, Israel's understanding of the Abrahamic mandate became further refined and crystallized in eight core values. These core values were:

1) The pluralistic nature of God's creation: gender, ethnicity, race, culture, which means that we seek unity in the midst of diversity.

2) Compassionate inclusion of all people in a society which includes embrace of one's enemies.

3) Peaceful resolution of conflicts between individuals and groups.

4) Forgiveness as a bedrock principle both in relationships between individuals and between communities or nations.

5) Social justice as a basis for right ordering of relationships and structures in a society.

6) The healing of historical wounds that stem from exclusion, prejudice, conflict, injustice or unforgiveness and hold back a community's true potential for growth and development.

7) Collective acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over the community or nation.

8) Affirming and validating the universal experience of spiritual hunger, alienation and the need for atonement with God.

In the New Testament we find the fullness of God's revelation of the Abrahamic mandate, particularly in the writings of Paul. Based in the promised land, Israel was to be an instrument of faith-based reconciliation to the nations under the leadership of their Messiah and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Application to the Messianic Community

The Abrahamic mandate is one that has been embraced by the three great faith traditions of the world; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, this mandate was given first and foremost to Israel and the Jewish community as a unique witness and vocation. There is an essential uniqueness of *tikkun olam* as a core part of Jewish identity. Michael Lerner, a Rabbi from San Francisco, writes:

> *Judaism presents the world with a challenge: that the world can and should be fundamentally changed; that the central task facing the human race is tikkun olam, the healing and transformation of the world. And Judaism has keen insight into how that can be accomplished. The historical project of the Jewish people is to be witnesses to the possibility of healing repair and transformation of the world and rejection of all forms of cynicism and pessimism that lead people to reconcile themselves with systems of oppression.*

Having thus revealed the nature of the Abrahamic mandate, God stipulated two further parameters of this vocation of *tikkun olam*. First of all, through the prophet Zechariah (4:6) God revealed that this mandate was to be carried out not by might or human power, but through the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, through the prophet Isaiah (52:13–53:12) God

revealed that he would be sending a messianic reconciler who would provide the spiritual basis for restoration of relationship with God and with one another (atonement and forgiveness). Six hundred years later this messianic reconciler emerged in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (Yeshua). His earliest followers were Messianic Jews who, over time, began to grasp the profound nature of Yeshua's ministry which was to universalize the Abrahamic mandate.

Since its rebirth, the Messianic Jewish community has been absorbed with questions of identity, growth, doctrine, infrastructure, relations with the gentile churches and the mainline Jewish community. In all that maelstrom it has sometimes spent so much time planting the trees that it has failed to look up and observe the forest. From the macro or strategic perspective what does one see? I see a modern day miracle of God raising the Messianic Jewish community from the dead to fulfill the Abrahamic mandate of being an instrument of faith-based reconciliation to the nations.

Faith-Based Diplomacy

As we enter the 21st century the Abrahamic mandate, in its relationship to politics and the affairs of nations, has taken on the form of faith-based diplomacy, which is a form of multi-track diplomacy that seeks to integrate the dynamics of religious faith with the conduct of international peacemaking and statecraft. In a sense, Isaiah (2:3-5) prophesied about the emergence of faith-based diplomacy in the fullness of time:

> *Come, let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob. That God may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For the law shall go out from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. God shall mediate between the nations and shall judge for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

As the sociopolitical manifestation of the Abrahamic mandate, faith-based diplomacy is an emerging paradigm of reconciliation that is needed in the resolution of international conflict and the rebuilding of divided societies. In his 1994 book *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, Douglas Johnston makes the case for the role of religious actors in resolving international conflict. He points out that in the traditional view diplomacy is understood in more restrictive terms as involving the relationships between sovereign states and their duly-appointed representatives. Historically the notion of multi-track diplomacy emerged from the realization of diplomats, social scientists and other conflict resolution professionals that official government diplomacy was not always the most effective method for securing international cooperation. Multi-track diplomacy views the process of international peacemaking as a living system including the contributions of citizen diplomats, or non-state actors such as NGO's, business persons, private citizens, educators, activists or religious leaders.

Faith-based diplomacy is more about reconciliation than it is about conflict resolution. The peace that it pursues is not the mere absence of conflict, but rather a restoration of healthy and respectful relationships between the parties. While faith-based intermediaries believe that diplomacy and the international system should be morally grounded, they also see a need for pragmatic idealism in their pursuit of reconciliation. The reconciliation that they seek encompasses a range of consideration that we call modes of intervention.

Modes of Intervention

How do we understand the specific ways in which faith empowers diplomacy? I will now address the eight key modes of intervention that largely define the scope of activity of a faith-based intermediary.

First, there is the imparting of a new vision in which the diplomat encourages the parties to embrace a new reality and a new relationship with one another. Each of the major world religions contains a set of moral principles to govern human relationships. Sometimes an appeal to those principles which are held in common can create a transcendent dynamic for overcoming the secular obstacles and moving toward reconciliation. Professor Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School speculates that one reason Jesus' words touched Mahatma Gandhi so deeply may be that they evoked associations with his very Hindu conviction that even the bitterest enemies can be reconciled if they can be led to see the situation differently.

Reconciliation itself can constitute a key element in the moral vision of a particular community or nation-state, quite apart from whether or not it is embroiled in conflict. In deeply divided societies emerging from violent conflict, it is particularly important that the concept of reconciliation become firmly anchored and constitute a permanent center of gravity on all sides. Without a fresh moral vision, the past remains unhealed and can cause even greater harm in the future. Imparting such a vision becomes particularly important when intervening with heads of state or leaders of ethnic communities since a key aspect of leadership is the articulation of vision. A good illustration of this approach is the initiative taken by the Moral Rearmament Movement in bringing French and German leaders together following World War II in order to reconcile their differences on a personal level. This process effectively prepared the way for the later establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community.

A second mode of intervention is building bridges, a task that involves the development of tangible and intangible connections among diverse groups so that they can live together in peace and seek a common good for the entire community. Bridgebuilding assumes a pluralistic vision for a community and provides the framework for forging unity out of diversity. When bringing people together in this manner, faith-based intermediaries look to spiritual

principles and traditions as a basis for establishing common ground between people. The Quakers are among the best at building such bridges.

A third mode of intervention is resolving conflict, usually through mediation. Here the goals are threefold: to bring an end to the hostilities, to resolve the issues underlying the conflict, and to restore the relationships. People of faith place as much, if not more, value on relationships as they do on negotiating a successful settlement. Through spiritual conversations with the parties to a conflict, a faith-based intermediary can penetrate the heart and uncover the deeper interests, values, and fears that can form the basis for a lasting settlement of the conflict. The Mennonite role and that of the Moravian Church in securing peace between the Sandinista regime and the East Coast Indians of Nicaragua in 1988 is a good example of this kind of intervention.

A fourth mode of intervention focuses on healing the wounds of history. These are normally the result of events in the collective institutional memory of an identity-based community, the recollection of which brings a sense of pain and suffering and inhibits the healthy development of that community. Until these wounds are effectively addressed, they inevitably give rise to stereotyping and the demonization of those who caused the wounds. This, in turn, can adversely affect relationships into future generations. So long as one or both parties remain captive to a wounded history, they will be unable to reach beyond their bitterness and sense of injustice. Faith-based intermediaries are among the best equipped to deal with such situations. There are resources within religious traditions that can enable adherents to (1) reflect on their history in a redemptive manner, (2) to bring meaning and dignity to the suffering, and (3) hold out the promise of genuine healing.

The fifth mode of intervention is advocacy for social justice, which often places the faith-based intermediary in an antagonistic role with the state or a privileged segment of society. Faith-based social justice relates to the fact that religious values provide a moral framework upon which human relationships and structures can be based. These are embodied in such concepts as human rights, religious freedom, and other forms of democratic expression. Social justice, in turn, is a prerequisite to reconciliation. To a large extent, this is the kind of justice that has been taking root in South Africa in the wake of the collapse of apartheid.

The sixth mode of intervention is advocacy for religious freedom, which again can place the faith-based intermediary in an antagonistic role with the state or a privileged religious institution. One of many outgrowths of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment was the concept of religious freedom. This means that no human power has the right to prevent or inhibit worship of God or the supreme being. The task of advocacy for religious freedom can take on one of three forms: advocacy on behalf of one's own religious community, advocacy on behalf of a religious minority different from

one's own religious community, and advocacy on behalf of religious faith and expression for all traditions.

A seventh mode of intervention is negotiating for prisoners and hostages. This task is one for which faith-based intermediaries can play a critical humanitarian role that literally saves lives. Frequently in conflicts that involve a significant power differential between the parties, the weaker entity will use prisoners and hostages as a negotiating ploy to level the playing field. Quite often governments or revolutionary groups are unwilling to release the hostages to the party with whom they are in conflict. However, they are able to save face by releasing them to an intermediary as a humanitarian gesture.

The final mode of intervention is serving as a go-between messenger. The most difficult task in mediating a conflict is convening the mediation or getting the parties to the table. Frequently, they are unable or unwilling to speak with each other directly and thus need an intermediary to carry messages between them. This has been dubbed as "shuttle diplomacy" and is another common role of intermediaries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the heart or essence of the Abrahamic mandate is to be an instrument of faith-based reconciliation to the nations. The Messianic Jewish community has been raised from the dead to fulfill that God-given historic role given to Israel and the Jewish community. In the realm of politics and the affairs of nation,s the Abrahamic mandate takes on the form of faith-based diplomacy which involves eight key modes of intervention. As a religious leader from the historic churches and as a professional in faith-based diplomacy and international peacemaking, I am committed to seeing the Messianic Jewish community take its place as the elder brother in the task of taking the gospel of reconciliation to the nations.

On the Road of Reconciliation

Salim Munayer*

Reconciliation is not an easy path. Often believers in the Messiah find themselves on two sides of a conflict.[31] Although we share a common faith, there are great cultural, historical and language differences. Violent conflict, political ideologies and theological disparities cause divisions and create enemies. Both sides are emotionally charged by their pain and enmity; the conflict is a continuous struggle between two people.

The mandate for reconciliation is very clear in the Scriptures, yet the challenge lies in how we apply the Biblical teaching in our daily life. How do we reconcile with our fellow brother or sister who belongs to the other side? Moreover, how do we put into practice the Bible's teachings on "Love your neighbor as yourself," and especially "Love your enemy?"

Biblical Mandate for Reconciliation

"*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity*" (Ps 133:1). In the years of the first *intifada*, Palestinian Christian and Messianic Israeli leaders observed that many meetings between Israelis and Palestinians did not reflect this scripture. Instead, after the initial meeting, the two sides moved to accusations, blame, and many were left hurt and hopeless. In spite of the difficulties in getting together, the scriptural commandments are an impetus and a driving force for reconciliation:

1: Christ's act on the cross reconciles humanity to God. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." (2 Cor 4:18-19).

2: Jesus' obedience compels us to obey His commands for unity and to experience the fellowship and community of believers. "For he himself is

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The author thanks Brittany Browning for her input.

[31] G. Shenk, (2000) "Anonymous are the Peacemakers" in *Christianity Today,* Volume 44, No.14, p. 34.

our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier ... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross …" (Eph 2:14-16).

3: Our unity in him is an essential element in our proclamation and the truth that he is the Savior of the world. Jesus prayed that believers' unity would be a message of his salvation: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

The challenge before Messianic Israeli and Palestinian Christian leaders was to find a forum where they could meet with each other, develop relationships and a certain level of trust that would help them deal with some core issues of the conflict between their peoples.

Building Relationships in Order to Face the Issues

The reality of our situation in the Middle East is that Israeli and Palestinians are living as if in one house. As they live in such close quarters, intermingling is unavoidable and even necessary, albeit tense. At the end of the day, there is no choice but to live side-by-side; therefore reconciliation and building relationships are essential.

While the Oslo peace accords attempted to work out a solution for co-existence, the political solution failed to mend inter-group relations, or to alter attitudes of hatred and prejudice that undermine political agreements. Thus while hammering out a way for them to share the house, the political process could not induce the change of heart required to live alongside each other.

Believers can play an important part in this conflict, because as a result of their faith in the Messiah, they are "one body." Because of Christ's death on the cross, believers are given the tools required for a transformation of hearts, and can answer hatred and bitterness with the message of forgiveness and love. In the current political conflict and division, believers can be examples and models that it is possible to live side-by-side, free of the bondage of hatred.

At the same time, believers disagree on many issues, especially political and theological. The disparity of opinions among believers is so severe in some cases that it can tear down the unity of the body of the Messiah. Thus, our task is to deal with the issues in a way that builds unity. First, a safe forum must be established through building relationships, and then room can be given to express, exchange, learn, and debate the issues. Many want to deal with the issues right away without understanding the importance of the process: that

these issues will be dealt with in proper time and manner, in the context of developed relationships.

Some have misunderstood the process and importance of building relationships, labeling it "cheap reconciliation." The objection is that the process maintains the status quo for the dominant group and ignores the reality of the situation in favor of unrealistic, idealistic relationships. While some believe that reconciliation takes place at the cost of justice, pursuing justice and restoration is a natural and Biblical part of the reconciliation process. John Dawson states that restitution, defined as "Attempting to restore that which has been damaged or destroyed and seeking justice wherever we have power to act or to influence those in authority to act," is a component of the Biblical model for reconciliation.[32]

In promoting understanding between two opposing groups, some feel that one side's agenda is promoted or pushed on the other. In our ministry of reconciliation at Musalaha, the charge from the Palestinian point of view was that we promoted a Zionistic agenda. From the Israeli point of view, some argued that we were advocating a Palestinian position.

Reconciliation must include a platform for presenting different perspectives and dealing with different opinions. However, this platform must be built on relationships that bring people into a spirit of brotherly love, gracious honesty, and respect.

The Challenges in Developing Relationships

Division among the body dilutes the act of Christ on the cross. When we cease to be unified, we cease to be salt and light in the world. There are many obstacles that drive a wedge between believers. Our broken relationships reflect the Bible's teachings that sin manifests itself in our social relations between individuals and ethnic groups. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar" (I Jn 4:20). It is important for those who are involved in reconciliation to understand the role of sin in causing division within the body of the Messiah.

The social aspect of sin takes the form of misperceptions and prejudice that can lead to rage, hate and violence. Each person perceives reality through the lenses of their culture, personality, and sinfulness. Perceptions of the other are formed in childhood, in schools and playgrounds, and are affected by culture, language, and history. These perceptions among groups are trends that are

[32] J. Dawson, *What Christians Should Know about Reconciliation* (UK: Sovereign World, 1998).

often found at the roots of intergroup conflict and broken relationships. The following trends are evident in our situation:[33]

Division between us and them. Individuals tend to evaluate one's own group with sensitivity and favor. We are able to understand our own group, recognize its good qualities, and become attached to it. We overlook our own shortcomings because it is important to distinguish between us (who are right and good and merciful) and them (who are evil and wrong); and thus we can blame them.

Dehumanization. Dehumanization limits how we see each other. Palestinians often see any Israeli as the enemy, who wants to steal their land and get rid of them. Israelis often see any Arab as the enemy, a terrorist desiring to push them into the sea.

Failure to see plurality within other side. It is more difficult to understand "them." Instead of recognizing their qualities, we generalize and stereotype the other, saying things like, "They all hate and want to kill us," or "They are the animals, they are the evil ones." We are unable to see them as individuals with unique feelings and thoughts as God created them.

Suspicion. When the other does not behave or speak according to our mental picture of them, we think that they have ulterior motives. "They" cannot really be a decent person, they must have some other agenda. We develop a "conspiracy complex," anticipating that "they" are conspiring to harm us.

Self-fulfilling prophecy. Often, the image that is projected on others and the behavior towards them provokes them to behave accordingly, confirming stereotypes. In our situation, we hear from each side that the other only understands power. Thus, they have continued to speak to one another in the language of power and violence.

Moral Superiority. Thus, we decide that we are more peace-loving, trustworthy, and honest. Our values become a moral authority, and we view with contempt those who have different values. Often we will not mix with those who do not share our moral standards, as they might change or corrupt us. The feeling of moral superiority allows for separation and protection, and can justify hatred or legitimize mistreatment of the other.

[33] Some points were included in Musalaha's May 2001 article, "Who Hates More? Who is More Evil?"

Perceived victimization. Both Israelis and Palestinian strongly perceive themselves as victims, and therefore are unable to see themselves as a threat to the other. If we are the victims, then we cannot be the victimizers. The victims' mentality causes them to be blind to others' pain, aspirations and needs, and therefore justify their attitude towards the other. This perception of themselves as the threatened and injured party, also allows for fear and hostility towards the other. Therefore violent action is justified, and some politicians use these fears to promote their political agenda.

Demonization. As each side believes that God is on his side, it follows that the devil must be on the other side. Both sides use religious language, showing the enemy as the instrument of the devil, who is beyond redemption, and therefore violence is justified.

These trends are obstacles in the process of reconciliation. If they are ignored, there is no process; instead it becomes a confirmation of misperceptions and attitudes. Holding on to these opinions allows us to neglect the fact that each person is created in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of the Messiah. What can be done to restore in our perceptions the truth that the enemy also is created in God's image? Relationships must be built in order to counter these tendencies and to make progress in reconciliation.

Finding Common Ground

In general, Palestinians and Israelis have minimal contact with one another on a personal level. While they may interact in a work or study environment, a personal and social relationship usually fails to develop. Those who wish to make steps in reconciliation need a vehicle or forum to come together.

Desert Encounter. One avenue that Musalaha developed in our ministry is the Desert Encounter. In an area with such complex realities, it is difficult to find common ground that is an appropriate forum for teaching and advancing in reconciliation. There are very few locations that are neutral and easily accessible. In order to solve this problem, Palestinian and Israeli groups travel together on a desert journey. The desert is a uniquely neutral atmosphere, where everyone is in the same position, working together to negotiate the hardships of the desert sun or a stubborn camel. There, the environment strips participants of their comfort zones and forces them to relate on a different level. The challenges of survival and cooperation provide an excellent occasion for open communication. In the desert, they share devotions, life stories, narratives, fears, struggles and hopes; and in doing so they reach a certain level of intimacy.

While to some it sounds merely fun and exotic, in actuality the experience does initiate changed perceptions and new relationships. Participants respond

in different ways. Some return home having had a good—but not life-changing—experience. For others, the encounter is a substantial breakthrough in their understanding of the "enemy." In several cases, Israelis have visited Palestinians in their West Bank homes, and vice-versa. One pastor reported, "I used to hate them ... but now I am starting to understand."

Theological Seminars. Over time, Palestinian and Israeli believers have understood that a vast array of theological interpretations exists. While leaders are often divided on issues such as the land, prophecy, end-time theology, justice and peace, they have recognized that they have unclear or incomplete understandings of one another's positions. Therefore, theologians and leaders have sought an edifying environment for discussing and listening to different perspectives. Through years of seminars on these topics participants have arrived at the conclusion that, in order to progress in the issue, they must agree on a common hermeneutic.[34]

Women's Activities. Israeli and Palestinian women must deal with the effects of living in a highly tense and uncertain atmosphere. Women have a unique impact in society; thus conferences are provided that will enable building relationships between these two groups of women. Considering the very special needs, concerns and contributions of this unique group, women's gatherings are a platform for addressing some of the intrinsic subjects concerning daily life and family issues.

Hardship Trips. One aspect of reconciliation is understanding each others' pain. Visits to places of pain or trauma that our people have inflicted upon each other are helpful in learning the history of our peoples. These trips are quite intimate and intense, requiring a sensitive approach. Participants become vulnerable to one another, share their narratives, express sorrow and confess sin. Recognizing and learning one anothers' histories is an important aspect of the reconciliation process.

Following Up. When participants return to their communities they can undergo negative pressure. Their experience and change of heart causes peers to question their loyalty to their own group. Thus follow-up projects and gatherings provide a means to keep in contact with one another. In many cases the meetings provide a means to take relationships to a deeper level and to deal with difficult issues.

Social service work is an opportunity to reach out to the larger community and to confirm the relationships that have developed. Groups of Palestinians and Israelis have helped in collecting food, remodeling churches, and visiting the elderly and hospitals. Onlookers question this strange phenomenon and it can become a testimony of the unity found in Christ. In the recent political crisis, many Palestinian and Jewish believers have reached out across "enemy"

[34] For more exploration of this topic, see Lisa Loden's chapter in *The Bible and the Land: An Encounter* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 2000).

lines with phone calls, prayer and donations of food. Thus, the reconciliation process bears fruit.

Stages in Reconciliation

In over a decade of programs between Palestinian and Israelis, we have observed several stages in the process of reconciliation. The process is continuous, people advancing in the stages and at times returning to previous ones. Some enter the process and do not persist; others leave and then re-enter. These trends are similar to phenomena noted by other organizations (such as Givat Haviva) working in conflict resolution between Palestinians and Israelis.[35]

First Stage. In the first stage, people from both sides are often willing to meet after some hesitation. In the initial meeting (Desert Encounter or conference), people are curious, interested, have fun, and often enthusiastic to participate in an activity together. There is a sense of idealism and euphoria, and expressions of "We are no different," and "We are all one body" are often heard. Participants also express reservations. Givat Haviva, while conducting a joint course with Palestinian and Israeli university students, noted that in the beginning stages participants questioned the validity of the encounter. "What can really be achieved by this meeting?" While Israelis found value in building personal relationships, Palestinian participants questioned the impact of personal relationships on political conflicts.[36] In spite of this, we find that most are encouraged by the fellowship and desire to continue in the process.

Second stage. Moving to the next stage entails a revelation of their feelings on issues, the background and context of their perspectives, and become more open about grievances. The fact that Palestinians and Israelis feel differently about issues now comes up to the surface. Several Messianic Israeli leaders expressed to us that many Israeli Jews feel overwhelmed at the Palestinians' stories, political and theological opinions, and at how strongly they express their grievances. He explained that suddenly, the power dynamic has changed and they are put on the "weak side."

Givat Haviva notes that Israelis are surprised by the shift in power balance. Outside the encounter, in the real world, they have majority and power. In smaller environment where they are no longer the majority, the dynamics are different. "The Jews have difficulty with the gap that has been revealed to

35 For more exploration of this topic, please see Lisa Loden's chapter "Knowing Where We Start", in *The Bible and the Land: An Encounter* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 2000).

36 A. Friedman, R Halabi, N. Sonnenschein, "University Courses on the Jewish-Arab Conflict." In R. Halabi (ed.), *Identities in Dialogue* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2000).

them, between their self-concept ... and their image as it is reflected in the way Arabs perceive them."[37]

For Palestinians, the equal footing that they experience in an encounter with Israelis is lost when they return and re-enter the political realities of their situation. This raises the question of what is gained from the meeting if there is no change on the ground.

Third stage. The third stage usually finds participants in a process of withdrawal, backing off from meetings because they see it as hopeless, or the issues have become too overwhelming and painful. Here Israelis state their own accusations and grievances against the Palestinians. They also share their strongly held theological and political positions. Each side reacts by saying that the other's withdrawal from the process was obvious and inevitable, that they will never understand and never accept one another. Each side accuses the other that they are blind to reality and to the truth of the Bible.

Rather than reaching a greater understanding of one another, this stage often confirms each sides' positions. They find explanations and reasons for the way things are, and if they do not move beyond this stage, then they reach an impasse. In this stage they feel that they will never agree and the process will lead nowhere. The parties separate into their corners; "the process has been wrung dry."[38]

Fourth Stage. Those who remain in the process understand that they are bound to live alongside one another. At this point, people realize that both sides have genuine charges and grievances against each other. They also recognize the shortcomings of their own people, and that their side has also contributed to the breakdown of relationships and the violence of the conflict. They realize that they must find a way to correct and restore the relationship between the two peoples and are willing to take serious steps in order to do so. Those steps include learning one another's history and life experiences, listening, and accepting differing perspectives and perceptions. They can also learn from each other about God and about Biblical truths. Making progress in reconciliation requires courage and risk; it means becoming vulnerable to "the enemy," being honest and open, yet sensitive and willing to listen.

As participants go through the process of reconciliation, the issue of personal and ethnic identity plays a major role. Identity is a sensitive issue that warrants much more attention than we can give it in this article. However, it is our observation that people who move through the stages of reconciliation have developed a more secure identity, becoming more sure of who they are in their ethnicity and in the Lord. At the same time, they are more open and willing to embrace others, and to work to restore relationships, to deal with the issues, and to correct the damage that has been done.

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37 Friedman.

38 Friedman.

A significant number of Palestinians and Israelis who have been involved in reconciliation activities over the past ten years have expressed that the experience has impacted their lives and led to a change of heart. As a result of the process, participants have interacted and built trust with the "enemy." Many have experienced spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of the meaning of being "one body" and being a testimony to the unbelieving community.

Looking Ahead

The process that we described has had both success and painful setbacks. As we advance in learning to fulfill the Lord's commandments, we are aware of the pain that both communities inflict upon each other, and we feel the pain from both sides. Many times we see how close we are, and at the same time, how far away; it is both frustrating and challenging.

There is still much to learn on the Biblical teaching and social dimension of reconciliation. As believers living in this region, we want to understand the dynamics between our political/theological positions and reconciliation.

The political events have much bearing on our efforts, especially as there is so much hurt, fear, and mistrust among our people. There is great pressure to conform to ethnic loyalties. The natural tendency is to avoid meeting, so that no one will be hurt and no suspicions will be raised. We need to study how the reconciliation process can be further developed and applied in this difficult, volatile context. As a small minority in our respective communities, we can have an impact on larger society. We need to explore how we can affect change among our communities.

The road is long and the gap is widening. The Palestinian village of Beit Jala and the Israeli neighborhood of Gilo lie in close proximity, yet are separated by a deep valley. In the same way, a profound rift divides our peoples. There is a serious demand for the body of the Messiah to be a bridge between the two communities. In times like these, this is no small challenge. As Jesus tells us, "Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:49-50).

Reconciliation: Jews and Arabs - a Personal Account

Menahem Benhayim*

Those who consider Scripture to be our guiding light may have different views of its application in contemporary contexts, but we would agree that reconciliation is expressed in two dimensions. First, vertically: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19-21).

Reconciliation also has an equally important horizontal dimension. Thus we find Yeshua teaching within the context of the Sinai covenant: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt 5:23-24). When Yeshua was asked: "Which commandment is the first of all?" He responded with the opening verses of the *Shema* (Hear O Israel) "… and you shall love the LORD your God … and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34).

The apostle John (1 John 4:20) goes even further when he makes love of God dependent upon the love of brothers: "For one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." The apostle Paul, for whom reconciliation with God was so central a doctrine, linked the effects of this reconciliation to our relations with others, believers and unbelievers. In the epistles the theme is repeated again and again: "For he who loves his brother has fulfilled the Law. (Rom 13:8-9); it is the "one word" of fulfillment (Gal 5:14); it is "the royal law" (James 2:8).

Anyone who accepts the vertical aspect of reconciliation between man and God cannot ignore the teaching the apostle offers all reconciled believers. For example, after dealing at length with the problems of sin and salvation in its vertical sense (Rom 1-8), and relating it to the calling of the gentiles into the Church to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom 9-11), Paul turns his attention in chapter 12 to the widest practical outworking of reconciliation in its horizontal aspect: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual

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worship." There follows a catalog of exhortations, commandments, and counsel to the highest degree of horizontal human relationships inside and outside the Church, even including our enemies.

Reconciliation within Mainstream Communities in Conflict

How does the issue of reconciliation within the body of Messiah between Jews and Arabs relate to the issues of truth and justice within the Land and outside of it? First, we recognize that the Arab and Jewish leaders in our mainstream communities have no commitment to biblical reconciliation in its New Testament context, neither vertically nor horizontally. Secondly, as tiny enclaves existing outside the Jewish and Arab mainstreams, and often rejected by our peoples, our influence is quite minimal, and sometimes is overshadowed by our desire to gain a measure of acceptance within our communities. This has led some Messianic Jews and Arab Christians to get involved with radical groups in both communities.

The questions of biblical truth and biblical community must be addressed. Worldly politics and our relations with the societies we are part of are also impacting our understanding and application of these aspects of our faith. The questions of prophetic truth and right behavior reflecting our biblical faith are crucial; they can no longer be relegated to speculation. Prophecy has in part become history, and history is current events for all of us.

Messianic Jews and our gentile supporters by and large accept the State of Israel as an important step in the fulfillment of God's purpose for the Jewish people, the Church and the world. We know we have like-minded brothers among Arab Christians although they must be more careful in voicing such views. I remember a pastor in East Jerusalem who told me that when members of his flock asked him about the prophecies, he pointed them out and said, "See for yourself!" Another Arab Israeli agreed to an interview for a Christian journal and told of how many Arab believers in the early 1940s already foresaw the imminent establishment of a Jewish state as fulfilment of biblical prophecy, but they, too, had to exercise caution in expressing their views.

Obviously, this does not mean we must be uncritical of everything that goes on or has happened in Israel and the Zionist movement. Zionism—secular, religious and Christian—provided the human framework for the establishment of the State of Israel, the ingathering of the exiles from "the four corners of the earth," and the infrastructures for the state to enable it to survive against fierce opposition from within the Land and outside of it.

Because we believe in the election of the Jewish people by the sovereign will of God, we must be all the more critical and sensitive to their faults and their achievements. The prophet Jeremiah who so often laid out the divine prophecies for Israel's survival and future national hope was also the most critical and angry among the prophets because of Israel's failures. Yet he also

offered words of comfort and hope for a future new covenant: "If heaven above can be measured … then will I also cast out all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done" (Jer 31:31-37).

God and Historical Processes

While we believe in a God who transcends humanity, we also believe in his involvement in human affairs, including historical processes. We cannot regard history, whether good or bad, as random events or totally under human control as secular humanists and deists do. On the level of history many of our Arab brethren regard the State of Israel as totally irrelevant to biblical teaching, and hold to the classical Church replacement theology, now renounced by the Roman Catholic church and many Reformed churches. For replacement theology, the Church is Israel; therefore, all the promises to Israel belong to the Church and are to be treated as allegorical metaphors. Quite inconsistently, these interpreters often allow the warnings and judgments upon biblical Israel to remain with the Jews, but seldom apply them to the sins of the Church.

How then shall we who share a common faith within the context of warring peoples be reconciled to one another as we are commanded? It isn't a question about mutual amiability and civilized discourse. It is for many of us a question of life and death in our "dangerous neighborhood." It periodically explodes at our doorsteps with casualties not in remote areas, but in our immediate vicinity even as I write these words. From a political perspective we would be optimistic indeed to foresee a resolution of the conflict in the near future.

The Land of Israel and Messianic Destiny

Messianic Jews and their gentile supporters believe that the Jewish people and Israel have a messianic destiny linked to Yeshua and the Land of Israel. We are still by and large rejected by the Jewish people, as is the teaching of Israel's election by the secular mainstream within Israel and the Diaspora. Even those traditional Jews who continue to accept these biblical truths are among the most resistant to the claims that their fulfillment lies in Yeshua, Israel's Messiah.

The claim that some are making that the Land is hardly if ever mentioned in the New Testament, and therefore is now a non-issue, is absurd. In the very second chapter of the New Testament we read of Joseph's dream as the angel commands him in Egypt: "Arise and take the child and go return to the Land of Israel … And he arose … and took the child and his mother and came into the Land of Israel" (Matt 2:20-21).

The fact remains that Yeshua and his first followers lived most of their lives in the Land of Israel under Roman occupation. From the words of the older prophets (Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel et al), they knew that occupation by

foreigners was a judgment on sin and could yet lead to another exile. Yeshua and Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, were well-grounded in the Tanakh and its prophecies of a return to Zion even in unbelief (Ezek 20:32-35): "For (with respect to Israel) the gifts and call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29).

Nevertheless, Arab Christians and their allies have a right to protest, and to work against the injustices done to them and their kinfolk, and Messianic Jews can support that right. At the same time, we must all shun the spirit of those Zealots who in the anti-Roman revolts (AD 66-70 and 132-135) brought disaster upon disaster on the Jewish people. In our own time, many Jewish and Arab zealots and their allies are acting in the same spirit, bringing disaster upon their own peoples. The spirit of zealotry needs no support from either Jewish or Arab believers.

Today there are Jewish and Arab believers in both camps working for reconciliation. Yet some have found it difficult to overcome their national prejudices within the framework of biblical truth and biblical ethics. An Arab Israeli, born and raised within a mixed Arab and Hebrew framework, Salim Munayer, has set up a reconciliation organization ("Musalaha") of Messianic Jews and Arab Evangelicals for developing relationships, especially among young people, students and other groups. Nevertheless, the strong emotions on both sides have led not a few Messianic Jews to withdraw their support and express their opinion that the Musalaha agenda is heavily weighted against Israel and is pro-Palestinian. On the other side of the spectrum, some Arab Christians have withdrawn because of what they see as a Zionist and pro-Jewish policy.

God as the God of History

God is the God of history—all history, secular and salvation—and has sovereignly chosen a particular people to be his agents in history. Despite their frequent failures to abide by the covenants he has made with them and their desire to be "like all the nations," they have survived and outlived most of their persecutors, and have always retained a national and spiritual remnant. Out of this remnant, God created a worldwide community rooted in Israel's rejected Messiah Yeshua. The Church composed of Jews and gentiles has become the main agent of God in history beginning with the ministry of Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, and his followers. The Church, according to the apostle, was raised up "to provoke Israel to jealousy" (Rom 10:19; 11:11-14). Needless to say, the Church has instead often acted as a major threat to Jewish survival, and many who name the name of Christ have provoked Israel to anger and encouraged their Jewish converts to assimilate totally into alien gentile societies.

In our age of Israel's partial national restoration, committed Messianic Jews resist the attempts of any gentile agency to delegitimize the reborn Jewish commonwealth by specious use of Scripture out of context. Thus we are often

confronted by half a text ("In Christ there is neither Jew nor gentile") while ignoring that part of the text which states that "In Christ there is neither male nor female," which few in the evangelical community apply in the same way.

Arab Christians are reluctant to give public support, with rare exceptions, to a national movement which most of their compatriots in and out of the Land regard as an alien and hostile entity. The situation is somewhat parallel to what Messianic Jews experience in identifying with the Christian Church. The historical polarization and alienation between the Church and the Jewish people, as well as the history of anti-Judaism and blatant antisemitism, is a major factor in this ambivalent relationship.

A Common Faith and Common Dilemmas

Is it possible on the basis of our common faith (and the common dilemmas we share as outsiders within our separate communities) for Arab and Jewish believers to experience genuine reconciliation among ourselves? In our extremely volatile situation with frequent outbreaks of violence we can find light in the situation of Jewish and gentile believers during the first century of the Church's history. Then both Jews and gentiles faced often violent reactions from the mainstreams of their peoples, whether pagan Rome or the Jewish establishment. We all need extreme sensitivity to one another's plight. We must try to maintain a spirit of brotherhood beyond our national controversy without compromising biblical truth. It is too easy to break off relations rather than to maintain them in a state of genuine tension, which can only be resolved by an ongoing encounter under the guidance of our common Lord.

I will close with two personal experiences. The first took place a few years ago.

We were a group of Messianic Jews and Arab Christians alongside several expatriate Western Christians. We had gathered in a Bethlehem hotel to attend the Third Consultation on the Theology of the Land, and represented various biblical perspectives. Papers were presented and there was a time set aside for questions and discussion, all in an atmosphere of civilized discourse. My own paper was entitled "The Relevance of Jewish National Life to the Purposes of God for Jews, Gentiles and the Church." It seemed to have been well-received by the participants.

During one of the breaks in the sessions, as we stood around "stretching our legs," one of the participants, an Evangelical leader in Bethlehem, Bishara Awad, founder and leader of the Bethlehem Bible College, remarked offhandedly to a local Anglican priest: "I don't know why they are celebrating." He was referring to the ongoing jubilee celebrations in Israel during its 50th year of independence. For Bishara the 1948 war related to his father's death as a war casualty. The Anglican priest, Canon Naim Ateek, responded, "It was a historical mistake to establish the State of Israel in 1948."

Only a few years earlier Naim Ateek had written a book from the perspective of an Arab refugee child forced to leave his home during Israel's War of Independence. In his book, *Justice and Only Justice*, Canon Ateek had based his personal acceptance of Israel's legitimacy not on biblical or historical grounds but solely on Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. It was, therefore, disappointing to hear his response, that Israel's establishment was an "historical mistake." As far as he and Bishara were concerned, Israel's survival and development as a dynamic modern nation in the face of constant threats to its existence was no cause for rejoicing during its jubilee year.

My first encounter with Canon Ateek was within the context of the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI), where I represented the International Messianic Jewish Alliance as its Israel Secretary. Naim was the UCCI chairman during the year 1976, and was also a leader in the Arab Anglican community in Israel. In the ensuing years I came to know him as a likeable and articulate clergyman who tended to use the term "justice" as a kind of code word for Israeli injustices toward its Arab citizens and neighbors. Yet he was cooperative in helping me prepare a series of articles on Arab evangelicals in Israel in a periodical of the now defunct American group called "Evangelicals United for Zion." He described himself as part of a fourfold minority, a Christian within the predominantly Arab Muslim community, an evangelical within the largely Orthodox and Catholic Christian communities, a gentile within a Jewish State, existing within a largely Arab Muslim Middle East.

The suffering and injustices to Palestinian Arabs that Israel's establishment entailed, and a continued sense of discrimination, are real, as is the need for addressing them. Yet Israeli Jews, including the many Holocaust survivors within it, also suffered injustices and violence in the wake of the massive rejection of Israel's legitimacy by most Arabs and many non-Arab Muslims. As the years passed, Naim became more outspoken in his approach to Scripture, describing much of the Hebrew Scriptures as "racist"; some of his remarks bordered on the ancient Marcionite heresy which had sought to sever the ties between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.

I sensed the tension between his views and the views of conservative Arab Evangelicals within the UCCI. Many of them, especially in the Galilee, had good relations with Israeli Jewish believers and sometimes took part in joint projects of evangelism and fellowship, especially when Messianic Jews were attacked by extremist Jewish groups. Eventually, Canon Ateek and those in his community withdrew from the UCCI, expressing disappointment at its failure to address justice issues within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and UCCI's unwillingness to incorporate or dialogue with the traditional non-Evangelical churches in the Land for whom evangelicalism was an alien Western import.

The other experience I want to share goes back a few more years. Our late brother Ilan Zamir was involved in an auto accident in El Azariya outside Jerusalem. It was night and the road was poorly illuminated. A deaf Arab teenager, not hearing his approaching vehicle ran onto the road and was hit by his car, and died later of his injuries. Ilan wanted to arrange for a "sulha" (a traditional act of reconciliation among Arabs). We made contact with several Arab Christians, including Baptist Pastor Suhail Ramadan from Turan near Nazareth who referred us to Munir Kakish, an Evangelical pastor near El Azariya. With the help of Joan MacWhirter of the Christian Embassy who lived in the village and knew Abu Musar, a Muslim who was friendly to Evangelicals, we contacted his uncle, the Muslim mukhtar (spiritual leader) of the village through his nephew, to arrange for a meeting with the family.

There were two preparatory meetings and delicate negotiations inasmuch as we were not villagers nor Arabs, and even more astonishing to them, that we believed in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Injil (New Testament). We were gathered together—two Messianic Jews, an Arab Christian, a Muslim mukhtar and the family and close kin. Munir served as translator from Arabic to English. When the ceremony was concluded, a young Hebrew-speaking kinsman arose and in fluent Hebrew addressed Ilan:

> *You are not an Arab nor do you live in our village and yet you have come to make reconciliation for this tragedy. We value your act, and we want you to know that we accept you as a son in place of the boy who died. Whenever you want, know that this is your home.*

The father came forward to embrace Ilan and those who had taken part in the sulha. The mukhtar's eyes were glistening as Ilan spoke to him. "You are a righteous man and thank you for your help!"

It was a small gesture, like the widow's mite, and it didn't prevent the first intafada which broke out about a year later; but like all the great deeds that need to happen between people, it represented a small sample of reconciliation that begins with small acts of kindness which contribute to the breaking down of harsh impenetrable barriers, which are not forgotten before God.

Differing Eschatological Viewpoints – Obstacles to Relationship?

Lisa Loden*

The presence of Israel at the center of the Middle East, in the heart of the Arab world, is often compared to the proverbial bone in the throat. It cannot be swallowed and it serves as a constant source of irritation. In similar fashion, the existence of Messianic Jews in Israel, a distinct faith community that identifies itself as a part of the political state of Israel, is a conundrum for many Palestinian Christians who identify themselves with the political aims and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The same conundrum exists for the Messianic Jew in Israel in regards to the presence of Palestinian Christians. While both groups would define their primary identity in terms of their faith, their emphases and interpretations differ widely and are many times colored by their life situations.

The last century has seen a significant increase in the number of Jews who believe in Jesus living in and identifying with the nation of Israel. The Arab Christians of the land of the patriarchs date their continuous presence in the area from New Testament times. Many issues have the potential to, and in fact often do, divide these two communities. Eschatology is one of those issues.

Simply stated, eschatology is defined as the study or doctrine of the last things. Since New Testament times, believers in Jesus have anticipated both his return and the times of the end. Particularly when Israel as a nation is occupying the land of the patriarchs, issues related to eschatology and a theology of the land achieve a level of importance that is far more intense and relevant than when Israel as a people are outside of the land. Israel, the land and the people, is the key question in most eschatological schemes. The particularity of the Old Testament versus the universality of the New is another central issue in the debate.

Eschatology seems to engender speculation, and literature in this field is rife with speculative end-time scenarios. Most of these scenarios place the Jewish

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All translations from Hebrew are by the author.

people in the historic land of Israel and it is for that reason that the issue of the land recurs when one deals with eschatological matters.

This article will look at various understandings of eschatology to be found in the two communities and will attempt to evaluate the influence of these views on the relationship of fellowship between the communities. It should be noted that only views expressed by Israeli Messianic Jews and Arab Palestinian Christians living in the land are quoted.

Arab Palestinian Christian Views

Very few Palestinian Christians have published books or articles in English that relate to theological issues in general or to the issue of eschatology in particular. While there is a greater volume of Christian theological literature in Arabic, the majority of it comes from Egypt and is not relevant for the purposes of this article. Most of what follows has been excerpted from unpublished papers and interviews, surveys and articles published in Israel.

When asked about the position of Palestinian Christians regarding how they make the bridge between Palestinian nationalism and the words of the prophets concerning the rise of Israel in her own land, Salim Munayer, a Palestinian Christian says,

> *Only a few of them think that the prophecies about the rise of Israel were fulfilled by the return to Zion under Ezra and Nehemiah. In their opinion, the vision of the dry bones was fulfilled in second temple times. The majority thinks that the words of the prophets should be interpreted in the light of the New Testament – that in Yeshua of Nazareth all the prophecies have been fulfilled.* [39]

Many Arab and Palestinian Christians express the view that much of the eschatology current in evangelical circles is imported from the Western church and as such is not sensitive to matters that are vital to Arab Christians in general and to Palestinian Christians in particular. They especially take issue with pre-millennial dispensationalism, the belief in the imminent return of Jesus and in the establishment of his reign on earth for a thousand years, a view that was widely disseminated by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and popularized by the Scofield Bible (1909).

In a paper entitled "The Protestant Influence on the Emergence of Today's Israel,"[40] Raed Abdul Masih, himself a Palestinian Christian, gives a condensed history of the development and spread of dispensational eschatology and its influence as one of the sources of encouragement for the modern day settlement of Israel by the Jewish people.

[39] Salim Munayer, 1997, interview in *Kivun*, No. 4, p. 5.

[40] Raed Abdul Masih, unpublished paper delivered at the Fourth Consultation of the Theology of the Land, Bethlehem, 2000.

The new dispensationalism of the last century thus regarded contemporary Jews as members of the Chosen People. The promises made to Abraham, not to speak of the other promises, had not been fulfilled during the period of the old covenant, but the continued existence for the Jewish people in Christian times indicated that these promises had not been repealed. Some remarks of Paul's in Romans 11, whose precise meaning is still a subject of debate, served as a pretext for the development of a complete eschatology, in which the Jewish people played a role of the first importance."[41]

Another Palestinian Christian, Alex Awad, a Baptist minister and teacher at the Bethlehem Bible College, expresses similar sentiments.

The Arab Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967 were viewed by evangelical Biblical interpreters as evidences that God is working in history to fulfill Biblical prophecy by the restoration of the Jewish nation and the empowerment of the State of Israel. … Palestinian and Arab evangelicals have many frustrations with extreme dispensationalism. For Palestinian Christians these issues are not just a matter of theological or eschatological exercise. They are a matter of life, survival and existence. [42]

Mitri Raheb, an evangelical Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem, discusses the estrangement and confusion he experienced as a student of theology in Germany when he was exposed to different interpretations of the Bible than he had known as a young person growing up in the church in Bethlehem.

I now began to see my Bible in a light in which I had never seen it before. That Bible I had previously felt to be "for us" suddenly became "against us," its message for me was no longer consoling and encouraging, but alarming. No more did it speak of personal and world redemption, but of my Land that God had promised to Israel, where I could henceforth live only as an "alien." The God I had known as Love since my childhood suddenly became a God that took away land, waged "holy wars" and annihilated nations. …

I was even more enraged at the theology of professors who disseminated such teachings. For them, Israel was above all a holy, mystery-filled nation, suffering and suppressed. Though unsure of its very survival, it miraculously destroyed powerful foes. It seemed to me that, after the Six Day War, many German theologians were also stricken with enthusiasm for Israel.

The uncritical and unhistorical equation of the present State of Israel with biblical Israel, added to the shock that theologians felt after the Holocaust and Israel's victory over the Arab States had led to a spiritualization of the State of Israel in some of Western theology.[43]

These Palestinian Christians are struggling with questions of history, theology and eschatology in a context of ongoing conflict. Their context is

[41] Masih, 2000, p. 5.

[42] Alex Awad, unpublished text of a letter delivered as a paper to the Fourth Consultation on the Theology of the Land, Bethlehem, 2000, p. 3.

[43] Metri Raheb, "Biblical Interpretation in the Israeli-Palestinian Context," in T. Elgvin (ed.) *Israel and Yeshua* (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1993) p. 110.

remote from the eschatological fever experienced by onlookers who have no immediate personal involvement in the situation.

In December 2000, an Israeli Messianic magazine published the results of a survey taken among Jewish and Palestinian believers. Titled "Apocalypse Now—The Great Tribulation or Another Small Tribulation," the article presented answers to the question: "As a believer do you see any special meaning in the violence that erupted on the Jewish New Year (September 2000)?"

Although the article did not state how many people were interviewed, it gave a statistical breakdown of the responses. Fifty-three percent of the respondents answered "we are at the height of the process that will bring the time of Jacob's trouble and the return of Jesus." Thirty-three percent responded that they see no special meaning and no connection between what is happening today and biblical prophecy. Thirteen percent responded that the recent events signal the beginning of the end. Of the sixteen people whose responses were quoted, only two of these were Palestinian and the rest were Messianic Jews. The responses of the two Palestinians are quoted in full

Philip Saad, an Arab Baptist pastor from Haifa said:

> *What's happening here is part of an ancient conflict. This is a religious conflict that has influenced the relationships between nations. At its source it is a religious conflict, Islam against the Word of God, against the plan of God and against the nation of Israel. The fact that Jerusalem and the nation of Israel are standing at the center of these recent events strengthens my understanding that they (the events) are eschatological. They strengthen my faith in the words of the prophets and in the New Testament and in the coming of the Messiah. What's happening now is the beginning of something much more difficult.*[44]

The other Arab Christian quoted was Samir Naseer, a doctor from Jerusalem. His response expresses his eschatological view:

> *The current events are another link in the chain of events that will bring about the return of the people of Israel to Zion, a return that's happening before our eyes, especially during the past 80 years. After the return to Zion the return of the people to God is expected. In contrast to the Messianic Jewish faith, the second largest monotheistic faith (Islam) in the world is active. It has visibly opposed, throughout history, the principles of Scripture that on one side support the return to Zion and on the other side do not rule out the presence of other peoples in the land of Israel at the same time.* [45]

While these two Palestinian Christians obviously do not represent a majority view within the Palestinian Christian world, it is interesting that they are quoted in a decidedly pro-Zionist, Hebrew-language Messianic magazine. Although eschatology is an important issue, issues of justice are of greater

[44] *Kivun*, No. 21, Nov./Dec. 2000, p. 8

[45] *Kivun*, No. 21, Nov./Dec. 2000, p. 9.

concern for the Palestinian Christian. This concern is a constant refrain in their writings.[46]

> *Notice in Matthew 23:23 that Jesus places justice as one of the more important matters of the law. Let us not place our eschatological speculations above the more important aspects of the law"* [47]

The majority of Palestinian Christians and Arab Christians in general tend to base their theology in the New Testament.[48] In the attempt to deal with the Old Testament Scriptures regarding a return to the land of Israel by the Jewish people, the Palestinian Christian has often taken the stand that in Christ all is fulfilled and there is therefore no further importance attached to the land of Israel or to the presence of the Jewish people in the land. Neither are seen as essential for God to fulfill his end-time designs. Alex Awad's statement below is representative of the general views of Palestinian Christians.

> *Paul is not teaching (in Romans 11) that the Jews must establish a state in order that they may be saved. There is no teaching in the New Testament that alludes to the need for God's people to capture a piece of land in order for God to fulfill his eschatological design.*[49]

This short overview of Palestinian views on eschatology shows the struggle Palestinian believers have in understanding the meaning of the current secular state of Israel in a Biblical context. Immediate issues of justice and peace supercede all other concerns. Eschatology and end-time speculation are not high priorities.

Israeli Messianic Jewish Views

A Jewish believer in Jesus who lives in Israel often sees his presence in that land as both fulfillment of prophecy and as an eschatological sign. The Messianic Jew's identity is integrally related to being a part of the Jewish people who have returned to the promised land to fulfill their final destiny. Eschatology is seen as being lived out by their very existence in this time and in that place. Although there are a number of different views as to the sequence of events in the end-times, there is almost universal agreement that these times are the times of the end.

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[46] See also Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice - A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1989) and Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications).

[47] Awad, 2000, p. 10.

[48] Rana Elfar, "The Old Testament for Arab Christians Today," in Loden, Walker, Wood (eds.), *The Bible and the Land, An Encounter* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 2000) pp. 95-105.

[49] Awad, 2000, p. 8

Finally, Isaiah 51:10 says that "the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy shall be upon their head." If these "redeemed of the Lord" are not the Messianic Jews now living in the Land, then who are they? [50]

This view has been a part of Messianic Jewish consciousness since before the foundation of the modern state of Israel. Messianic Jews (then called Hebrew Christians) were involved in political Zionist movements in Europe. Their involvement was based on their understanding of the prophetic scriptures concerning the return of Israel to Zion.

Those Hebrew Christians who enthusiastically expressed Zionist aspirations, in word or in deed, did so from an inherent belief rooted in their understanding of biblical prophecy. In fact, their Zionism, which often integrated political and spiritual aspects, should be understood as a conditio sine qua non of their individual and national identity …

In the idea of Zion's restoration there was the expectancy of a further fulfillment of human history within the framework of the history of man's redemption … Zionism was 'ordained' to pave the way physically for the movement of the dry bones (Ezek 38) leading into a spiritual renaissance. [51]

In this respect, little has changed and today's Messianic Jew would find himself in agreement with this position. One of the questions in a survey taken of Messianic Jews in Israel in 1997 asked the respondents to answer if they believed that Zionism was God's tool to fulfill prophecies in the end times. Sixty-two percent of the women surveyed responded positively as did seventy-two percent of the men. Twenty percent of the women and twenty-five percent of the men were "not sure." This result shows that only eighteen percent of the women and three percent of the men *did not* believe that Zionism was God's tool to fulfill prophecies in the end times.[52]

One of the recurrent themes expressed by Messianic Jews is the expectation of opposition towards Israel and the Jewish people as a part of end-time scenarios. David Stern claims to speak for the majority of Messianic Jews in Israel:

In this I think I can safely claim to speak for virtually all Messianic Jews in Israel. Zechariah 12 and 14 proclaim the day when all nations will come against Jerusalem and the Lord (that is, the Messiah Yeshua) will fight and defeat them. The Jewish people will be saved as they recognize and mourn for their Messiah, "whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10). He, the

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[50] David Stern, "The Land from a Messianic Jewish Perspective," in Loden, Walker, Wood (eds.), p. 42.

[51] Gershon Nerel, "Messianic Jews and the Modern Zionist Movement," in *Israel and Yeshua*, Elgvin (ed.), p. 75.

[52] Bodil Skjøtt, "Messianic Believers and the Land of Israel—a Survey," in *Mishkan*, No. 26/1997, p. 76.

Messiah, will be standing on the Mount of Olives, 'with all his holy ones,' repelling and defeating all the nations battling the Jews. [53]

A variation of this view was expressed by several of the respondents to the questionnaire previously mentioned in this article. In response to the question, "As a believer do you see any special meaning in the violence that erupted at New Year, 2000?" one respondent answered:

I certainly see what is happening now as the beginning of the end. The Palestinians, in my opinion are part of the coalition of Gog and Magog…The Palestinians, especially in their struggle for self determination are inciting the whole world against Israel and are awakening it to join in a war to liberate Jerusalem …This is the last act in the war of Islam against the truth of God. We as believers must see our place in this reality, otherwise our existence has no meaning.[54]

In answer to the same question, Daniel Yahav, a Messianic leader, expresses a similar if more moderate view:

I see the current situation as part of a process. All that the Palestinians are doing, not just now but from the beginning of the first intifada, is meant to serve their purpose of enlisting, in stages, international public opinion against Israel. The influence of this process is widening and deepening the image of Israel as Goliath and the Palestinians as David. All of this serves to fulfill the picture that Zechariah paints at the beginning of chapter 12 when he speaks about the day when all of the nations will come up to fight against Jerusalem.[55]

Baruch Maoz has written extensively on the subject of eschatology. In his article, "Priorities in Eschatology," he challenges the reader to look at eschatology from a broader perspective than the usual narrow end-time event focus. He attempts to bring balance and presents a well-reasoned plea to consider the relationship of eschatology to other theological concerns and to consider issues as well as events:

If we focus on issues of timing, sequence and space, we shall lose sight of the main intended import of the prophetic message. …Eschatology – the biblical description of the world as it will and was intended to be – must serve as our focus, not the present challenges, sorrows, opportunities and pleasures. (1 Cor. 15:17; Col. 3:1-5)[56]

This is a much needed reminder in the current climate of speculation.

Reconciliation in the Light of Differing Eschatological Views

[53] Stern, p. 54.

[54] *Kivun,* No. 21, Nov./Dec. 2000, p. 9. The respondent quoted here (Amikam Tavor) is not a Messianic leader but is a member of a local Israeli Messianic congregation.

[55] ibid. p. 9

[56] Baruch Maoz, *Priorities in Eschatology* (Rishon L'Tzion: Hagefen, 1991), p. 6

Since there are distinct differences between the views of Israeli Messianic Jews and Arab Palestinian Christians in regards to eschatological issues, it remains to be seen if these differences affect their relationships with one another.

It is a matter of record that the events of the past year, from September 2000, have increased the difficulty of physical contact between these two groups. Repeated and extended closures of the Palestinian controlled areas have made it impossible for Palestinian Christians to travel into Israel and the increased violence and security threats have similarly hindered the Messianic Jew in his travels inside the Palestinian controlled territories. As of this writing, Jews who travel into the Palestinian territories can be detained by the Israeli armed forces, while Palestinians who travel into Israel without permission are liable to be arrested. If there are closures, no one can legally leave their prescribed areas. Both groups are increasingly occupied with questions of their own security.

A number of Messianic Jews have expressed themselves on the issue of the relationship between eschatology and reconciliation. Baruch Maoz writes:

> *Christians may differ in matters of where and when or in what sequence this or that aspect of eschatology will be fulfilled. Nevertheless, they are our brethren in Christ and should be acknowledged as such. Differences of opinion in these areas ought never to be allowed to infringe upon the integrity or fullness of our fellowship. Hence, however great an importance we attach to those issues, we tacitly recognize that they do not form the essential substance of our faith.* [57]

In his response to Naim Ateek's article on the theology of the land, Menahem Benhayim, although diametrically opposed to Ateek's views on eschatology and the theology of the land, continues to emphasize his commitment to relationship with Palestinian Christians.

> *I have long shared with many other Jews and Christians in efforts to correct injustices to Palestinians and others. I also believe it is necessary for biblically committed Jews and Christians to work to promote Jewish-Arab reconciliation, especially within the Body of Christ.* [58]

There are other less positive voices coming from the Messianic community. In a report on a debate that took place in early 2000 between Salim Munayer and Aviel Schneider, Schneider concludes that:

> *Today, in spite of the fact that we are brothers in the same faith, we can't get along with one another. I belong to the Jewish people and the Palestinian belongs to his people.* [59]

As long as the Messianic Jew sees his ethnic identity as primary, and in consequence the eschatological significance of his ethnic identity becomes

[57] ibid. p. 4
[58] Menahem Benhayim, "Letter to Mishkan," in *Mishkan* No. 28/1998, p. 82.
[59] *Kivun*, 2000, No. 17, Jan./Feb.2000, p. 9

dominant, there will inevitably be difficulties in relating to Palestinian Christians. On the other side, Palestinian Christians never claim an eschatological significance to their existence but issues of their ethnic identity and natural sympathies for their people can also become obstacles to reconciliation and the biblically mandated relationship of fellowship.

While there is virtually nothing in print from the perspective of a Palestinian Christian on these issues, it has often been said that actions speak louder than words. In this arena, the actions of the Arab Palestinian Christians do declare loudly that in spite of differing eschatological views, their desire is to have fellowship with Israeli Messianic Jews. This can be seen in the relative numbers of Palestinian participants at conferences, prayer meetings, and seminars that are organized for joint Israeli Messianic Jewish and Arab Palestinian Christian participants. The numbers of Palestinian Christians attending these events is always significantly higher than the number of Israeli Messianic Jewish participants. This holds true even in times of extreme tensions between the two peoples.

Are peace and reconciliation possible for Arab Palestinian Christians and Israeli Messianic Jews, given their differing eschatological views? The question cannot be answered by a simple unqualified yes or no. In regards to eschatology there is unilateral agreement on at least three issues: that Jesus will return, that we cannot know when, and that we must always be ready for his return.

Until he comes, his believers, be they Jewish or Arab should be found reaching out to one another in love. Only when the will and the commitment to persevere in the face of every obstacle exist, can peace and reconciliation between brothers be realized.

And the Innocent Shall Forgive the Blameless: A Critique of the Reconciliation Movement

Tsvi Sadan*

The many forums for Jewish-Christian dialogue that started to spring up around the world after the Holocaust sought to find ways in which Judaism and Christianity could coexist without the latter attempting to convert the former. These dialogues achieved much in building mutual respect between the two religions and as such, are extremely voluble. They have, however, left many Christians unsatisfied. Many viewed the dialogues as spiritually lukewarm and therefore, destined to deviate from the purity of the gospel by compromising even on such issues as the exclusiveness of Jesus as a way to salvation for both Jew and gentile. These dialogues therefore, cannot but fail their own objective: to bring peace between Jews and Christians.

The keen desire to see a more meaningful Christian change of heart toward the Jews began to translate itself into action in the last decade or so in what will be termed from here on as the Reconciliation Movement. This grass-roots movement that formed into groups and organizations began to offer people a way to escape the animosity between Christians and Jews and between different Christian denominations through the process of repentance and forgiveness. As a result, two distinct and different approaches to the question of Jewish-Christian relationships were formed. The first is Jewish-Christian dialogue that tries to build mutual respect by seeking to find good qualities in the "other." The Reconciliation Movement disregards the dialogue approach as a sort of "mutual flattery" and instead, encourages people to repent and be forgiven. That is the only true way to achieve a "true dialogue" or reconciliation between Jews and Christians and between people in general. So while the former was left primarily to "the establishment" (i.e., renowned scholars, authors and the like, whose religious conviction is characterized by a high degree of tolerance), the latter was characterized by the religious zeal of somewhat more marginal Christian leaders.

To accomplish the process of forgiveness, the Reconciliation Movement, like its counterpart, needed the participation of Jews. They found them, just like

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themselves, on the periphery of Jewish society. Not a small number of Messianic Jews, particularly from the United States, who share the same (Christian) faith, found it appealing to see Christians who "confess the sins of their fathers" and were only to happy to find themselves in the role of a priest and to absolve the sinners.

This need for confession on the part of many Christians arises from the genuine sense of the Church's guilt of antisemitism and its horrific consequences. In addition, there is the notion that genuine Christian remorse for what was done to the Jews in the name of Jesus demonstrates the character of the true (Christian) faith. This latter concept is of immense importance and it is with this in mind that this article is written. In other words, it is the present objective to examine whether the Reconciliation Movement indeed helps the Jews to see the beauty of the Gospel, or whether it is yet another phenomenon that undermines it.[60]

The Reconciliation Movement's *Modus Operandi*

The fact that the Reconciliation Movement, is not yet an integral part of the recognized religious establishment, allows it to operate primarily within the unaffiliated churches and draws its main support from what can be characterized as Charismatic Protestants, Catholics and Jews. This situation promotes acts of reconciliation in two primary ways. The first is through informal meetings that are privately initiated. These meetings, like any other reconciliation meeting, require the participation of both the offenders and the offended i.e., the Christian and the (Messianic) Jew. These meetings develop in such a way as to encourage the conscience-stricken Christian to confess and the Jew to forgive him.[61] According to one active participant, during these meetings a Jew should be fully aware of the fact that he represents no one but himself. So, for example, if there is a group of Germans who wants to repent of Germany's past treatment of the Jews, the (Messianic) Jew will take the priestly role given to him by the New Testament commands, but only as a private individual and not as a representative of a group of people. The importance of these sessions lies in the very fact that people are willing to admit wrongdoing. This alone merits the participation of a Messianic Jew. In this way, although not forgiven by the Jews as a people, the confessors are forgiven by at least one

[60] I am aware of the fact that the vision of the Reconciliation Movement is broader than just Jewish-Christian reconciliation. Yet, though my interest is limited, what applies to the Jews applies also to anyone else, including Christian-Christian reconciliation, Christian-Moslem reconciliation, and the like.

[61] Being informal, written information about such meetings is scarce. There are also *ad hoc* groups that encourage such activities among Messianic Jews. Such was a meeting in Cyprus between Jewish and Arab believers that was sponsored by the women's track of the organization "AD 2000 and Beyond," headed by Louis Bush.

Jewish person. This, though it may look insignificant, is extremely important because a person who believes in Jesus grants the forgiveness and as such it takes on a special spiritual meaning that cannot be attained just by any Jew.[62]

The second way the Reconciliation Movement operates is through formal meetings that require the participation of religious leaders. These meetings are particularly designed for Christians who desire to repent of the sins of generations past. They also require the participation of both Christian and Messianic leaders, who could be considered as representing communities of Christians and Messianic Jews.[63] Such a meeting took place in 1998, when the group "Toward Jerusalem Council II" (TJCII) arrived in Toledo, Spain to meet with local Christian leaders. The stated purpose of the trip was to tear down "the ancient strongholds of antisemitism and anti-Messianic Judaism."[64] This breakdown of antisemitism would be achieved, so the proposition reads, through intercession and the willingness of those participating to forgive one another. The report went on to say that indeed repentance and forgiveness took place between "Christendom and the Messianic Jewish community." As a result, "a harvest of Spanish souls for Yeshua is believed to come forth."[65] During this particular trip, the Christians repented of the sins of the Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. From the report however, it is not clear from what sins the Jews had to be forgiven,[66] but it is abundantly clear that the Jews who participated in this event forgave the repentant Spaniards.

The "International Reconciliation Coalition" initiates similar activities. In 1996, at the anniversary of the First Crusade, a "Reconciliation Walk" took place in Istanbul. The participants "asked forgiveness from Moslems that they meet, for the actions of the soldiers in the Crusades 900 years ago." Later in the day, the "Walk" paused near a synagogue to pray and seek "blessing and healing" because "at the time of the Crusades, the people of Cologne rose up and destroyed the Jewish population."[67]

Such acts stand in sharp contrast not only to the Christian-Jewish dialogue already mentioned but also to other Christian individuals or organizations whose remorse drives them to different courses of action. Though highly

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62 A conversation with Reuven Berger, 22.10.2001.

63 Such a formal group is "Toward Jerusalem Council II." Marty Waldman, former president of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) is a protruding person in this group.

64 "Journey to Spain," in *The Shekinah*. A report given in the 19th annual conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations and the Association of Messianic Believers, Washington DC, July 29 - August 2, 1998, p. 2.

65 "Journey to Spain", p. 2.

66 It may be simply from "pride." See Gary Thomas, "The Return of the Jewish Church," in *Christianity Today*, 7 September 1998.

67 "The Reconciliation Walk," pp. 1, 2. To access the document, go to http://www.soon.org.uk/page15.htm.

controversial, the Pope's visit to Israel last year demonstrated that remorse could be expressed without the need for the active participation of another party. In other words, the Pope's confession of past wrongs did not require the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Jews. He simply did what he thought to be right. Consequently, not a single Jewish person was asked to pardon the Pope or any other Christian for that matter.[68] Likewise, a German Protestant order, the "Sisters of Mary," conducted a "Holocaust service" in Israel during which representatives from different Christian denominations publicly acknowledged sins from the past and expected nothing in return from the government's representative who was present at the occasion.[69]

The foregoing short and sketchy description of the type of activities undertaken by the Reconciliation Movement, as contrasted with other types of "events promoting reconciliation," were given to highlight the differences between them without attempting to evaluate either one. Before turning to the evaluation of the Movement itself and its potential effect on the Jewish community, the scriptural justification for its mode of operation will be described.

How Can the Innocent Forgive the Blameless?

At the outset one must ask: "Why attempt to explain the obvious—the need to forgive one another?" The answer is just as obvious: any new approach needs to be justified before the "conservatives" and "reactionaries" of the day. The Reconciliation Movement is a new phenomenon with a presupposed agenda: it is a way, both better and more faithful to Scripture, to reconcile Jews and Christians and Jews and Jesus.

So what are these new elements? In his paper "Theological Notes About 'Identificational Confession,'" Pieter Bos, himself an advocate of the Movement, presents a clear and helpful synopsis of its scriptural basis. In a nutshell, it all rests upon a new understanding of Daniel's prayer.[70] Forgiveness can come through the identification of one with the sins of the others. "*We* have sinned," prayed Daniel and "Moreover, *we* have not listened … to our kings, our princes, our fathers" (Dan 9:5, 6, my emphasis). The use of the pronoun "we" by a righteous person leads to the conclusion that Daniel identified himself fully with Israel and her sins, even though he did not take part in them. In this way, the confession of one person for the sins of others is justified and is termed "representative confession". Furthermore, Daniel not only confessed

[68] For more on the Pope's visit to Israel, see Gershon Nerel, "Rome in Jerusalem: The Pope, the Jews and the Gospel in Israel," in *Mishkan* 32/2000, pp. 67-81.

[69] On "The Evangelical Order of the Sisters of Mary," Holocaust service, see "*Tsa'ar Amok Vaken* [A Deep and Genuine Sorrow]," *Kivun* (May-June), vol. 23, p. 12.

[70] There are of course other scriptural references such as Neh 1:6, 7; Ezra 9:6, 7 et al.

present sins but also sins of the past, which predate the Exile and extend back to the sins of the "fathers." Christians thus feel justified in doing the same today, seeing it as their duty to confess the past and present sins of their cities, nations, tribes, etc. Finally, since Daniel confesses the "corporate sins" of the people of Israel, Christians should do the same. In this way, a Spaniard is seen as a representative of the whole of the Spanish people when he confesses the corporate sins of Spain.

How should this understanding translate itself into reality? Ultimately, the process of "progressive representation" should begin by an official representative (a mayor, for example) confessing the sins of his particular city. Yet since it is only the Church that can "legally apply the blood of Jesus as means of forgiveness of corporate sins,"[71] the process must begin with her. However, the Church moves slowly, if at all, and so the process of progressive representation usually starts with the "Daniels," the intercessors, who identify themselves with, and intercede for, the sins of the city (nation, tribe). The prayer of the "Daniels" paves the way for the "Ezras," the Christian leadership, who represents the city's people at a corporate level before God. The "Ezras" in turn prepare the way for the "Nehemiahs," the secular leadership, who through the prayer and encouragement of Christians lead the people of the city to repentance, to Jesus and to forgiveness.

This short analysis of the Movement's scriptural basis demonstrates its novelty and explains the events described above where Spaniards of the 21st century confess the sins of the Inquisitors before a forgiving group of Messianic Jewish leaders. It also explains the "Reconciliation Walks" where the sins of the Crusaders are confessed by an enthusiastic group of Americans in front of an empty synagogue. The Reconciliation Movement, by developing a new understanding of the idea of representation, is able to justify and encourage people who have done no wrong to one another, to forgive each other for sins they themselves have not committed.

What Is Wrong With This Picture?

The Reconciliation Movement demonstrates how impoverished some segments of modern Christianity have become. Through a precarious process of interpretation, confession and forgiveness have taken a form that will only reinforce the very thing the movement is trying to change: a Jewish lack of appreciation for Jesus and the New Testament.

The prayers of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah are an indication of a careless, and indeed a reckless, interpretation where even the unlearned must admit that Daniel, unlike many of the so-called "intercessors," was a prophet and as such

71 Pieter Bos, "Theological Notes About 'Identificational Confession'," 1997:6. To access to the document, go to http://www.reconcile.org/identcom.htm.

held a unique, almost unparalleled position in the history of Israel. To say that any "intercessor" is a "Daniel" is to reduce the biblical text into a none-sense. The same holds true for forgiveness. Any reader should at least acknowledge that Daniel never attempted to forgive anybody. To turn his cry: "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness … O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive!" to "As a representative of Israel before God, I forgive her" is ludicrous. In the same way Ezra, even as a priest, never sacrificed a single animal to atone for corporate sins. Instead, he humbly acknowledged: "God of Israel, Thou art righteous […] Behold, we are before Thee in our guilt, for no one can stand before Thee because of this" (Ezra 9:15). In other words, Ezra the priest understood that there are sins that even he could not forgive. To say that he legally applied the blood of a lamb as a means of forgiveness of corporate sins is so remote from the text and context that one must truly wonder under what influence those who hold to such an interpretation are operating. That Nehemiah was neither a "secular" figure nor did he pronounce forgiveness on anyone by now becomes tiresomely repetitive.

The whole analogy of "progressive representation" collapses with alarming ease, particularly with regard to the very objective of the Reconciliation Movement, which is to present the world with a purer gospel than did its predecessors. The Movement has turned forgiveness into such a cheap commodity that it has not only become meaningless but also offensive. What would a Jew think of the gospel when forgiveness is equally applied to one who stepped on his foot as to one who murdered his uncle? Similarly, what would anyone think of the gospel when two people who have done one another no wrong ask forgiveness from each another for sins committed by others? This approach trivializes the complex issue of forgiveness and therefore makes the gospel, if this is truly what it teaches, irrelevant.

The story of Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to hunting Nazi fugitives, is a great help in gaining some appreciation for the complexity and moral dilemmas inherent in forgiveness. In his book, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, Wiesenthal is telling us how he was faced with the ultimate dilemma of forgiveness: Should he, a Jew who is locked in a death camp, forgive a dying SS soldier who participated in the burning to death of 300 Jews—the elderly, women and children? The dying Nazi chose to confess his sin before Wiesenthal because he understood that only a Jew, not a priest, not a Christian nor a sympathetic fellow German, could forgive him, if at all. This murderer understood at least one thing correctly: the need to beg forgiveness from the offended (e.g., Matt 18:26). The soldier intuitively knew that there are only two possible participants in the process of forgiveness—the one who perpetrated the evil and the one on whom evil was perpetrated. Wiesenthal, after agonizing over what he should do, understood the same thing. He knew that he could not represent those who were burned to

death by this man. Only the victims could represent themselves. His resolution, therefore, was remarkable. He left the dying man in silence. He did not forgive but neither did he condemn. Forgiveness (or condemnation) is left to God. The consequence of his behavior was equally astonishing. On the theoretical level, the Polish priest Bolek told Wiesenthal: "Through his confession […] his conscience was liberated and he died in peace because you had listened to him."[72] On the practical level, at a meeting between Wiesenthal the Nazi hunter and Albert Speer, a high-ranking Nazi who was sentenced at the Nuremberg Trials to 20 years' imprisonment, the latter relayed the following:

> *My moral guilt is not subject to the statute of limitation, it cannot be erased in my lifetime. […] Should you forgive, Simon Wiesenthal […]? No one is bound to forgive. But you showed empathy, […]. You showed clemency, humanity, and goodness when we sat facing one another […]. You did not touch my wounds. You carefully tried to help. You didn't reproach me or confront me with your anger […]. My trauma led me to you. You helped me a great deal – as you helped the SS man when you did not withdraw your hand or reproach him. Every human being has his burden to bear. No one can remove it for another, but for me, ever since that day, it has become much lighter. God's grace has touched me through you.*[73]

Simon Wiesenthal may not have liked what will be stated here. Nevertheless, his behavior demonstrated the power of reconciliation when it was done in accordance with God's will. Rather than misapply the Word of God to aid pompous conferences of reconciliation that offer free confessions and cheap forgiveness, Wiesenthal understood that the only thing he could do was to show sympathy toward those who did not deserve it. Although it may seem insufficient, this is what love is all about. An event somewhat parallel to Wiesenthal's experience occurred recently. On 1 November 2001, President Mesitch of Croatia came to Israel and asked forgiveness from all those who were hurt at any time by the Croatian people. Tommy Lapid, as a Knesset member and a Holocaust survivor from former Yugoslavia, extended his hand to greet the Croatian president.[74] Lapid welcomed into his home the one who represented his tormentors, but did no more than that. This was an act of love and grace at work. It is a matter of further study, however, why it is that those who do not demonstrate any faith in God are able to act upon a biblical principle better than those who claim to be "the true faithful."

One might say, "But this is not scriptural. We are commanded to forgive seventy times seven." But is it that simple? At the height of his suffering, a moment away from death, Jesus cried: "Father, forgive them." He did not say, as the Reconciliation Movement would have us to believe, "As the one who is

[72] Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (New York: Schocken Books, revised and expanded edition, 1997), p. 82.

[73] Albert Speer in *The Sunflower*, pp. 231, 232.

[74] Gideon Alon, "The President of Croatia Apologized in the Knesset for the Crimes of his Country at the Time of the Holocaust," *Ha'aretz* (1 November 2001), p. 5a.

at the pinnacle of the progressive representation chain, as the High Priest, as the sacrificial Lamb, I now forgive you." No, he could not and would not have done so because for him to forgive those who killed him would have been a supreme act of injustice.[75] All Jesus could do was to show sympathy, love and compassion toward those who did not deserve it. And that he did. To complicate things further, while on the cross, Jesus asked God to forgive those who did not know what they were doing. The question needs to be asked, however, concerning those who did know what they were doing. Could they be forgiven?

What does all the foregoing mean? It simply means that the Reconciliation Movement is failing miserably. It fails to bring true reconciliation and it fails to attract Jews to Jesus. By creating a forum through which Messianic Jews can forgive those (or their representatives) who persecuted and killed other Jews, they are saying once again that those Jews and Christians who embrace Jesus tolerate the murderers, the rapists and the tormentors of the Jewish people. In effect, the wheel has come full circle and, once again, Jesus is presented, hopefully by well-meaning Jews and Christians, as an infinitely loving Messiah, embracing those who inflicted untold sufferings upon his brothers and sisters. Instead of hinting at the possibility of tolerating evil, both Christians and Jews who confess faith in Jesus would do well to heed the examples of Wiesenthal and Speer, Lapid and Mesitch, for theirs is the way of true grace. Humbling as it may be, the Reconciliation Movement could stand to learn how to walk in love from the very people to whom they are trying to be an example.

[75] A careful study of Gen 9:5 would be appropriate here.

Books about reconciliation*

***Peace building*. Luc Reychler & Thania Paffenholz (Eds.), pp. 573 (2001)**

A handbook about reconciliation. The book contains articles written by field-workers who are active in current peace building, working in hot spots around the world.

The field guide gives examples from reconciliation projects from Northern Ireland to Somalia and takes up issues like the usefulness of humor, overcoming sentimental walls, dealing with stereotypes and much more.

***Seeking Peace*. Johann Christoph Arnold, pp. 237 (1998)**

Peace doesn't necessarily mean absence of war. The author of this book tells us that before we can make peace with others and with the world, we must make peace with ourselves. If we are at war with our parents, our family, our society, or our church, there is probably a war going on inside us also. The book therefore suggests that we return to ourselves and create harmony within us.

***What Christians Should Know About Reconciliation*. John Dawson, pp. 48 (1998)**

This booklet aims to bring understanding and knowledge into areas of ministry that frequently affect believers. It is an introduction to reconciliation and tells about how we first need to be reconciled with God, and then with each other. It demonstrates a model of reconciliation that evolves around confession, repentance, reconciliation and restitution.

***Christian Peacemaking From Heritage to Hope*. Daniel L. Buttry, pp. 214 (1994)**

The book offers historical and biblical background as well as a report of recent international happenings. The author of the book tells about his firsthand experiences into the efforts for justice and peace in areas such as Nicaragua, El Salvador and India. He encourages individuals to get involved and illuminates the role of churches in carrying peacemaking into the twenty-first century.

* This list was compiled by the International Centre for Reconciliation (Coventry Cathedral), Musalaha Ministries of Reconciliation, and Daniel Buttry.

Dimensions of Forgiveness. **Everett L. Worthington Jr., pp. 358 (1997)**

This collection of articles evolves around the scientific studies of forgiveness. It approaches the term "forgiveness" in religions as Christianity and Judaism, and tells about the method, dimension and model of forgiveness. The book also contains several bibliographies on forgiveness.

Exclusion & Embrace. **Miroslaf Volf, pp. 336 (1996)**

The book is an analysis of the toughest Christian challenge of our time: how to understand the persistent alienation of peoples in our world. This is rooted in the strangeness of the "other," in tribal memories of ancient wrongs, and the self-deceits of all—even the most victimized—groups in the conflict.

Just Peacemaking. **Glen H. Stassen, pp. 288 (1992)**

The book tells us that Christians should direct their energies toward finding a set of criteria and a model for a "just peace" instead of "just war." It bases its just theory on the new reality of our world, on recent biblical interpretations, and on the experiences of people, who live in the face of oppression and nuclear threat. The author especially uses the Sermon on the Mount and the book of Romans as models for establishing a just peace.

The Lost Art of Forgiving. **Johan Christoph Arnold, pp. 149 (1998)**

This is a collection of stories showing the healing power of forgiveness in the experiences of ordinary people scarred by crime, betrayal, abuse, bigotry and war. Rather than offering a theoretical discussion, it lets the lives and voices of those who have forgiven—and those who haven't—speak for themselves.

The Reconciliation of Peoples. **Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, pp. 195 (1997)**

From Bosnia to Rwanda to Sri Lanka there seems to be no end to the list of countries in conflict—and the deep divisions along religious lines that become fuel for fires. This collection of fifteen original essays reports on the efforts of church-based groups to foster reconciliation between former combatants in many different contexts.

Dialogue, Conflict Resolutions, and Change. **Mohammad Abu-Nimer, pp. 199 (1999)**

This study introduces the subject of Arab-Jewish relations and encounters in Israel from both conflict-resolution and educational perspectives. Through a critical examination of Arab and Jewish encounter programs in Israel, the book

reviews conflict-resolution and intergroup theories and processes which are utilized in dealing with ethnic conflicts.

***Embodying Forgiveness*. L. Gregory Jones, pp. 313 (1995)**

Drawing on a rich array of theological sources from the Bible to Bonhoeffer, the author describes sin as a distorted form of human relation and describes forgiveness as reconciliation—the disciplined activity through which humans take responsibility, once again, for each other.

***Seeking and Pursuing Peace*. Salim J. Munayer (ed.), pp. 158 (1998)**

This is a collection of articles written by Palestinian and Israeli believers in the Middle East about their perspectives on peace. The book includes topics on Biblical Foundation, Practical Aspects and Personal Experiences and Views.

Other Publications:

SULHA, Palestinian Traditional Peacemaking Process. Elias J. Jabbour (1996).

Religion, the missing Dimension of Statecraft. Douglas Johnston, Cynthia Sampson (1994).

Reconciliation, Gift of God and Source of New Life. Rudger Noll, Stephan Vesper (1998).

Reconciliation through truth. Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal, Ronald Suresh Roberts (1997).

The Forgiveness Factor. Michael Henderson (1996).

Justice and Reconciliation. Andrew Rigby (2001).

Building a Relational Society. Nicola Baker (1996).

The R Factor. Michael Schluter, David Lee (1993).

No Future without Forgiveness. Desmond Tutu (1999).

Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Second Spring? Michael Hurley SJ (1998).

Reconciliation in Religion and Society. Michael Hurley SJ (1994).

Beyond Impunity. Genevieve Jacques (2000).

Enemies – The Clash of Races. Haki R. Madhubuti (1978).

Revenge and Reconciliation. Rajmohan Gandhi (1999).

God and the Victim. Charles W. Colson (1999).

Prejudice in Religion. L. Gregory Jones (1995).

The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament. Williard M. Swartley (1992).

An Ethic for Enemies. Donald W. Shriver Jr. (1995).

Forgive and Live. Una Kroll (2000).

Ethnic Conflict and Religion – Challenges to the Churches. Theo Tschuy (1997).

Jewish Believers in Jesus: from Antiquity to the Present

Description of a book project in progress

Oskar Skarsaune*

No history of Jewish Christianity from the beginning to the present day has been written since the two semi-scholarly volumes of Hugh J. Schonfield: *The History of Jewish Christianity From the First to the Twentieth Century I-II*, London: Duckworth 1936.[76] In what follows, I will describe the plan for a new three-volume *History of Jewish Believers*. Work on the first volume is already in progress; the last two volumes are still only at a preliminary planning stage. The history project, initiated by the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, is a part of the center's programs for studying and researching Jewish believers in Jesus historically and contemporarily.

Problems of definition

What is this *History* about? Schonfield wrote about "Jewish Christianity"; other scholars working in this field have defined their subject under similar headings: "Judaeo-Christianity"; "Judenchristentum"; "judéo-christianisme." The definitions of what should be understood by this term vary a great deal, and some have suggested one should abandon this concept altogether and instead talk about varieties or types of Jewish/gentile Christianity.[77] While this may

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[76] The periods of Antiquity and modern times (last two centuries) are also covered in a more or less continuous narrative in J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: The Relationship between Church and Synagogue* (London: SPCK, 1949; 3rd. rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hous, 1979). The period of antiquity has recently been treated in a comprehensive survey by Simon Claude Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancient. Essais historiques* (Patrimoines) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1998).

[77] Raymond E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983), 74-79. Cf. also Bruce J. Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward an hypothetical Definition," *JSJ* 7 (1976), 46-57.

seem a wise strategy, at least for the period of antiquity, the approach suggested for this proposed *History* is a different one.

In the Early Church, we find a clear consciousness in several writers that there were basically two categories of believers in Jesus: Those who were Jewish by birth and those who were gentile. The basic criterion is that of ethnicity. As an example *instar omnium* one might point to Justin's *Dialogue* chap. 47, in which Justin explains in some detail his points of view concerning the possibility of salvation for different types of Jewish believers and different types of gentile believers. He clearly states that Jewish believers in Jesus take different positions with regard to questions of Torah observance and Christology (chap. 48). Corresponding differences of view exist among gentile believers, partly due to influence from the different Jewish believers. In all of this, the criterion which divides believers in Jesus into two main categories is the criterion of ethnicity, whereas points of doctrine and observance may subdivide the two main groups, and even unite believers across the ethnic division.

It is this criterion of ethnicity which is proposed as the basic definition of our *History*. It is about Jewish believers in Jesus — not about an -ism or an -ity. We define a Jewish believer in Jesus as *a person who is a Jew by birth (or conversion) and who believes in Jesus as the Messiah.*

This definition does not require a Jewish believer to adhere to a specific kind of theology, "heretical," "orthodox," "Judaeo-Christian" or otherwise, nor does it require him/her to practice a Jewish way of life or consciously keep a Jewish identity.[78] In antiquity, the majority of Jewish believers probably considered themselves as (still) Jewish and observed normative *halakhah* in varying degrees. In the medieval period many seem to have abandoned Judaism and everything Jewish in a rather conspicuous way. In the modern period one finds all kinds of positions on a spectrum ranging from full traditional observance to a rather non-observant, "average" Christian way of life. We think all of this should be included as different self-definitions and ways of life chosen by Jewish believers.

As with most definitions, there are some difficult border cases. The first element in the definition is the question of ethnicity: Who is a Jew? This may be a more difficult question in theory than in practice, but some border cases

[78] In this, our definition is different from that of Simon Claude Mimouni's. Who includes adherence to the Torah: "Le judéo-christianisme ancien est une formulation récente désignant des chrétiens d'origine juive qui ont reconnu la messianié de Jésus, qui ont reconnu ou qui n'ont pas reconnu la divinité du Christ, mais qui tous continuent à observer la Torah." His recent, quite comprehensive, monograph on ancient Jewish Christianity is based on this definition (cf. ref. in note 1; quotation p. 15). I believe the vast majority of Jewish believers in antiquity did in fact observe the Torah, but those who did not should not be excluded from the category of Jewish believers.

should be mentioned. One may be a gentile by birth but become a Jew by conversion. If such a person, after conversion to Judaism, becomes a believer in Jesus, is that person to be considered a Jewish believer in Jesus? We say, "yes." A similar border case would be gentile believers who were circumcised as part of their conversion to Christianity (probably the practice Paul is arguing against in Galatians). These people would also be among the Jewish believers in Jesus to be treated in this *History*. Gentile "Judaizers" who did not undergo circumcision and the other formal conversion rites would strictly speaking not belong to the Jewish believers in Jesus, but would constitute an interesting "fringe" phenomenon on the demarcation line between Judaism and Christianity. In this *History of Jewish Believers* they are not to be included as part of the subject, only as one of the other groups with whom Jewish believers may or may not have had close relations.

The other element in our definition is less clear-cut: "who believes in Jesus as the Messiah." A somewhat fuller statement could be: A person who believes that Jesus brought the end-time salvation promised in the Hebrew Bible, whether Jesus be conceived as the royal Messiah, the priestly Messiah, the end-time Prophet like Moses, the heavenly Son of Man, or similar categories. This definition does not include the criterion that he or she believes Jesus to be a divine being or the Son of God in an ontological or more specifically Nicene sense. In other words, our definition is meant to include a wide spectrum of Christologies, from purely Ebionite to "orthodox" Nicene.

More problems attach to the verb "believes." To modern minds, belief is something private and personal—something not to be judged and evaluated by outsiders. We could therefore take the definition to mean "who *professes* belief in Jesus." But even so, difficult border cases remain, first and foremost those Jews who were forcefully baptized, as e.g., the Marranos. Some may have come to a sincere faith in Jesus and would be Jewish believers by our definition; others kept their Jewish faith and way of life, not least in response to the pressure exerted upon them from the Christian authorities. We think the painful history of the forcefully-converted belong to our project, but precisely as a border case, and as a reminder of the tragic backdrop of violence and coercion that is always present in the post-Constantinian period of our *History*.

As already mentioned, our working definition excludes gentile Christians who for different reasons define—or want to define—themselves as "Jewish," either by different degrees of observing Jewish customs, by thinking that their nation descends from one of "the lost tribes of Israel," or by embracing a supposedly Jewish form of Christianity. In short: gentile "Judaizers" are not regarded as Jewish believers in this project.[72]

I have spoken consistently about "Jewish believers (in Jesus)," not using the more traditional "Jewish Christians" or "Judaeo-Christians." Present-day Jewish believers in Jesus will normally reject the term "Jewish Christian," since

"Christian" for them by definition means "gentile." The most popular modern self-designation is "Messianic Jew." Applying this latter term to Jewish believers in any century before the 20th is, however, anachronistic. To avoid the problem of referring to Jewish Christians by a term to which they themselves have strong objections, we have chosen the somewhat more cumbersome "Jewish believer(s) in Jesus" as (1) non-offensive to modern Jewish believers, and (2) corresponding to the earliest neutral designation of this group of believers in the sources: Justin and Origen speak about people of the Jewish *genos* who believe in Jesus.[79] This designation is to be used in the title of our project and in other conspicuous positions. The traditional "Jewish Christian(s)" (preferable to "Judaeo-Christian[s]") is hardly to be avoided, however, in the current text.

Problems of Periodization

I propose to divide the *History* into three main periods: (1) Antiquity - through the fifth century. (2) An extended middle period: sixth century - 18th century. (3) The modern period c. 1800 - present day. The criterion for this periodization is simple: In the first and last period one may speak of Jewish Christian *communities*, or at least groups. As a rule, in one way or other these communities tried/try to maintain or develop a Jewish-Christian way of life and forms of worship. In the middle period we seem to encounter Jewish believers only as single individuals, or at most as families—as a rule considered as "former Jews" by their gentile fellow-Christians and often also by themselves.

For the first two periods, there is a deplorable scarcity of sources. For the last, the problem is to sift the enormous flow of relevant source material: Magazines, pamphlets, edifying books, scholarly books, (auto)biographies, organization histories, etc.

The three main periods are meant to be treated in three corresponding volumes of some 500-600 pages each.

Challenges regarding the First Period — Antiquity (c. 30–500 C.E.)

STRUCTURE. The period of Antiquity seems to fall naturally into two main chronological periods: The New Testament period (roughly first century C.E.—but sometimes extending into the first half of second century C.E.), and the Patristic period (roughly second through fifth century C.E.) Within these periods the most convenient organization of the material seems to be by categories of sources, but also, to some extent, by different groups of people.

[79] Cf. esp. Simon Claude Mimouni, "Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien," *NTS* 38 (1992), 161-186, with references to the Fathers.

LITERARY SOURCES. This period no doubt provides the richest source material (unless one follows the "maximalist" view of the archaeological evidence advocated by the Franciscan school). I should emphasize that in the context of the proposed *History of Jewish Believers* the literary sources are treated as sources for something behind themselves: The Jewish believers who either produced them, or are referred to in them, or in other ways have left traces in them. The many difficult literary and source-critical questions should not be ignored in our context, but are not aims in themselves.

The literary sources include the following:

(1) Texts supposed to have been authored or edited by Jewish Christians, e.g., Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,[80] some apocryphal Gospels,[81] other New Testament Apocrypha, some of the so-called "Apostolic Fathers,"[82] other Patristic works,[83] the whole or parts of the Pseudo-Clementines,[84] prayers and other liturgical material in early Church Orders.[85] Apart from the urgent task of

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[80] Cf. the survey in Robert Alan Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity" in John C. Reeves (ed.), *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 55-86, and the case-study in Jacob Jervell, "Ein Interpolator interpretiert. Zu der christlichen Bearbeitung der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen," in W. Eltester (ed.), *Studien zu den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen* (BZNW 36) (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 30-61.

[81] Cf. the most recent treatment in A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

[82] Jean Daniélou may be called a "maximalist" in this regard (see ref. next note). S.C. Mimouni, *op. cit.,* takes the authors of *Didache* and *Barnabas* to be Jewish Christians.

[83] Jean Daniélou's two major studies, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea, Vol. I) (London/Philadelphia: Darton, Longman and Todd/Westminster Press, 1964) and *Études d'exégèse judéo-chrétienne (Les Testimonia)* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1966) are partly based on a rather generous assumption of extensive Jewish-Christian authorship, especially of second century works.

[84] Cf. i.a. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums (*Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1949); Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin: Akademieverlag, 1958 [2nd ed. 1981]); Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989); F. Stanley Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," *Second Century* 2 (1982), 1-33, 63-96; idem, *An Ancient Jewish-Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995).

[85] E.g., Georg Kretschmar, "Die Bedeutung der Liturgiegeschichte fhr die Frage nach der Kontinuität des Judenchristentums in nachapostolischer Zeit," in Marcel Simon (ed.), *Aspects du judéo-christianisme. Colloque de Strasbourg 23-25 avril 1964* (Paris, 1965), 113-137; David A. Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish: An Examination of the Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985); G. Rouwhorst, "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity," *VC* 51 (1997), 72-93.

critically sifting the many proposals in this regard, there is also the more difficult task of reconstructing the historical and social setting of these texts.

(2) Statements about Jewish believers in Patristic literature, as assembled and analyzed in the studies of Klijn and Reinink[86] and R. Pritz.[87]

(3) Indirect evidence in Patristic literature. Here I am thinking mainly of the frequent use in gentile Fathers of written or oral traditions coming ultimately from Jewish Christians.[88]

(4) Direct and indirect evidence in Jewish, mainly rabbinic, literature. From a methodological point of view, this is perhaps the most difficult category of material. The two classics by Travers Herford[89] and Strack[90] are nowadays deemed insufficiently critical in their handling of the rabbinic evidence on the *minim*, but some modern critical treatments may have gone to the other extreme. There seems to be no *a priori* reason why all references to *minim* should refer to the same group — be they believers in Jesus, Gnostics, or other groups. The meaning of *min* seems to be rather formal: Anyone deviating in a significant way from rabbinical doctrines.[91] It seems that the soundest way to proceed is to examine each rabbinic reference on its own terms and when the points of doctrine or observance attributed to the *minim* correspond (most) closely to known (Jewish) Christian positions, assume that Christians are intended.

More difficult is the question of veiled dialogue and discussion over Jewish Christian (or generally Christian) exegesis and *halakhah* within rabbinic literature. Some attempts have been made in this vein,[92] while other scholars

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[86] A.F.J. Klijn; G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973).

[87] Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Forth Century* (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes Press/E.J. Brill, 1988).

[88] There is still much work to do along this line. Cf., e.g., Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy. A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987).

[89] Robert Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903) (= repr. New York: KTAV Publishing House, [1975]).

[90] Herman Leberecht Strack, *Jesus, die Häretiker und die Christen, nach den ältesten jüdischen Angaben* (Leipzig: 1910).

[91] On the whole question of minim, see the comprehensive treatment in William Horbury, "The Benediction of the Minim in Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *JTS* (ns) 33 (1982), 19-61; repr. in idem, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 67-110.

[92] See the very interesting and also somewhat problematic pioneering study of E. Mihaly, "A Rabbinic Defence of the Election of Israel. An Analysis of Sifre Deuteronomy 32:9, Pisqa 312," *HUCA* 35 (1964) 103-143. Mihaly takes this passage as a point-by-point rejoinder to Paul in Romans and Barnabas 13f. Cf. also several studies by G. Stroumsa and Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995).

emphatically affirm that there is a complete and very conscious ignoring of everything Christian in rabbinic literature until after Constantine — and then it is the Christian Empire, not Christian believers, who come under attack.[93] There is certainly work to do here, on a complicated question.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES. There is a long-standing controversy between what might be called "the maximalists," represented by the Franciscan school (B. Bagatti, Loffreda et al.) on the one hand and most other archaeologists on the other. The Franciscan position is summed up in Bagatti's volume *The Church from the Circumcision*.[94] According to this school of thought, there is a wealth of archaeological evidence documenting the way of life and the theology of the Jewish Christians, especially in Syria/Palestine: Ossuaries with Christian names and symbols (crosses), graffiti with Christian inscriptions and symbols, building structures deriving from Jewish Christian synagogues (e.g., *mikwaoth*), etc. One can hardly read Bagatti's book without a strong feeling that this wealth of material, together with the rather audacious juxtaposition of the archaeological evidence with quotations from patristic literature, needs very careful critical sifting. In Jerusalem itself the Franciscan school has for a long time drawn criticism from their fellow scholars among the Dominicans at the École Biblique, and in recent years Israeli archaeologists have also joined the critics' camp. The major critical *Auseinandersetzung* was published by Joan E. Taylor.[95] One may remark that Taylor seems to make a principle of contradicting the Franciscan interpretations of the evidence whenever possible —in contrast to the more positive evaluation of James H. Charlesworth, for example.[96] There seems to be room here for yet another balanced appraisal of the presently available evidence.

Challenges regarding the Second Period — c. 500–1800 AD

Whereas one can hardly say that the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity has been ignored by scholars, as far as Antiquity is concerned, one can hardly avoid an impression of almost complete neglect regarding the medieval period. This

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[93] As claimed e.g., by Jacob Neusner and his disciples.

[94] *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971) (repr. 1984).

[95] *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Cf. also her unpublished dissertation and her articles "The Bethany Cave: A Jewish-Christian Cult Site?" *RB* 97 (1990), 453-65; "Capernaum and its 'Jewish-Christians': A Re-examination of the Franciscan Excavations," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 9 (1989-90), 7-28; "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?" *VC* 44 (1990), 313-34; "The Bagatti-Testa Hypothesis and Alleged Jewish-Christian Archaeological Remains," *Mishkan* 13/1990, 1-26.

[96] *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK 1989), esp. 103ff.

may have to do with the inevitable stigma that attaches to all and every Jewish Believer in this period: The stigma deriving from the policy of forced conversions. This was not a constant policy during the entire period, but the only known instances of conversion to Christianity in greater numbers were due to the use of force by the Christian authorities — usually in the form of Jews having to choose between baptism or expulsion. This being the case, the odds are clearly not in favour of regarding any conversion by Jews to Christianity as being caused by a sincere and genuine conviction of faith. It certainly doesn't make the odds any better that some converts are known to have acted as informers and tools of persecution against their non-converted compatriots.

This aspect of the story has to be addressed squarely and without unwarranted apologetics. At the same time, there is also the little known story of the exceptions to the rule — those rare individuals or families who embraced Christianity with a sincere commitment and who made significant contributions to Church life in general and towards a change for the better in Church policy towards the Jews in particular.

As with Antiquity, the wider historical framework within which Jewish Believers could exist has to be mapped to a reasonable extent, and also the significant changes that occurred during this long period. The many dimensions of the Jewish/Christian relationship are generally well researched for the Medieval and post-Medieval period,[97] but one may reasonably claim that the significant phenomenon of Christian philo-semitism has been neglected in much of the literature.[98]

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97 To name just a few standard studies: Marianne Awerbuch, *Christlich-jüdische Begegnung im Zeitalter der Frühscholastik* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980); S.W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. IX: Under Church and Empire (2nd ed.) (New York/London/Philadelphia, 1965/5726); Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du moyen age sur les juifs et le judaïsme* (Paris, 1963); idem, *Juifs et Chrétiens: Patristique et Moyen Age* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977); M. Braude, *Conscience on Trial. Three Public Religious Disputations Between Christians and Jews in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 1952); Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1980); idem, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1988); Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaka & London: Cornell University Press, 1982); G. Dahan, *La Polémique chrétienne contre le judaïsme au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1991); Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, Siegfried von Kortzfleisch (eds.), *Kirche und Synagoge. Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden I-II* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1968/1970); Diana Wood (ed.), *Christianity and Judaism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).

98 Cf. e.g., Alan Edelstein, *An Unackowledged Harmony: Philo-Semitism and the Survival of European Jewry* (Westport, Conn./London: Greenwood Press, 1982); Siegfried Riemer,

It may also be said, perhaps, that the history of Jewish Christians within the realm of the Eastern (mainly Syriac) Churches has been little investigated. The lonely figure of the Jacobite "Bar Hebraeus" of the late 13th century is there to remind us there might be more to this story than often thought.

Towards the end of the period, especially in the 17th and 18th century, one observes significant changes in Christian attitudes towards, and theology about, the Jews, not least in the Netherlands and Britain,[99] and in the 18th century also in Germany (the Pietist revival). This paved the way for the great novelty in Jewish/Christian relations in the 19th century: The Christian mission to the Jews on a grand scale.

The Modern Period

Much has been written about Jewish Believers in the 19th and 20th century, but most of it from the perspective of the larger or smaller missionary bodies, i.e. as a history of missions.[100] Our challenge in this third part of the history, as I perceive it, is to change the perspective and write this history from the perspective of the Jewish believers themselves. Many of them became believers in Jesus without much contact with the missionaries. Some of them stressed their independence vis-à-vis the "gentile" Church and its missionary bodies and figure as marginal sectarians and troublemakers in the histories of the missionary societies. There is a remarkably rich literature produced by modern

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Philosemitismus im deutschen evangelischen Kirchenlied des Barock (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1963); Oskar Skarsaune, "The Neglected Story of Christian Philo-Semitism in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Mishkan* 21/1994, 40-51.

[99] Cf. e.g., N.I. Matar, "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought: Between the Reformation and 1660," *Durham University Journal* (1985), 23-35; idem, "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701," *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985), 115-148; Wolfgang Philipp, "Spätbarock und frühe Aufklärung. Das Zeitalter des Philosemitismus," in Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, Siegfried von Kortzfleisch (eds.), *Kirche und Synagoge. Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden - Darstellung mit Quellen II* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970), 23-86; Martin Schmidt, "Judentum und Christentum im Pietismus des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," ibid, 87-128; Regina S. Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism. Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed Press, 1983); Peter Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1970).

[100] E.g., the three massive volumes of J.F.A. de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Mission betrachtet* Band I (Karlsruhe/Leipzig, 1884); Band II (Berlin, 1891); Band III (Berlin, 1892). Cf. also W.T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809-1908* (London, 1908). In our century several of the missionary societies have had their history written, usually as anniversary volumes. See the bibliography in O. Skarsaune, "Israels Venner." *Norsk arbeid for Israelsmisjonen 1844-1930* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1994), 245-48.

Jewish Christians during the last two centuries: Books, articles, pamphlets, periodicals—much of it almost entirely overlooked in the missionary histories. Here is a rich field for innovative research.[101]

I presume that this part of the *History* has to be organized in subdivisions, partly according to periods, partly according to regions. Some of the material is in Yiddish or Eastern European languages (Rumanian, Hungarian, etc.), some of it in Hebrew, biblical or modern. In other words: In this part of the history special linguistic competences are required.

It seems that after 1948, Israel, the USA, and the former Soviet Union are the main scenes for significant developments of and within Jewish Christianity. The first studies of the post-war and contemporary scene in Israel and the USA are presently forthcoming,[102] the former Soviet scene seems to be almost completely unresearched.

Epilogue

Work on volume 1 is already in full progress, and will be published in 2003. Volumes 2 and 3 are still at a preliminary planning stage, which means that the editor is very interested in input of all sorts concerning these volumes: relevant source material and where to find it; unpublished theses and dissertations related to our subject; resource persons with insight in the field, bibliographical resources, etc. The editor's E-mail address is: Oskar.Skarsaune@mf.no.

101 A pioneering work is Kai Kjær-Hansen, *The Herzl of Jewish Christianity: Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Edinburgh/Grand Rapids, MI: The Handsel Press/Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

102 See for the American scene, Jaques Gutwirth, *Les Judaéo-Chrétiens d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1987); for the Israeli scene, Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jewish Self-identity in Eretz-Israel, 1917-1967* (Jerusalem, 1996).

Book Reviews

Messianic Judaism. Dan Cohn-Sherbok. London: Cassell, 2000, 234 pp.

Akiva Cohen

For Messianic Jews, a welcome trend has appeared lately—a spate of books, written by non Messianic Jews, that assess Messianic Judaism from a self-declared objectivity. These include S. Feher's, *Passing Over Easter; Constructing the Boundaries of Messianic Judaism*, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1998); C. Harris-Shapiro's, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey through ReligiousChange in America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); D. Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, (London: Cassell, 2000). I feel justified in calling these books a "spate" as three such books published (one every year) between 1998 and 2000, compared to virtually no such books since the first century C.E., constitute a "spate!" Such a phenomenon is certainly a sign of the pluralistic times in which we live.

The first two books were written from the perspective of women with diverse backgrounds—the first a sociologist and the second a Reconstructionist Rabbi—this most recent book, is written by a male Reform Rabbi and scholar. Dan Cohn-Sherbok is well known to the academic guild as a scholar of Judaism, having published or edited over 50 books, and currently holds the post of the first Professor of Judaism at the University of Wales. What motivates a rabbi scholar to write such a book? The answer is provided by the author in the introduction. The author states that after a visit to America, while writing a book on American Jews, he was introduced to the phenomenon of Messianic Judaism, and became "convinced of the need for an objective account of this important development in modern Jewish life" (p. xii). However, at the conclusion of this review, I will offer my own suggestion that I believe plays into his reasons.

Cohn-Sherbok's book, Messianic Judaism – as already hailed by its critics – succeeds as a responsible and "objective" account of the subject. The book is divided into three parts—Part I: History and beliefs of Messianic Judaism; Part II: Messianic Jewish observance; Part III: The authenticity of Messianic Judaism. Cohn-Sherbok demonstrates his ease with sources (often obscure to those "outside" the movement) and academic research as he traces the history and beliefs of the movement in Part I. In this first section, the author delineates the first "Jewish Christians" from the time of Jesus' disciples, through the Middle Ages, to the modern period. This provides an interesting account that helps to elucidate the significance of Jewish Christians in the early Jesus movement; some interesting facts form the somewhat sparse details of the Middle Ages, and the transformations of the modern period.

Concerning the modern period, the author explains the development of Hebrew Christianity, with a focus on Joseph Rabinowitz and the emergence of *the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America* and Missions to the Jews in the United States and Europe in the early 20th century.

A characteristic aspect of the book are several illustrative quotes and stories such as the following one that concerns the transitional period and tension between Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews,

> *A delightful though disturbing crisis occurred one day, when we were waiting in the cafeteria for lunch. Someone from our group said, 'Let's sing a song!' In response, we all began to sing, Havenu, shalom aleichem, an old Hebrew folk song, the older Hebrew Christians present would surely remember from their childhood. And sing we did, with energy, enthusiasm and joy. Abruptly, some of the old Hebrew Christians' Gentile wives accosted us. 'Why are you singing that? Don't you know you shouldn't sing Jewish songs!' . . . How assimilated they [the Hebrew Christians] were! How far removed from their own people!* (Y. Chernoff, *Born a Jew . . . Die a Jew*, [Hagerstown, 1996], pp. 113-14, cited in Cohn-Sherbok, 59)

Part II, concerning Messianic Jewish observance provides a comprehensive description of Messianic Jewish practice. This section, as with the rest of the book, is well written, complete with Cohn-Sherbok's own summaries of the historical origins and meanings of Jewish practices. This section, however, by nature of the movement, is problematic. First, as the author readily concedes, there is no sort of consensus upon Messianic Jewish practice, and in fact a huge spectrum exists upon the "less traditional-more traditional" continuum. Nonetheless, this section provides an account of what at least some in the movement would like Messianic Jewish practice to look like. Secondly, Cohn-Sherbok (perhaps because of his unfamiliarity with Israeli Messianic Jews) does not make the important distinction between the practices which he describes – which are more characteristic of American Messianic Jews (and perhaps those in Britain and other nations of the Diaspora) – and those which are observed by Messianic Jews in Israel. For example, although almost all Israeli Messianic Jews observe the Biblical Feasts (as part of Israel's national culture), very few observe the Sabbath (in a traditional way), or wear a kippah, or a tallit, even during worship.

The author devotes a significant and informative section of his book (chapter 16) to the status of Messianic Jews and Israel in relation to their right, or lack thereof, to make aliyah (immigrate to Israel). Still, it seems to this reviewer, that at least an indication of the stark difference between Messianic Jews in Israel and those in the Diaspora, in terms of their practice (and issues of religious identity) would have provided the book with a more accurate summary of the movement and its nuances.

Although the vast majority of the book's pages depict Messianic Judaism in a positive light, and even expose some of the acrimonious tactics of some in the Jewish community who oppose it, the author has included in Part III, a chapter

on critics of the movement. This includes "testimonials" of "former converts" who now have "returned to the fold" of non-Messianic Judaism. For Messianic Jews these will be painful to read. However, they should be seen as an opportunity for soul-searching concerning what was experienced by these Jews as, in retrospect, a shallow encounter with authentic and informed Jewish belief and practice.

Returning to my claim at the outset of this review, that it seems to me that at least part of the motivation of the author involves more than just his academic curiosity of the Messianic Jewish movement, let me state my case.

Since, the rift between the Orthodox and Reform Jewish communities has widened in the last several years (at least from my perspective living in Israel), the trend seems to have been an aggressive delegitimization of Reform rabbis via the flagship "conversion" issue as it relates to Israeli (religious) law. As a Reform rabbi, Cohn-Sherbok's pluralistic viewpoint is naturally more tolerant than the Orthodox position towards other "Judaisms." One should not then be surprised by the author's openness towards Messianic Judaism.

My observation is simply that it seems to be in the interest of Cohn-Sherbok to make a case for the ludicrous stance that the Orthodox Jewish community takes towards Reform (and other non-orthodox) Jews in light of the Orthodox position on Messianic Jews born of a Jewish mother. The following discussion takes place in the context of the author's informative discussion of Orthodox, non-orthodox, and Messianic Jewish views of who is a "Jew." The author states his case as follows:

> *Although Israel has barred Messianic Jews who have Jewish mothers from entering Israel under the Law of Return, this does not mean that within the Orthodox community such individuals are not perceived as Jewish. Rather, the Israel Supreme Court has gone beyond Jewish religious law in declaring that a Jew who accepts another religion violates the common sense sociological boundaries of inclusion within the Jewish community ... In addition, Orthodox Judaism rejects any form of conversion other than its own. As a result, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist converts and the children of female converts are regarded as non-Jews. Thus, Orthodox Judaism includes some Messianic Jews [born of Jewish mothers, yet considered 'apostates'] within the Jewish community while regarding individuals born of patrilineal descent and non-Orthodox converts as non-Jews.* (p. 203-4)

Also of interest is the author's statement concerning non-Orthodox branches of Judaism (p. 208):

> *Even though the adherents of these branches of the tradition differ over the most fundamental features of the Jewish religion, even including belief in God, they have joined together in excluding Messianic Judaism from the range of legitimate interpretations of the Jewish heritage.*

Although, by this Cohn-Sherbok may refer to the "official" positions here, it is of note that the founder of Humanistic Judaism, Sherwin Wine, makes the

surprising comment on the back cover of the book, " ... Messianic Jews have the right to be included in the Jewish people."

The book seems to be free from typos, except for the rather glaring oversight on p. 19, where the twelve "Principles of the Jewish Faith" of Rabinowitz are listed; the fifth principle has erroneously been recorded as a duplicate of the sixth principle. For a correct rendering cf. K. Kjær-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*, (Scotland: The Handsel Press, 1995), p. 94.

In sum, Cohn-Sherbok has done a commendable job of depicting the history and practice of Messianic Judaism in ancient and modern times in what will no doubt prove to be a valuable and user-friendly resource for Messianic Jews and those interested in the movement. The author has also (regardless of his motivations) done a service to Messianic Jews. By taking the time and effort to dedicate a fair-handed book to the movement, Cohn-Sherbok has aided the Messianic Jewish movement in its quest for recognition, affirmation, and acceptance by the wider Jewish community. Although, there are still probably more "spitters" than "listeners" (to use the authors' own terms, p. 213), in Cohn-Sherbok, Messianic Jews have surely found a listener and a friend, and for that the movement should be grateful. Cohn-Sherbok is to be applauded for his courage to go where more tradition-bound souls have been afraid to travel.

After Paul Left Corinth. The Influence of Secular Ethics ond Social Changes, Bruce W. Winter. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2001, xx + 344 pp.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

With his book *After Paul Left Corinth* Bruce W. Winter, director of the Institute of Early Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World, Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK has given us a thought-provoking new book. Well-written and documented, it offers a new understanding of how the relationship developed between the church in Corinth and Paul, the founder of the church.

In *Mishkan* 24/1996: 78-84 we brought a presentation of the five volume series The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, of which Bruce W. Winter is a series editor.

In 51 AD Paul left Corinth after having worked there for about 18 months. Four years later at the end of a three-year stay in Ephesus, Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. Much had changed since Paul left Corinth and these changes are the subject of Winter's book. By giving a picture of the Roman colony of Corinth through the help of literary, non-literary and archaeological sources he attempts to answer the question of what went wrong in the church

in Corinth and who is to blame for the detour taken by the church after the good beginning made by Paul.

Several factors change in Corinth during the 50s, according to Winter. He mentions the creation of a provincial or federal cult with Corinth as its headquarters and indicates that the cult of the emperor was much more common than is often assumed. Several years of severe grain shortages also caused instability in the region. The moving of the Isthmian Games from Corinth to the ancient, nearby site of Istmia affected in no minor way the social elite in the church. As citizens of Rome the social and privileged elite of the church were invited to the big banquets held in connection with the games. Apart from the imperial cult and the worship of idols associated with the games, the banquets were made up of "the unholy trinity of eating, drinking and immorality" – in which the host offers the guests prostitutes as "dessert." It is against this background Winter understands Paul's fight against the social elite of the church, which tried to introduce into the church the norms of the non-believing Roman elite outside the church.

Such an approach sheds fresh light on the elite's new view of sexuality which Paul argues against, but also many other conditions are revealed through Winter's approach. While Paul during his first stay in Corinth would know of nothing else but Jesus Christ as crucified (1 Cor 2:2), the rich and influential in the church wanted to dress Paul up like a sophist or a wandering preacher who would deliver his speech like a great orator. Furthermore they wanted him to receive payment for his work. They were used to sophists having disciples who showed great loyalty towards their teacher by defiling the teacher of other disciples. This Roman norm to which they subscribed meant that they saw no problem in playing Paul and Apollos against each other.

These examples will suffice to represent Winter's view that the lamentable development in the church in Corinth was caused by the social elite who let Roman elite thinking influence them with distressing consequences for the life and the lifestyle of the church.

All exegeses are incomplete and that includes exegesis based on historical sources. But this does not change the fact that Winter has presented a historical work and come up with an inspiring interpretation which sheds new light on many of the issues with which Paul was concerned in his first letter to the Corinthians.

The best recommendation I can give the book is that it has changed much of my understanding of what Paul was concerned with when he wrote 1 Corinthians.

The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape and Interpretation. Peter W. Flint, editor. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, xv + 266 pp.

Miriam Berg

This volume is part of a series on the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature whose general goal is laid out as "Meeting a need for quality English-language resources on the Dead Sea Scrolls." The series is intended to make "available to readers at all levels the best of current Dead Sea Scrolls research, showing how the Scrolls impact our understanding of the Bible, Judaism and Christianity."

This particular volume contains eleven articles and is divided into two parts: 1. The Scriptures, the Canon, and the Scrolls, and 2. Biblical Interpretation and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the first article—"Canon as Dialogue"—James Sanders addresses the canon from an intertextual perspective. Bruce Waltke follows with an overview of "How We Got the Hebrew Bible: The Text and Canon of the Old Testament", a theme continued in Eugene Ulrich's "The Bible in the Making: The Scriptures Found at Qumran" which examines the shape of Scripture in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Craig Evans discusses the development of the tripartite division of the canon in "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canon of Scripture in the Time of Jesus" and in the last article in this section Peter Flint surveys the "Noncanonical Writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Apocrypha, Other Previously Known Writings, Pseudepigrapha".

The second part of the book presents a number of biblical characters which appear in the writings of the Qumran community. James VanderKam looks at the Enoch tradition in "The interpretation of Genesis in *1 Enoch*", while Craig Evans discusses "Abraham in the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Man of Faith and Failure." James Bowley treats "Moses in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Living in the Shadow of God's Anointed", followed by James Scott's examination of "Korah and Qumran". The last two articles in the book are "4QMMT, Paul, and 'Works of the Law'" by Martin Abegg, Jr. and "The Intertextuality of Scripture: The Example of Rahab (James 2:25)" by Robert Wall.

Although the articles in the first part of the book can be read individually, the reader will gain most by reading them as a unit. Despite the fact that they do not directly build on one another, taken together they examine the development of the canon in the light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Flint's examination of the definitions of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in order to evaluate the presence of these genres in the Qumran texts is particularly helpful, while the reader interested in the non-canonical writings discovered at Qumran will also find useful his listings of English translations of the texts in question.

The book will also be of use to anyone interested in any of the characters examined in the second part of the book and their depiction in the Qumran writings. Here, it is not clear why Wall's contribution—taken from his commentary on James—has been included in this volume since the only mention of Qumran is in a footnote in the appendix to the article.

The book's terminology and presuppositions indicate that the writers are addressing an evangelical Christian audience. Such phrases as "Our Lord and his apostles confronted Old Testament variants similar to the ones that confront us" (p. 49) and "the wilderness period of Israel's salvation history" (p. iii) give the book a Christian focus which may or may not have been the intention of the editors.

Contributing to this factor is the obvious lack of articles addressing Judaism. While papers such as Evans' "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canon of Scripture in the Time of Jesus" and Abeggs' "4QMMT, Paul, and Works of the Law" do draw on rabbinic literature to address New Testament issues, an opportunity has perhaps been missed here to examine the relationship between (the Bible at) Qumran and the emergence of first century rabbinic Judaism.

Although the book's own objective is to make Dead Sea scroll research "available to readers at all levels," some of the articles may be difficult for lay readers to comprehend in light of the contributors' specialized terminology and the assumption of considerable background knowledge. Nevertheless, the book is overall both interesting and informative, and worth the read.

Books received

VanderKam, James C.

An Introduction to Early Judaism. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001; Bristol UK: Alban Books. Xii + 234 pp. $ 18.00.

Loader, Wiliam

Jesus and the Fundamentalism of His Day. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 162 pp. $ 14.00.

Saldarini, Anthony J.

Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society. A Sociological Approach. The Biblical Resource Series. Grand Rapids Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001 xxv + 325 pp. $ 28.00.

Fahlbusch, Erwin, Lochman, Jan Milic, Mbiti, John, Pelikan, Jaroslav, and Vischer, Lukas (eds)

The Encyclopedia of Christianity. Volume 2 (E-l). Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999., xxx + 787 pp. $100.00.

Dever, William G.

What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When did They know it? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel. Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, xii + 313 pp. $25.00

Tschuy, Theo

Dangerous Diplomacy. The Story of Carl Lutz, Rescuer of 62,000 Hungarian Jews. Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000, xv + 163 pp. $25.00

From the Israeli Media

Lisa Loden*

For many years the Israeli press has occasionally carried reports about various Christian sites. In the past few months, however, there has been an increase in the number of articles dealing with convents, monasteries, churches, and Christian guesthouses. The articles all express positive attitudes towards the presence of these "foreign" sites in Israel. There seems to be a sense of fascination with the lifestyle and atmosphere embodied in these Christian locations and in the lives of those who live in them.

Abu Ghosh

The Arab village of Abu Ghosh has two crusader churches with monasteries. For the past 12 years, these two churches have hosted a bi-annual music festival with a classical concert series. Each year the press carries announcements and reviews of the concerts held in the churches.

This year the Benedictine crusader church at Abu Ghosh underwent renovations and some of the wall frescos were restored. The major Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz* (18.05.01), carried a full-page feature article about the church – now given the status of an abbey—and its history from the 12th century. The concert series was briefly mentioned and the article carried an implicit invitation to visit the site.

In another article (*Jerusalem Post*, 25.05.01), this time in the leading English daily paper, the venue was as much the focus as the concert series. According to the artistic director of the Abu Ghosh music festival, Hanna Tzur, "when people come to Abu Ghosh they are completely taken with the churches." She stressed the spiritual atmosphere of the churches and its effect on the music and the audience.

Being Abroad While Still in Israel

With the recent crisis in tourism worldwide and particularly in Israel, foreign tourism to the country has diminished; still there continues to be a steady, if smaller, flow of Israelis visiting holy sites. The guesthouses and hospices that

All translations from the Hebrew press into English are by Lisa Loden.

especially cater to foreign tourists are also open to Israelis and it is a recent trend for the press to review these accommodations..

A bi-monthly Tel Aviv journal (*Roim Olam*, July/August 2001) carried a five-page feature reviewing three Christian hospices in Jerusalem. The title of the article was "Breaking into the Monastery." The journalist, Anat Or, began the article with the following statement:

> *You don't need to go abroad to feel like you are out of the country. The touring Israeli doesn't skip over any of the famous churches that appear in his guidebook, but how many of us have visited the churches that are right here in Israel? Churches and Christian sites that draw hoards of tourists are almost unknown to Israelis. Many churches and monasteries have guest rooms and offer a fantastic experience, including, in addition to the vacation, an encounter with another culture, a special atmosphere, and even a spiritual experience if you are open to it.*

The three guesthouses she reviews are Christ Church, just inside the Jaffa Gate in the Old City; St. Andrew's, the guesthouse of the Scottish Church in the new city; and the convent of Saint Charles in the German Quarter of the new city. She finds all three of these sites to be very well suited to the Israeli looking for a kind of vacation that is qualitatively different from the normal stay in a hotel. She gives a brief history of each site and highlights interesting aspects of each one.

Christ Church is interesting on account of its Zionist history. Or writes that from its inception in 1809, the founders of the church were Zionists—long before the Zionist movement was formed. "The founders of the organization (Anglicans) believed that before Jesus would return, the Jewish people would return to their land." Today a Jewish priest, Neil Cohen, leads the church and the congregation that meets in the church is a mixture of Christian Zionists and Arab Christians who believe the promises of the Tanach regarding the nation of Israel.

In regards to the accommodation, Christ Church offers quiet, modest, and almost monastic like accommodation with "a peaceful atmosphere."

Saint Andrew's Hospice, the Scottish Hospice, is also given high marks for its hospitality. Although the hospice is managed separately from the religious side of the site, Or says:

> *Whoever wishes to can relate to the place like a normal hotel, but it would be a pity to miss a visit to the beautiful church. The quiet you find in Christian religious institutions is also found here. Sitting in the empty church and listening to church music can be compared to psychological therapy.*

Saint Charles' Convent in the German Quarter is cited as the most extreme of the three guesthouses reviewed by this article. The atmosphere is more foreign and more Christian than the other two venues visited. "The place is quiet and there is a sense of being completely cut off from the Israeli experience

outside of it. … Only the exit signs in Hebrew tell us that we are not in Europe."

When she speaks of the nuns who manage and serve in this guesthouse, Or confesses her childhood dream (revived in this setting) of wanting to be a nun!

Hebrew is spoken in all three of the guesthouses reviewed. The rooms are described and telephone numbers and booking information are given.

The major Hebrew daily paper *Yidiot Achronot* (04.07.01) writes about the Christian settlement of Ness Amim in the Western Galilee. The focus of this article is once again the accommodation that an Israeli can enjoy in this "foreign" setting.

> *The settlement is … surrounded by Arab and Jewish settlements, and it offers spiritual encounters between the different religions … The residents of Ness Amim believe that the people of Israel are the chosen people and that Yeshua lived and died as a Jew. Christianity, after the European holocaust carries a historic and public responsibility. Flowing from this is that there must come a change in the traditional attitude towards Jews.*

After giving a history of Ness Amim, the article describes the setting, accommodation and activities that can be enjoyed by guests. The journalist highlights activities for children, for music lovers, for students, and for the entire family:

> *You can soak up the relaxed atmosphere of the place, meet with the residents and volunteers and guests from abroad who have come to the seminars and to learn Hebrew, you can speak with them in English, and you can feel that you are abroad, in spite of the fact that you are in the north of the country.*

Monks on a Mountain

In an unusual article, published in the orthodox religious Hebrew weekly paper (*Makor Rishon*, 05.10.01), Ainat Barzilai writes about the small settlement of Netofa in the upper Galilee. This is a small monastery in a cave, set on a hill between Jewish and Arab villages and settlements. What is unusual about the article is the relatively positive and tolerant tone with which it discusses the life of the Greek Catholic monks and their Israeli volunteers who live in Netofa.

The founder of Netofa, identified only as Yakov from Holland, was reluctant to give an interview but in the end agreed to speak to the reporter. Yakov spoke of his own history and calling to Israel. As a young man he was impressed by the story of his uncle, who during the Second World War was sent to a concentration camp and tortured for his anti-Nazi views. This uncle saw the hand of God at work in the establishment of the State of Israel and felt that he should move to Israel (then Palestine) to be a part of what God was doing with the Jewish people. Because of injuries sustained during the holocaust, he was unable to make the journey and his nephew, Yakov, made the journey in his place.

Netofa today has five monks living together who are cloistered and live in seclusion. Their focus is contemplative prayer and their lifestyle is one of withdrawal from the world. When asked who comes to Netofa (which is remote and accessible only by foot), Yakov answered:

> *Christians from our community, the Greek Catholic, come in order to talk and pray with us. Groups of Jews come with their guides and we don't interfere with them, volunteers come from abroad, and young Israelis come to volunteer and work in the orchards in exchange for room and board. They help us with renovation and maintenance; sometimes out of curiosity they ask to take part in our prayers.*

Barzili was pleased with the answer to the next question when Yakov emphasized that they do not engage in missionary activity and in fact send Jews back to the source of their own religion, to the Tanach and especially to the Psalms.

The article ended with a surprisingly positive statement about Netofa:

> *Whoever is nauseated by a visit to a Christian religious site can see Netofa as a beautiful place where a delicate balance is achieved between man and his environment, in a kind of thoughtful symbiosis ... He can learn a lesson about listening to inner truth or about the great need for sacrifice to his creator to the extent of self sacrifice. And we didn't say a word about Christianity.*

Life in a Silent Convent

Two of the major Hebrew daily papers (*Globes*, 30.08.01; *Ma'ariv*, 22.06.01, 31.08.01) carried feature articles and reports about a new documentary film, "Love That Can't Be Expressed in Words." The documentary is about a convent of silent nuns at Beit Jamal near Beit Shemesh and is significant because it is the first time filming has been permitted inside this convent.

The articles all carry interviews with the film's producer, Shiri Tzur. She relates that it took two years of building trust with the nuns to come to the point of receiving permission to make the film. In the process, she spent much time at the convent and became friends with the nuns, or at least with those who were permitted to speak.

> *After two years with them. I understood that the only way to understand them was by means of a comparison with being in love. They are in love with God and feel that he has chosen them. It's exactly the same way a man centers in on a woman and wants her to be his wife. As soon as you place being in love in the center of life, it's something that causes you to take drastic steps, I suddenly was able to understand them and even to identify with them ...*
>
> *There is a lot in common between us. Their life is just a way to say no to modern, western life, and I identify with that. Also the matter of preferring the spiritual to the physical is certainly understood. That way of living, that many would call crazy, is worthy of appreciation and even of emulation.* (Ma'ariv 22.06.01)

While Shiri Tzur is not recommending that Israelis become silent nuns, both by the interviews she gave and the treatment of her subject she has done much to present the choice and lifestyle of cloistered, silent nuns as positive and even praiseworthy.

Conclusion

In the current tense atmosphere of Israel, it should not be surprising that there is an intensified search for an experience of things that are perceived to be removed from the pressures, conflict, and insecurity of Israeli life. Both the secular and religious press have chosen to positively report on and review Christian sites and lifestyles. That there is a growing fascination with things and places Christian inside of Israel is an interesting development and could be indicative of an emerging trend to view what was once anathema as now a viable option.