Christian Approaches to Grassroots Reconciliation Between Israelis and Palestinians: The Theological Grounding and Institutional Practices

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Abstract

Christians are a minority group found within both the Israeli community and Palestinian community. This affects how Christians are perceived within their respective national communities and how they relate to one another as people of the same faith across the Israeli-Palestinian divide. This study outlines the theological tools and teachings that Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews rely on in seeking reconciliation with one another and with those of other faiths, and why reconciliation is important to them from a religious perspective. It explores Christian institutions working towards reconciliation within the State of Israel with case studies from Jerusalem, Haifa, and Netanya. It concludes that there are three key themes in Christian reconciliation: identity, relationships, and repentance.

Keyword: Israel-Palestine, reconciliation, Messianic Jews, Palestinian Christians

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Introduction
Although a desire to see peace and reconciliation is common amongst all Christians, the Christian community in Israel and Palestine is by no means overwhelmingly united. In spite of their small number, the divisions found in the broader community between Israelis and Palestinians can be found within the Christian community.

The number of Palestinian Christians in Israel at present is just over 100,000, with their number recorded to be 79.1% of Israel’s 166,000 Christians. [1] In the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem it is estimated by various sources to be around 50’000. [2] The number of Messianic Jews is uncertain due to the fact that the Israeli government keep no official record of their number, as they are not an officially recognised community. However most sources would put the current number of Messianic Jews in Israel at around 20,000. [3]

This study examines Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians attempting to reconcile with one another as well as those outside of their faith. Firstly looking at the identity of both of these communities then exploring the institutional resources for reconciliation through three case studies. Then the theological framework will be examined, exploring the themes of reconciliation that feature throughout the New Testament. The findings will show that an approach to reconciliation based on Christian teachings requires an understanding of one’s identity, the building of relationships, and the role of repentance when traditionally forgiveness has been given priority.

Identity is one of the biggest challenges in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and identity is intimately connected to theological narratives. [4] In his own experiences of Israeli-Palestinian problem solving workshops, Herbert C Kelman [5] states that identity plays a major role in the national narrative and narrative of the conflict, and the threat to collective identity is a core issue in the conflict.

Judaism is defined in such a way that it excludes the possibility of Jesus being the messiah, whereas Christianity is built on the foundation that Jesus is the messiah. [6] For Messianic Jews this causes contention with the wider Jewish community who argue it is incompatible to consider oneself both Jewish and Christian. Concerning the law of return in Israel, there has been a clause since 1970 that means a Jew is not just defined as somebody with a Jewish mother or who has converted to Judaism, but “who is [also] not a member of another religion.” In a number of Aliyah cases, the High Court of Justice decided with regards to the law of return that Jews who believe in Yeshua (Jesus) and the New Covenant Scriptures (the New Testament) are “members of another religion” and therefore not eligible for Aliyah. [7]

Identity can be an issue for Messianic Jews even with regards to being classified as Christians, as many Messianic Jews in Israel prefer to describe themselves as followers of Yeshua (Jesus). [8] Most Messianic Jews form their own evangelical congregations as opposed to joining the established Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox churches. In turn, it is only the established churches that are recognised as official churches by the State of Israel, which makes it hard to
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be both a Christian and a Jew in the eyes of the state. The reluctance to self identify with the label Christian is often because of the negative history of Jews in Europe being persecuted by a Christian majority throughout the last two millennia. Messianic Jews can be ridiculed on the grounds of plain naïveté in the face of history and the historical development of theology, both Jewish and Christian. [9]

In Messianic Jewish theology, there are three important elements that contribute to their identity: God, the Land, and the Jewish people and identifying with the land of Israel is very important. [10] Messianic Jews consider their identity to be wholly Jewish and continue to celebrate Biblical feasts such as Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (feats of weeks), Sukkot (feast of tabernacles), Rosh Hashanah (feast of trumpets), and Yom Kippur (day of atonement), which are national holidays in Israel. The feats are considered God’s (as defined in Leviticus 23) and therefore their celebration is important within their Christian identity. [11] As a result of this, religious holidays can be one of the most poignant debatable issues between these two communities and their theology and identity.

Methodology
This study draws on the theological framework of international commentators on religious reconciliation such as Miroslav Volf and John Paul Lederach, as well as the framework of Christians working in reconciliation in Israel such as Dr Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden, who specifically address what reconciliation looks like from Christian perspectives between Israelis and Palestinians. This study explores the differing dynamics of Christianity in the Messianic Jewish community and the Palestinian Christian community with a focus on the two most commonly cited biblical passages on reconciliation by practitioners in Israel, Ephesians 2:14-16, and 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.

This qualitative study is supplemented with the findings of in-depth semi-structured interviews carried out in three locations with individuals involved in the following institutions. The first of which is Musalaha, a reconciliation organisation based in Jerusalem. The second, Israel College of the Bible in Netanya, which does not explicitly consider itself to be a reconciliation organisation, however in its practice it has managed to bring together Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians for theological studies which has resulted in better understandings of the others religious identity. The third, the House of Victory, a drugs rehabilitation centre in Haifa that puts Christian reconciliation at the heart of its approach to rehabilitation and serves people of all faiths, and none. Not all interviews are referenced, but six leaders and employees from these institutions participated in formal interviews. Less formal discussions took place between participants from the institutions during my observations of each of them, and radio interviews from ‘The Olive Tree’ a programme dedicated to the work of Christians in Israel and Palestine are referenced.

This study fills a gap in literature on Palestinian Christian-Messianic Jewish interactions, and the place of these communities within the national identity of their larger communities. It is important to note that this study focuses solely on initiatives based in the State of Israel, within the 1967 borders. There are many different ways that Christians in both communities
self identify. For the purposes of this study I will be referring to Christians in two broad groups, those of a Jewish Israeli background as Messianic Jews, and those of a Palestinian and Arab background from Israel proper and the Palestinian territories, as Palestinian Christians.

Theology and Identity for Palestinian Christians

How Palestinians self-identify, as either Palestinians, or Arab-Israeli’s, and just how much they see their faith as part of their own national identity, can differ greatly depending on who you speak to, and their location. There can be a difference in experience between a Palestinian living in East Jerusalem and that of a Palestinian from Northern Israel. There is no homogenous Palestinian opinion on many issues relating to the conflict, even amongst a minority such as Christians, the diversity in self-identification, and views on Israel and the political situation can differ vastly.

At times the Israeli government has attempted to categorise Palestinian Christians in Israel separately from Palestinian Muslims. Israeli sociologist Sammy Smooha [12] once claimed the distinctive characteristics of the Christian community should be emphasised in order to avoid them establishing an organisation on a national scale that may follow the dictates of Muslim nationalism. Such an example of this is seen in the last couple of years, the Israeli government has chosen to recognise Aramean Israeli as an official national identity as opposed to Arab Israeli. [13] This was a controversial decision for some Palestinians in Israel, who considered it to be an attempt by the Israeli government to cause divisions within their community. For example Ahmad Tibi [14] an Arab-Muslim member of the Knesset claimed it was “a high-handed attempt to divide and rule the Arab minority in Israel [and] the Christians are an authentic part of the national Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and no right-wing political decision will change this fact.” However it must be noted that this was at the request of a subsection of Aramean Israeli’s in Northern Israel, a community who trace their roots to Arameans living in the area around the first century, as opposed to Arabs.

Unlike Messianic Jews, most Palestinian Christians belong to the established church. They identify with traditional Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter and adhere to the religious calendars of the church as opposed to the Jewish calendar. With regards to feasts and holidays, Palestinian Christians choose to identify with the traditional Christian holidays, as opposed to the biblical feasts. [15] The role of the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and interpretations of the Old Testament can vary. For Palestinian Christians, a continuous history in the land since the time of Jesus means that they also identify heavily with the land and sacred sites. There is a sense of pride in belonging to the land in which Jesus was born and an inherited sense of stewardship for the maintenance and preservation of holy sites. [16]

What is reconciliation and why is it important to Christians?
The New Testament is thought to have an overarching message of reconciliation. Munayer and Loden [17] describe reconciliation as “the theological concept that describes the setting right and restoration of broken relationships.” They state that biblical reconciliation has two main aspects, a
vertical and a horizontal. [18] The vertical aspect is reconciliation between God and man, which is made possible through Jesus Christ as God’s gift to the world dying for humanity. [19] The horizontal aspect is then the reconciliation that takes place between human beings. John Paul Lederach [20] describes reconciliation as a journey toward a place where truth, mercy, justice, and peace meet. Such journeys are the essence of the gospel, and are where Christians encounter God, others, and themselves. [21] Donna Hicks [22] argues that the process of identity development requires social interaction. This understating of the way human beings relate to God, and by extension one another, puts identity and relationships at the heart of reconciliation.

Aside from the horizontal and vertical understandings of reconciliation there are two other Christian views of reconciliation. The first is that reconciliation is an outgrowth emerging from faith and conversion. The second is that reconciliation is a product of proper belief. [23] However these two views can restrict reconciliation to requiring one to convert to Christianity in order to be capable of reconciling with an enemy. Although ones faith may be the instigator in seeking reconciliation, building an idea of reconciliation based on faith does not mean it can only be replicated with people who also share that faith. Lederach [24] suggests a third view of reconciliation, that it is better understood as a journey. He considers reconciliation to be the way God has chosen to act throughout history, and the way God has shown his presence throughout history demonstrates a methodology of reconciliation. [25] Therefore the role of Christians is to align themselves with God, who is working to reconcile all of humanity and creation. [26]

Miroslav Volf’s [27] influential perspective states that ‘though reconciliation of human beings to God has priority, reconciliation between human beings is intrinsic to their reconciliation to God.’ Most definitions of reconciliation are explicitly religious, they relate to a restoration of relationship between God and man, and allude to a spiritual goal. [28] He points to the criticism of the church’s theological tradition that has never offered a lot of insight into the social meaning of reconciliation. [29] Typically reconciliation has been thought to have a personal and theological meaning, but no wider social meaning. [30] I would suggest that there is a wider social meaning, it may not be immediate, but therein lies the difference between reconciliation and peacebuilding. Reconciliation is about restoring a relationship, and not immediately concerned with solving the overarching political problems.

**Musalaha: Identity, Relationships and Repentance**

Musalaha is a reconciliation organisation based in West Jerusalem that works with people from Israel proper and the Palestinian territories. The organisation was founded by Dr Salim Munayer, a Palestinian Christian born in Israel. The vision of Musalaha is to see reconciliation between Arab and Jewish Christians, and also between those of other faiths and none, on opposite sides of the conflict. This is done through summer camps for children, and groups that meet regularly and often go on trips together, with the aim of getting to know one another and building relationships.
For many Israelis and Palestinians, to meet with someone from the other side is considered a betrayal of their own group. [31] For some Palestinians justice is a precondition of reconciliation, and refusing to meet with Israelis is a way of symbolically communicating that justice must come first, making them reluctant to get involved in reconciliation. [32] Power is an issue in the conflict of identity between Israelis and Palestinians. [33] As such there are theological, psychological, and sociological factors at work when it comes to the position that members of each community take with regards to meeting people from the other side, and approaching reconciliation. [34]

Musalaha have created a curriculum of reconciliation made up of six stages, as reconciliation is not simply a single event. [35] The six stages are as follows: establishing relationships, opening up, withdrawal, reclaiming identity, committing and returning, taking steps. The three major themes of Christian reconciliation, repentance, relationships and identity, all play a role here, and relationships and identity are particularly central to the work that Musalaha does.

When interviewing Munayer, he emphasised that there needs to be better integration between theology and the social sciences. [36] The fourth stage of their reconciliation process is all about reclaiming identity. They have taken the sociological and psychological understandings of the role of the self in reconciliation, and then looked to the Bible and Christian theology to see how these things shape a healthy identity that leads to reconciliation.

Identity can also become mixed with a victim mentality. [37] This is why reclaiming identity is important. Acknowledging the others’ identity group can be synonymous with jeopardizing the identity and national existence of one’s own groups. [38] Reconciliation is not about changing the identity of Israelis and Palestinians to be merged into one, this would be counterproductive, as Musalaha takes the stance that for reconciliation to occur, each side’s identity must be affirmed. [39]

Israel College of the Bible: Identity, Relationships and Repentance
Israel College of the Bible is an evangelical theological college based in Netanya, Northern Israel. What sets it apart from other such institutes in Israel, and the Palestinian territories is that the college consists of both Palestinian Christian and Messianic Jewish students. The college was founded 25 years ago to originally serve the Messianic Jewish community, yet quickly the vision of the college was to have both Jewish and Arab pastors studying together. At present 40% of students are Arabs and the President of ICB, Dr Erez Soref a Messianic Jew, has a vision to see Jews and Arabs working together. ICB does not consider itself a reconciliation organization but uses the same principles of identity, relationships, and repentance that I have found to be characteristic of Christian reconciliation. Their approach is the least scholarly and the most faith based.

Dr Seth Postell, the dean of students at ICB, states the reason the college does not see itself as carrying out reconciliation, even though there is a space for reconciliation especially in the Christian community, is because
reconciliation works on the foundation that there is a problem, so you are ‘starting on the left foot’ as such. [40] To delve straight into reconciliation requires you to deal with things that you may not be ready for relationally. [41] For ICB the foundation they are starting on is the assumption that reconciliation has happened, that Jews and Arabs are reconciled and they need each other. The reason for this approach is based on the biblical principle that reconciliation has happened through Jesus Christ, therefore there is no process they must go through to reconcile their student but simply bring them together.

Postell [42] mentions there was an assumption amongst some Palestinian Christians that the underlying agenda of the college was to give them an Israel centered theology. The college does not consider any one culture or theological identity as more important, and attempts a mutual sharing of both traditions. The complexity of having a Christian identity alongside a majority Jewish or majority Muslim community is a shared experience. Postell speaks of one Palestinian student whose perception of the Messianic community changed drastically on learning just how difficult it was for one of his fellow Messianic students to be accepted by his family and those in his community. This contrasted with the Palestinian students own experience that it was widely accepted for him to be a Palestinian and a Christian as Christians have been a part of society in Palestine since the start of Christianity in the first century.

With the college being an explicitly Christian environment, repentance is significant. Postell [43] insisted that students who come with any kind of prejudice find themselves coming to a place of repentance through the relationships they build and being in a mixed environment.

The House of Victory: Identity, Relationships and Repentance
The House of Victory is a drug rehabilitation centre in Haifa, Northern Israel and is affiliated with Kehilat HaCarmel (Carmel Congregation) a Messianic Jewish congregation on Mount Carmel, one of the largest Messianic Jewish churches in Israel. [44] On interviewing Mr Eric Benson, the director of the rehab centre, he notes that the congregation is known for its emphasis on the “one new man vision” of Ephesians. [45] A point also emphasised on the Kehilat HaCarmel website as their founding vision, “to reach both Jews and Arabs in Israel, and to demonstrate the reconciliation and unity that the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) has already accomplished.” [46] The House of Victory is first and foremost a drug rehabilitation centre, and refers to itself as “Israel's first Bible-based rehabilitation centre.” [47] Most of the people coming to the House of Victory are not from a Christian background at all. They are a mixture of Jews, Arabs, and secular Russians from all over Israel. Although offering a service completely unrelated to reconciliation, the House of Victory considers itself a reconciliation ministry and puts reconciliation at the heart of its approach to drug rehabilitation.

The desire to help addicts also has biblical roots, in a radio interview Eric Benson cited Matthew 25:40 which states that what you do to the very least in society it is as if it is being done to the Lord. [48] As Jesus’ ministry was to all people, from all walks of society, the House of Victory sees itself as doing the same because it is the role of Christians to be attempting to reconcile all people, including those on the very
fringes of society, such as drug addicts. There are 25 drug rehabilitation centres in Israel, the House of Victory takes referrals from all people of any background in Israel, whereas many others don’t.

The House of Victory sees a shift in identity as key to reconciliation. For some this comes about through believing in Jesus Christ and building their identity on that faith. All participants are working towards a common goal of breaking free from their addictions, and finding themselves in the centre, living with people who they may have at one time considered their enemies; they find themselves building relationships. Relationships are formed to help one another in their rehabilitation, but also without forming relationships with anybody else in the facility they will be completely isolated.

The work of the House of Victory is not so much a commentary on identity, relationships, and repentance, but relates more to the literature on why reconciliation is important to Christians. The House of Victory represents the two dominant views of reconciliation referenced by Lederach, that reconciliation is an outgrowth emerging from faith and reconciliation is a product of proper belief. [49] They don’t merely incorporate reconciliation into their work but insist that it is a necessary part of a Bible based rehabilitation programme, showing that reconciliation is an immovable part of the Christian message.

Theological Framework: Ephesians 2:14-16 “One New Man”

14 For he [Jesus] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.” Ephesians 2:14-16 [50]

When meeting people involved in reconciliation, the verse cited more than any other by Israelis and Palestinians was Ephesians 2:14-16 which talks about the notion of “one new man.”

Nils Alstups Dahl [51] states early Christians perceived the world in which they lived to be a world of Jews and Gentiles. Ephesus was the capital of the Province of Asia, an extremely significant Roman city that people from across the Roman Empire would have passed through. [52] The text addresses an audience of Jewish and Gentile Christians and makes a point of addressing the unity of these two parts of the church. [53] The passage refers to the two people as groups, and not as individuals, and reconciliation in the context of this passage is defined as creating a new humanity bringing the two groups together. [54] The overarching theme of the chapter is that before those in the church were Christians they were outsiders, and aliens. Yet on becoming Christians they have been radically altered and reconciliation has already happened for them.[55] Through this comes the idea that one’s identity is no longer simply found in ethnicity or culture. But if ones identity is in Christ they can relate to all people just as he did.

Lederach [56] states “Paul depicts Christ as a person through whom new relationships are formed.” The role of
relationship and identity are key in this passage. I would argue that the reason Christians cite this passage so often is because it suggests reconciliation is the mission of all Christians. Lederach also states: “I believe the Pauline vision leads us to a simple but challenging conclusion: God is working to bring all things together. The purpose is to heal and to reconcile people with each other and with God. God's mission is also ours. We have been given the same ministry of reconciliation.”[57]

This passage is also commonly cited by Christians because much of what Paul is alluding to here, especially with regards to identity, resonates heavily with the situation of those caught up in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yee [58] states that the church in Ephesus was planted in a society in which Jewish identity had become so confused with Israel and Israel’s God given grace, and that this had been turned into a boundary marker by the Jews, separating and distinguishing Jews from the rest of humanity. Yee [59] suggests that the two parts of humanity, Jew and Gentile, are kept apart because of Jewish ethnocentricity. I would argue that there is no greater parallel to this than the identity of Messianic Jews currently, and a faith that centres around the Jews as a chosen people and their place in Israel, which can alienate non-Jewish Christians, and particularly Palestinian Christians who are conflicted by the political situation. When Paul states that both are made one through Jesus, it is not because differences between Jews and Gentiles as two distinct ethnic groups are diminished. [60] It is breaking down this barrier that an emphasis on one identity over another has caused.

Theological Framework: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 “Ministry of Reconciliation”
"17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 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.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 [61]

Verses 17-20 form part of a longer narrative found in verses 11-21 often subtitled in most translations of the Bible as ‘the ministry of reconciliation’.

Diverse socioeconomic groups and differences in religious and ethnic background was the underlying cause of several of problems faced by Christians in Corinth. [62] Paul’s dilemma was to create a clear sense of moral and theological identity while also incorporating a heterogeneous group of people: Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. [63] With regards to identity, there is a strong theme here that all have the opportunity to identify with Christ. [64] In earlier verses Paul expresses his identity as an apostle, follower of Jesus, and his experiences of hardship. [65] Christians are always to encounter tough situations, but the only appropriate response is love. Verses 14-15 stress the death of Christ as an act of renewal. [66] Therefore, in lieu of the Jesus’ death attitudes to one another must be adjusted in line with Christ’s attitude to all people, which was one of love and compassion. Paul
defines the meaning of the symbol of Christ’s death as love, and that his death was the ultimate personification of love. [67] This is consequently the basis and behavioral goal for all Christians. [68] Verse 16 states that one should no longer look at people in a worldly way, but from the perspective that Christ would have seen them, a perspective that saw them worthy of the most self sacrificial love, that he would die for them. Compelling Christians to develop this same attitude of self-sacrificial love in their own relationships.

Much like the passage in Ephesians we are dealing with a fractured society with ethnic divisions that have seeped into the Christian community, this passage also gives reconciliation a place in political life. Although reconciliation had a place in Hellenistic Judaism, its primary context was the political life of the ancient city state. [69] Paul is doing more than merely creating a useful theological metaphor out of familiar political experience. Paul must use the language of reconciliation because he is engaged in the politics of reconciliation. [70] In addition to the underlying political tones, Paul is emphasizing here that it is not an option for those divided in society to be reconciled but rather it is a necessity, it must happen because it has happened with Christ and his sacrificial death. The overarching theme of this entire section is that Christ and his death is the means by which God has reconciled the world. [71]

In this passage Paul evokes the three key themes of Christian reconciliation; repentance, relationship, and identity and asserts that they are inseparable from the Christian message. The opening verses are a call to look inwardly, to not find pride in possessions or things around them but in the state of their heart; it is a call to repentance. Verses 14-16 calls for a change in perception of those who may be considered ‘others’, compelling the Corinthians to build relationships. Finally, verses 17-20 firmly place the identity of the community in Jesus Christ. They have been made new through their faith and therein lies their identity, this new found identity should make it possible for the individuals to seek repentance and build relationships.

Forgiveness vs. Repentance

Religious reconciliation literature tends to focus around forgiveness. Yet when interviewing Christians involved in reconciliation in Israel and Palestine, it was not forgiveness but rather repentance that was constantly cited to me as the concept around which a lot of their work is based.

Forgiveness has always been linked to reconciliation, it is often considered to be the key to unlocking patterns of resentment. [72] Worthington [73] defines forgiveness as a juxtaposition or superposition of a strong positive emotion over the cold emotions of unforgiveness in such a way that unforgiveness becomes overwhelmed by more positive emotions. Linked to this, political theorist Hannah Arendt [74] claims Jesus to have been the “discoverer” of this role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs. It is a common view in the American public policy community that forgiveness will be central in 21st century political order. [75] The Christian community and those beyond it have a growing interest in forgiveness in the course of public events. [76]
Forgiveness and repentance both focus on the individual, however forgiveness in the public domain relates to justice. Forgiveness can often look like a lesser form of condoning, dismissal, and forgetting that takes place. [77] In this respect, the relationship between forgiveness and justice can be clumsy and inconsistent. Palestinian Christian Pastor Yousef Dakwar [78] who is involved in work in both the Messianic Jewish and Palestinian Christian communities states that for him reconciliation looks like, no matter what has happened to you, continuing to do good, and forgiving those who have wronged you. But only an attitude of repentance first, can change a person to approach things as such.

Munayer and Loden [79] argue that reconciliation is costly and requires us to give more than we might comfortably give. Tied to repentance and forgiveness is also the idea of justice, as for both Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians justice is important to a vision of peace. [80] I would argue that it is allowing oneself to enter a place of repentance that makes it possible to engage in the uncomfortable level of giving that reconciliation requires. Reconciliation itself consists of giving and receiving forgiveness, but repentance must precede that.

Miroslav Volf argues that at the heart of Christianity lies important resources for creating a culture of peace, it is not just a superficial characteristic of faith found in the margins. [81] The wrong emphasis or attitude towards forgiveness results in what Volf refers to as ‘cheap reconciliation.’ [82] This ‘cheap reconciliation’ is built on a notion of ‘cheap grace,’ a readiness to receive the love of God, without a sense of obligation to ones neighbor. ‘Cheap reconciliation’ frames forgiveness as acting towards the perpetrator “as if their sin was not there.” [83] The emphasis on repentance combats this view of forgiveness and I would argue it is repentance and the feeling of deep conviction that leads to one feeling an obligation to ones neighbor.

Conclusion
Worthington [84] states that the best way to tackle issues regarding reconciliation is with a broad strategy of reconciliation. I think the Christian approach provides this, an approach that is built on incorporating three key principles; identity, relationships, and repentance. Just how heavily an organization, or individual, may use one of these things in their approach to reconciliation can differ, because the approach is incredibly flexible.

Most scholars acknowledge just how important identity is in conflict, and the role it can play in conflict resolution. The Palestinian Christian and Messianic Jewish communities have their identity called into question by their wider community, and their identities as Christians do not always match up theologically with one another.

The vertical relationship between God and man compels Christians to develop the necessary horizontal relationships between all mankind. The principles found in Ephesians and Corinthians, and an emphasis on love and repentance, are echoed in varying degrees by all of the organizations I encountered. Using these basic principles, an approach to reconciliation can be developed in any area of society.

Lederach [85] is clear that he is not developing a well-honed sociological theory of reconciliation, or a how-to
guide for handling conflict, but rather exploring the spiritual foundations that undergird his work in peacebuilding. This I would argue is how grassroots Christian reconciliation is devised, as identity, repentance, and relationships, are the spiritual foundations of Christianity, they become the spiritual foundations of reconciliation work. All three of the organisations I visited, Musalaha, Israel College of the Bible, and the House of Victory have built successful models of reconciliation using these three elements as their foundation stone applying them to their models of reconciliation in varying degrees.


8 Interview with Employee from Musalaha. by Daniela Duhur, Jerusalem, Israel, May, 2016. Hereafter cited as, interview with Musalaha Employee.
9 Riggans, ibid. 131.
10 Munayer and Loden, ibid, 94.
11 The entirety of Leviticus 23 lists the feasts that God tells Moses are to be celebrated: the sabbath 23:3, the passover and unleavened bread 23:4, the feast of firstfruits 23:9, the feast of weeks 23:15, the feast of trumpets 23:23, the day of atonement 23:26, and the feast of tabernacles 23:33. They are never referred to as Jewish holidays but ‘festivals [feasts] of the Lord’ Lev 23:1-2. As Christians understand the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament to be the same God, Messianic Jews consider God’s feasts in the Old Testament still to be His feasts in the era of Christ, as there was never a command to stop celebrating them or that they are explicitly for Jews adhering to Judaism.
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14 Tibi, ibid.
15 Interview with Musalaha employee.
16 Munayer and Loden, ibid, 54.
17 ibid, 191.
18 ibid 191.
19 ibid, 192.
21 ibid, 159.
23 Lederach, ibid, 159
24 ibid, 159.
25 ibid, 160.
26 ibid. 160.
29 G. Baum referenced by M. Volf (1999), ibid, 9.
30 Volf (1999), ibid 9.
31 Munayer and Loden, ibid, 204.
32 ibid, 205.
33 ibid, 208.
34 ibid. 205
35 ibid, 223.
38 Kelman, ibid, 192.
39 Munayer and Loden, ibid, 229.
40 Seth Postell, Interview with Dr Seth Postell from Israel College of the Bible, by Daniela Duhur, Netanya, Israel, May 23, 2016. Hereafter cited as, interview with Dr Seth Postell.
41 Interview with Dr Seth Postell.
42 Interview with Dr Seth Postell
43 Interview with Dr Seth Postell.
45 Eric Benson, Interview with Mr Eric Benson from The House of Victory, by Daniela Duhur, Haifa, Israel, May 29, 2016. Hereafter cited as, interview with Mr Eric Benson.
49 Lederach, ibid, 159.
50 The book of Ephesians found in the New Testament is a letter from St Paul to the church in Ephesus (a city in Modern day Turkey), but was most likely also sent to a number of churches in the Roman province of Asia.
52 P. Scherrer, “The City of Ephesus from the Roman Period to Late Antiquity,” in Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia; an interdisciplinary approach to its archaeology, religion, and culture, ed. Helmut Koester, by Helmut Koester (United Kingdom: Continuum International Publishing Group - Trinity, 1996). 4-5.
53 Dahl, ibid, 441.
54 Lederach, ibid, 163.
55 Dahl, ibid, 443.
56 Lederach, ibid, 164.
57 Lederach, ibid, 165.
59 ibid, 143.
60 ibid, 143.
61 The book 2 Corinthians in the New Testament is the second letter from St. Paul to the church in Corinth, Greece.
63 ibid, 29.
65 ibid, 150.
68 ibid, 142.
70 ibid, 217
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74 Arendt as cited in Petersen, ibid, 3.

75 Petersen, ibid, 3.

76 ibid, 6.

77 Petersen, ibid, 4.


79 Munayer and Loden, ibid, 194.

80 ibid, 167.


82 ibid, 34


84 Worthing Jr, ibid, 186.

85 Lederach, ibid, 15.